



VINCENTIAN FAMILY HAITI INITIATIVE
INITIATIVE DE LA FAMILLE VINCENTIENNE EN HAÏTI
INICIATIVA DE LA FAMILIA VICENCIANA EN HAITÍ

January 2013 Newsletter



Successful Fund-raising Campaign Supports Path to a Better Life for 300 Haitian Families

The “bottom billion” are people around the globe who live in the poorest and most stagnant countries in the world. They live in make-shift homes, are not guaranteed a daily meal, cannot send their children to school and lack an income to improve their lot in life. They spend less than \$1 a day to survive.

In Haiti, a country of 10 million people, 77 percent live at or below the poverty level.

The international Vincentian family hosted a highly successful match program for its member organizations and others in fall 2011 that raised \$448,200 to invest in Haiti’s future. The funds have been used to enroll 300 families in a new cohort of the Chemen Lavi Miyò (CLM) or “Pathway to a Better Life” program. Targeting

families in Mirebalais and Las Cahobas, both rural areas north of the capital, this cohort will aid 1,500 to 2,100 people because the average Haitian family has five to seven members.

Gauthier Dieudonè directs this program for female-headed households who, he says, “carry the economy of Haiti on their backs.” The women have now entered a proven 18-month program that provides close support and training that enables them to upgrade their living conditions, become food secure, enroll their children in school and learn a vocation to create a sustainable income.

The families are doing well already. They have committed to the program, received a water filter to prevent cholera, free access to health care, a sturdy housing structure and a separate latrine that they had to build themselves as part of the sweat-equity required of participants. Some women have already received training in two income-generating activities, such as raising goats, pigs or chickens, or micro-businesses that sell items on the street.

Viergemène Pierre had been selling eight to 10 coffee cans filled with salt daily when she enrolled in the program, but it wasn’t enough to provide for three children, her nephew and her elderly mother, all of whom were living in a tent-like structure. Through her hard work and the guidance she has received, she saved \$20 so far that she put into her new savings account.

The Vincentians are funding this program in partnership with Fonkoze, an alternative bank for the poor in Haiti. Fonkoze staff members have guided hundreds of families through the program with great success and report an excellent start for this latest group.

Ms. Pierre has begun her journey on the path to a better life. She has a new-found sense of hope for the future, with good reason. She now has two goats and will be receiving a pig in the coming weeks. When it comes time for her to receive the proceeds from her savings group, she plans to start a small business. When she graduates from the program, she will be graduating into the new life she will have created for herself and her extended family.



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Q&A with Haitian Scholarship Winner Joanne Joseph

"The more education I have, the more I can help myself, my family, my friends, my town and my country." The power of that statement helped propel 29-year-old Joanne Joseph to win a two-year scholarship from [St. John's University](#) in New York, where she is majoring in Administrative Studies—a professional management program—and expecting to graduate in May 2014.

Joseph grew up in Ladumette, Anse-à-Veau, Haiti, "a small town in a remote area where even the basics are missing, let alone school or work, so there wasn't much for me to do." She earned a scholarship to a California community college, where she earned two associate's degrees in agriculture sales & service and agriculture business. The Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative checked in with her to see how she is faring after her first semester.



Q: Describe your experience at St. John's.

A: I am having a great time. St. John's is way beyond what I expected. I was very frustrated because I missed orientation. I did not know exactly what I was going to do or how I would figure things out, but thank God I met some wonderful, helpful people on campus. The first day, I fell in love with Lucy Pesce (Executive Director for Mission). She is such a fantastic person. She gave me a personal tour which was excellent. We had fun discovering together all the departments that she did not know despite working at St. John's for many years.

When I arrived at an office on campus, everyone was willing to help, and Lucy did not hesitate to introduce me to her colleagues and friends. I now know a lot of people, thanks to her. She assigned me a mentor whose name is Hadia Sheerazi, who became a friend. Hadia helped me with almost everything throughout the semester including finding the best bargains☺. I think that I have already met almost all the wonderful Vincentian priests on campus. I am now looking forward to my second semester, which hopefully will be as wonderful as the first.

Q: What was your reaction when you heard you earned the scholarship?

A: Honestly, it was a mixed feeling. I was extremely happy to hear about it since it was my dream, but I was a little sad to leave my three sisters and brother behind. I am the oldest, and my parents are getting old. They can no longer do the work they used to do before to put food on our plates and pay for our education.

When I started working in 2010, I was helping a lot. I was responsible for taking care of the house and paying school tuitions for my siblings. Leaving them behind was very hard. I felt like I was a selfish person. However, I was able to move forward because there are opportunities that do not come twice.



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Q: You previously worked as a business analyst with Zafèn. What did you do?

A: I started working for [Zafèn](#) in October 2010 and developed business profiles for small and medium-sized enterprises. I evaluated about 10 to 15 monthly to determine their needs and goal alignment with Zafèn's mission. I worked in the Central Plateau for about a year and then in the Port-au-Prince area for about seven months. I assessed community impact through job creation or implementation of environmentally friendly practices, business knowledge, technical skills and ability to repay the loan. I also prepared a financial analysis and business profile of each enterprise for the Zafèn Selection Committee. I conducted follow-up interviews and other relationship-building activities.

Q: Did you have a favorite business you worked with at Zafèn?

A: I had many interesting clients, but NOBIGABEL, which makes fruit jams and other products, was one of my favorites. I admire Mrs. Nozia Comeau, the owner, for her courage and her determination to make a positive contribution to her community. She was one of the finalists of Digicel Entrepreneur of the Year in the food processing category. When I visited her for the first time, her shelves were nearly empty. She lacked equipment funds to purchase raw materials to increase her production capacity and could not keep up with demand. However, she was very excited about her business and very happy about her effort to keep training young people in the community in food processing.

When I told her why I came to visit, she almost cried. She could not believe that such a wonderful program existed. Nevertheless, I could not guarantee that she would receive the loan, but I gave her examples of businesses that had already received loans, which gave her hope. About 22 days after she received the loan, I visited and could not believe my eyes. Equipment was purchased and there were boxes of products everywhere with addresses for orders made by supermarkets and food stores in Lascahobas and Port-au-Prince. I was so amazed to see the changes in just a few days. The shelves were filled with products and there were many women working. I realized how helpful the loan was for her.

Then two months later, she signed a contract with the National Bureau of Nutrition to provide snacks to about 8,000 students in Lascahobas. Mrs. Comeau could not stop talking good about Zafèn to anyone she knows. During my time with Zafèn, I took many groups to visit NOBIGABEL, and they were all the time very satisfied.

Q: What did you learn about the Vincentian Family while you were working with Zafèn?

A: I did not really learn a lot about the Vincentian Family. The only thing I knew was that they were one of the major Zafèn donors/partners. However, it is at St. John's that I started learning a lot about the Vincentian Family. I am working as a student assistant in the Office of University Mission with Lucy Pesce, who runs the Vincentian Mission Certificate Program. I got to participate in many workshops and reflection sessions where I learned about Vincent de Paul and all the good things he did for the poor during his time. I even learned about the five Vincentian Virtues which are simplicity, humility, meekness, self-denial, and zeal.



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Q: What are your plans after graduation?

A: I will go back to Haiti and try to find a job with the Vincentians or Zafèn, if it's possible. Then I will start working on obtaining a master's degree in social development. I'll also consider opening a small business in Ladumette, where I was born. One of my aunts on my mother's side, a cousin, and I opened a small community school there a few years ago to help parents in the area who can't afford sending their children elsewhere to school. The small business will create jobs for some of the young people leaving there, which I hope will stimulate others to do the same and possibly replicate to other areas.

Q: What do you want people to know about Haiti?

A: Haiti is a very beautiful island with a strong culture. The Haitians are extremely courageous and friendly. Haitians are also very spiritual, and anyone who wants to experience a good moment of happiness, compassion, and stress free should definitely go and spend some time in Haiti.



**TRANSLATORS
WITHOUT BORDERS**

Translators without Borders Honors Haiti Project Staff Member

Global translation charity Translators without Borders (TWB) has [recognized](#) the work of Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative Fiscal/Marketing Manager Griselda Garibay.

For the past two years she has coordinated many TWB translations of Zafèn's loan and donation requests into English, French and Spanish to broaden the reach of each appeal. More recently, she has worked with TWB to translate Vincentian documents as the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative expands its efforts into new projects.

Garibay and Zafèn received an honorable mention in the Humanitarian Communicator category of TWB's awards,

which are given to non-profits that understand the critical link between language/translation and access to critical knowledge, according to a TWB spokesperson.

"This has been a very big year for Translators without Borders," said Enrique Cavalitto, who noted that the group has translated 6.5 million words and counting for non-profit organizations.

Garibay participated in TWB [videos](#) and newsletters when the organization was in its infancy and needed support to expand awareness of its services and to illustrate its value. "Griselda's activities with TWB were mutually beneficial. We are grateful that such an organization exists because communication is vital to everything we do," said the Rev. Joseph Agostino, C.M., who coordinates the Vincentian Family Haiti Initiative.

"Zafèn is an outstanding humanitarian organization with a real impact on the life of people in need," Cavalitto said. "In particular, Griselda is a great player in our workspace, with clear communications, well-defined projects and quick to thank the work of our volunteers. This award is well deserved!"