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A Few Hours and a Handful of Beans

A Story of Transformation

by Troy Sanon



It's amazing what you can accomplish in a few hours with a handful of beans.

World Renew longs for community transformation. Transformation happens when communities learn to develop, implement, and sustain their own solutions to problems. World Renew partners with organizations around the world to provide support as communities do this hard work. When a community is involved in assessing their own capacity for change, the odds of transformation are strengthened.

Transformation takes time and, before that precious commodity is spent, assessing a community's strengths and needs is imperative. Sometimes community assessments look like full-scale scientific surveys and a lot of time is spent collecting, tabulating, and presenting data. In Haiti, World Renew and its partner the Christian Reformed Church of Haiti (ECRH) discovered that with just a few hours and a handful of beans, a community can look at and develop consensus about its own needs and abilities to address them.

Last year, as part of an organization-wide effort to test a new community assessment framework called the Community Capacity Indicator, World Renew asked a sample of partners and communities to engage in pilot testing the framework. 5 particular areas of strength, or capacity, would be assessed:

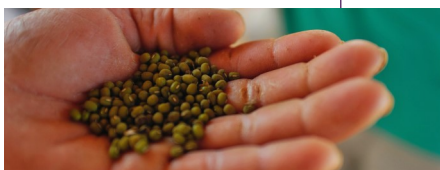
1. Sustainable Community Ownership
2. Effective and Participatory Community Organizations
3. Equity and Equality for Vulnerable Groups in the Community

4. Program Quality and Results
5. Spiritual Formation.

World Renew Haiti agreed to host community meetings in 10 different areas of Thomassique and Belladere. They organized meetings in which members of the community were given a series of questions — **and a handful of beans**. As the group heard the questions, each member responded by putting their bean by a word at their table: YES, NO, and NOT YET. This visual representation of their agreement or disagreement on a particular issue led to a **dynamic debate**. Participants challenged each other's answers, clarified positions, shared information that helped others understand parts of the situation they might not know.

This lively discussion required the development of consensus among community members with different opinions and views on how community issues should be understood and addressed. As they identified strengths and weaknesses — their community's capacity — they were able to create step-by-step plans of action to be accomplished by the community in collaboration with ECRH and World Renew.

This community involvement, *also called capacity building*, requires regular check-ins to monitor progress and the prospect of achieving those in a short time makes this crucial part of community planning possible. World Renew Haiti reports that the involved communities were very satisfied that they were able to assess and plan for their communities in a short time. Amazing things can be accomplished by the regular investment of a few hours and a handful beans!





So Many Acronyms, So Much Potential for Change

There are a lot of acronyms here at World Renew: PAG, NEICORD, FOTADEL, SLDS, CECS...

They can be a little overwhelming until you know that each acronym simply represents one of the 84 organizations World Renew partners with in 31 countries around the globe. Our partners work at the local level, helping identify a community's needs and its capacity to implement and sustain solutions to those needs.

Each acronym represents enormous potential for changing stories. So read on to discover how World Renew and Haitian partners PWOFOOD and ADJGH are fostering local leadership and development in the community of Gressier, Haiti.

Program for Organization of Diaconate (PWOFOOD) is a longtime partner to World Renew in Haiti, where they mobilize church and community organizations for leadership in and development of their communities. They have been working in the community of Gressier, 12 miles west of Port-au-Prince, providing leadership and diaconal training to to 15 churches there.

In the northern part of Gressier, the two small villages of Jasmin and Kaleje noticed the changes taking place in their neigh-

bors' communities and asked PWOFOOD to assist them in beginning a similar transformation. Producers of crops like cassava, banana, yam, and beans, Jasmin and Kaleje had already taken great steps towards positive development. In 2009, community members established the Association for the Development of Jasmin, Gressier Haiti (ADJGH). They received legal recognition from the Haitian Ministry of Social Affairs in 2012 and now have 100 members. In just 8 years they have founded a school and created a village savings and loan program.

With these strong assets in place, Jasmin and Kaleje were ready to embark on leadership training and analysis of their communities' capacities with the help of PWOFOOD. For the last two years, church leaders from Jasmin and Kaleje have trained with PWOFOOD and learned how to take the next steps in transformation of their communities. In partnership with World Renew, PWOFOOD has enabled local leaders to increase dialogue and partnerships within their communities. Teachers have been trained and teach literacy classes to young people and adults. For the villages of Jasmin and Kaleje, acronyms like PWOFOOD and ADJGH stand for renewal and transformation.

A, B, C, D, Snip, Snip, Snip

In rural Haiti, it's not easy to be a business owner, especially if you don't even know how to read. Enjoying the income and self-reliance of the entrepreneurial life can be out of reach for the 39% of Haitians who aren't literate.

World Renew Haiti is making that connection for the young people and adults who participate in their literacy classes. Now students in the poor and remote parts of the country who complete literacy training have the opportunity to learn barbering, a skill that will allow them to run their own businesses and generate income for their families.

Last fall World Renew recruited Haitian American Darryl Goss-Geffrard, a US-trained professional barber, to offer advanced training to ten local barbers. **The catch was that those 10 barbers would in turn train literacy students in barbering and barber shop management.**

Mr. Goss-Geffrard organized a 4-day workshop in advanced methods and trends, such as scissor-over-comb, fading techniques, and amazing shapes. Each participant received a full barbering kit including quality clippers, combs, brushes, razors, capes, disinfectants, cremes, and sprays. Using the same resources US barbering students would use to pass state licensing exams, Mr. Goss-Geffrard taught technique and best business practices.

When the workshop was over, the ten participants had gained skills to advance their own business efforts and were also ready to teach barbering to literacy class



students. Each barber will take their skills to the rural communities of Haiti where students in World Renew-supported literacy classes will add to their ability to read new skills that will allow them to run their own individual businesses and enjoy the fruits of their own labor.