



HAITIAN EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

From Poverty To Prosperity Through Education

HELP Update Summer 2008

Dear Friends,

As usual, there is plenty of good news to report. Interviews with candidates for this year's freshman class are almost over. We will accept 30 students this year, bringing our total student body to 100. Details on the incoming students will appear in the next issue of the HELP Newsletter.

HELP alumni maintain 100% employment rate in Haiti: Only a week after defending his thesis this month, fifth-year accounting student Monil Paraison began work as an accountant with Sogebank, Haiti's second largest bank. For the past several years Monil has supported himself and his mother on his \$75 monthly stipend from HELP. His starting salary at the bank is \$555/month or \$6,660 a year. Monil said the Sogebank interviewer was impressed with the work he had done for HELP, especially the recruiting trips Monil took around the country to spread the word about HELP. Almost all of this year's graduating seniors found work before graduation, enabling HELP to maintain a 100 % employment rate among our graduates. Haiti's "formal sector" employment rate is estimated at only 13%.

HELP hires former student: HELP graduate Marie Poulard earned a management degree in 2004 and began work as an account for Haiti's international school. From there she moved to southern Haiti to work with FINCA, an international microcredit bank. While at FINCA she volunteered for HELP as the coordinator for the HELP students at the agriculture school of Haiti's Catholic university. HELP Director Garry Delice was so impressed with her work that when he was hiring a second Student Advisor he asked Marie to apply.

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Marie is the first HELP alumna to return as an employee. Her experience as a student and as a successful professional woman in the workplace makes her uniquely suited to helping a new generation of students replicate her success. Marie writes: "I am just a result of the HELP equation: Capacity + Will+ Opportunity = Success. I attribute all my success to the program. If I could, I would work for free, to show my gratitude and help the institution accomplish its goal."

Wyclef Jean visits HELP:

Haitian born hip-hop star Wyclef Jean visited the HELP center in June, part of a tour to highlight the work of Yele Haiti, the foundation he started several years ago. The Grammy winning artist maintains close ties to Haiti; Yele sponsored 10 HELP students last year through a donation from the local cell phone company Viola. Wyclef met with the Yele-sponsored students and told us he was inspired by what he saw. This year, Viola and Yele will increase their support to 12 students.



Wyclef Jean (orange) with HELP students and staff & Viola Director

HELP's first Washington DC Benefit: On June 27th HELP held our first Washington DC area benefit at the embassy of the Republic of Haiti. Over 100 guests showed up to meet HELP students Dany Selme and Stanley Clermont. The event grossed close to \$25,000, thanks in large part to \$5,000 sponsorship donations from host committee chair Karl Racine, Donald and Anne Brown and Jeffrey and Ann Kurzweiler. A special thanks is due to Ambassador Raymond Joseph and his staff who extended their generous Haitian hospitality to HELP and our guests. Thanks also to several volunteers who put in many hours to make the event a success: Jean-Eric and Patricia Dyer for their MC and organizational skills and Rosemay Dyer and Martial Lamy for their photography. The speech that Dany gave is below. It explains, better than I ever could, HELP's work and the tremendous potential that your support unleashes, in Haiti and beyond.



Stanley, Conor, & Danny

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My name is Dany Selme. I was born in 1985 in Petite Rivière, a small town in central Haiti. My mother has three children and my father had five other children. He didn't live with my mother because he had to take care of his other children. I was raised by my mother, a poor washer woman who never went to school. Her income was not enough to feed us every day, so she couldn't pay for our school.

A neighbor saw that and she sent me to school where I was always first in my class. After primary school she sent me to secondary school in Port-au-Prince where I lived with her daughter, Paula. After two years, I couldn't stay with Paula anymore; she thought that I didn't deserve what her mother was doing for me because my family was so poor as to be worthless.

I was 13 when I left her house and I didn't have anyone to support me so I had to take care of myself. For five years I was obliged to change houses all the time, go to school without eating and walk long distances on foot. Always though, I tried to be first in my class. However, when I got to my senior year my situation became worse. I was staying miles from school, I had no money for transportation and I felt I just couldn't continue. I became discouraged and depressed. I dropped out of school and I went back to my mother's house. Six weeks later someone offered me a place to stay close to school and when I came back the principal offered to support me and suggest I apply to HELP.

HELP was a rescue for me. Without HELP, going to university was out of the question. Thanks to HELP, my tuition was paid; I was less worried about money for food and transportation. Now my future is assured and I already feel that my success has had an effect on other people. When I visit schools to recruit for HELP I share my experience with the students. Many tell me that it encourages them to think positively and be strong. It shows them that there is a future for people who value school and study hard.

Today I know I have great potential. I want to use my skills to help my country. I will change my family's situation, my community, why not the world. I am a young tree that HELP has watered; a tree whose roots will be strong, whose fruit will feed people, whose leaves will treat people, whose shade will protect people and whose seeds will generate other strong trees. And so, I will be useful for my environment. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I will not disappoint you.

Please consider donating today so we can give more young women and men like Dany the opportunity they deserve. Please visit our website (www.haitianeducation.org) or mail your gift to:

**136 Madison Ave.
N.Y., NY 10016**

Thank You,

Conor