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 2019 YEAR END APPEAL

MORE THAN A **PASSION PROJECT**

Josiah Thomas, CEO

I grew up in Fond-des-Blancs (FdB), a rural community in southern Haiti. I had the opportunity to go to college in the US. Now I have returned to FdB where I work for the Association for the Development of Fond-des-Blancs (ADF). Our vision is the socio-economic transformation of FdB into a globally attractive community where FdB natives can choose to lead prosperous lives. Our mission is to strengthen local organizations and coordinate their work towards that shared vision of an empowered and economically competitive community.



MORE THAN A **PASSION PROJECT**

Regional Education Project (REP)

The type of economic development ADF envisions requires a well-educated workforce, but in FdB very few students are receiving even a minimally adequate education. In recognition of this, ADF is currently engaged in a project to transform education across FdB. About a year ago, when the project was starting, I had a chance to talk with students, parents, teachers, and principals about education in FdB. I want to share some of the things they said that stuck with me and that I feel speak to the deep aspirations of the FdB community.

One student said, “education is a means to a successful life and is important for the development of a society.” Echoing that thought, a teacher said, “education is the key to developing a community and society in general.” Finally, a parent said, “education is the greatest gift a parent can give their children. It is better than material wealth because it can provide more possibilities and open more doors.”

REP Cont.

Parents, teachers, and students all want better education in FdB. They all see the opportunities they are missing. By positively transforming education across FdB, parents will be able to give their children that ultimate gift of possibility and opportunity. Together we can offer all children growing up in FdB the opportunity to fulfill their full potential, now and in the future.



As someone who grew up and now works in FdB, I am familiar with the disparity between the ambitions of the community and the conditions that make those ambitions challenging to achieve. I have visited schools that do not have a roof and others that only have a sheet separating classrooms. In almost every school in our area, the lack of school supplies like chalkboards, chalk, maps, and diagrams of any kind is a serious yet common problem. Electricity and digital technology, now considered basic requirements in most modern classrooms all over the world, are even rarer.

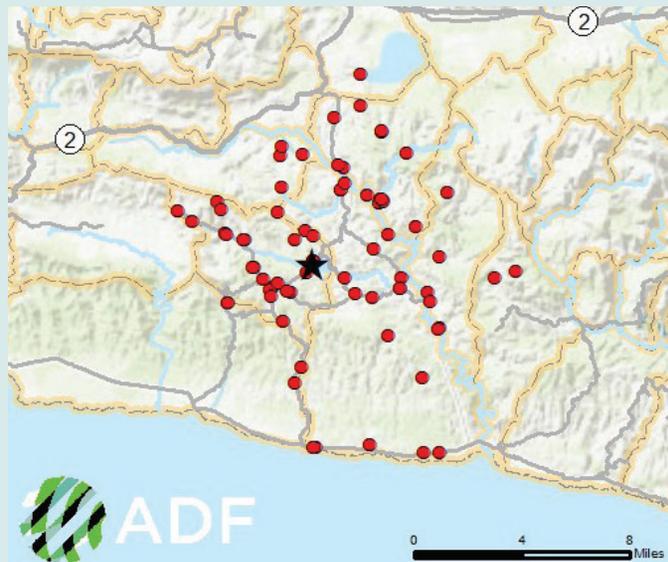
However, material and structural needs are not the only challenges. Students tell me about how uninspiring some teachers are and how teachers do not even want them to ask questions in class. Grade school administrators often hire teachers that have not finished high school. At one public high school, some classrooms have as many as sixty students, led by a single teacher.

The diagram above illustrates how poverty and poor-quality education in Fond-des-Blancs create a repeating intergenerational cycle. Low economic power among parents leads to poorly funded schools that are unable to improve infrastructure, hire qualified teachers, or improve the quality of education. The low quality of education available to students in FdB limits their opportunities for well-compensated employment as adults. Then, in turn, poor job opportunities make it impossible for each new generation to offer the quality of education they want for their children.

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES IN FDB

IMPROVING EDUCATION IN FdB

It is crucial to have this sort of information available when deciding what to do about the education problem in FdB. I and the rest of ADF want to act now, to use our resources to do whatever we can. However, without a proper understanding of the circumstances, a well-meaning person or organization trying to “solve the problem” is likely to miss the root causes and only provide temporary relief with no long-term impact. Temporary relief rather than transformative work is a widespread problem in the NGO world. It is something that I and the rest of ADF want to avoid. With education data available, ADF’s work and the work of others will be more effective. That is why ADF is expanding its initial series of surveys with questionnaires for students, parents, teachers, and administrators along with infrastructure-oriented assessments.



Education in FdB faces severe challenges, but what should you or I do about it? One of the greatest obstacles in the way of improving education in FdB is deceptively simple: a lack of information. Until recently, I did not even know how many schools existed in FdB, nor did anyone else. I know now because of ADF’s education project. Over the past year, our survey team has mapped the locations of seventy-seven schools across the region and recorded information about each one. This effort has resulted in the first directory of kindergarten through 12th grade schools in FdB ever created. The progress so far is promising, but there are many vital questions that ADF needs to answer, such as:

- What’s the average student-teacher ratio?
- What’s the percentage of teachers with training?
- What’s the number of students that lack access to textbooks?
- What is the distance children walk each day to school?
- What’s the number of schools without roofs or walls?

The following page is a photo of just one example of the types of schools children are attending.



IMPROVING EDUCATION IN FDB

Why supporting ADF's data gathering will help solve the problem

To find solutions that will create transformative and sustainable change in education, you have to understand the complexities of the problem. You can't get that understanding without collecting data. ADF is distinctively well positioned and qualified for this type of work. It has a track record for data collection and has a unique systemic and local perspective. This is important for gathering the data. Our systemic perspective, in contrast, allows us to focus our work on the root causes of problems. By focusing on root causes, we can support transformative and sustainable change.

Framework for Transformation

Better education is crucial to bringing about the socio-economic transformation envisioned by the FdB community. The data we are collecting will help bring this vision to life by helping in the enactment of locally aware, systemic, and sustainable solutions for education in FdB. This project is part of a large and long-term battle against the cycles of poverty and inequality. That is why ADF is doing it, and we want you to be a part of it.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Spread the Word

You can spread the word online by sharing our work with your network: Here are our social media pages and website:

www.adfhaiti.org

@adfhaiti on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter

Volunteer

Vacations in service to others can be extraordinarily fulfilling. ADF is happy to host individuals or groups interested in learning more about our community and lending a helping hand.

If you would like to volunteer, but can't travel, we welcome you to explore how your skills may help us increase our impact across Fond des Blancs remotely. Here is a small list of volunteer support that we need:

Expertise or experience with school district operations
Copy Editing
Fundraising

Donate

ADF will survey each school by giving a varying number of in-person questionnaires (varied based on the school's student population size) to parents, students, teachers, principals. Based on the average size of the school's, here is what your donation can accomplish:

10 USD to give one set of questionnaires

20 USD to give two sets of questionnaires

30 USD to give three sets of questionnaires

40 USD to have a school fully surveyed

50 USD to have a school fully surveyed with infrastructure assessments

3,850 USD to have all seventy-seven schools surveyed

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