



RAYJON NEWSLETTER March (2019 # 2)

Haiti in the News

A Travel Advisory was issued in mid-February for Haiti due to political turmoil and civil unrest, and the situation remains volatile. February was full of widespread, sometimes violent, and unpredictable demonstrations in Port-au-Prince and elsewhere in Haiti, including frequent protests, tire burning, and road blockages. March has been somewhat calmer but the effects of the unrest are felt everywhere.



In the midst of these concerns the core of the nation stands proud and strong as illustrated in the above photo. During the height of the period of political unrest the women's federation of St. Marc wanted to paint a different picture – and so, here they are, standing together in solidarity with one another, brainstorming and planning future activities, and celebrating International Women's Day! We will report further on their efforts, but in the meantime, later in this newsletter, we share interesting information about the Alpha Literacy Program and an exciting new development that is happening this year.

The government of Haiti is a semi-presidential republic, a multiparty system wherein the President of Haiti (Jovenel Moïse) is head of state elected directly by popular elections. The Prime Minister (most recently, Jean-Henry Céant) acts as head of government and is appointed by the President, chosen from the majority party in the National Assembly.



The Prime Minister and his cabinet were ousted in mid-March, and the status of the Parliament and government leadership remains shrouded in uncertainty and tension. An acting Prime Minister has been named but further plans have been slow to formulate. The government opposition, led by Jean-Charles Moïse, state that their goal is to create a transitional government to provide social programs and to prosecute allegedly corrupt officials.

What does this mean ... the political unrest has made things harder for virtually all Haitians. The rising costs of food and fuel are certainly being felt. For Rayjon projects that means it is harder to meet our commitments. In Cap Haitian in particular, the needs at the Centre and with the Nutrition Program are high. Nevertheless, despite these and other challenges, Rayjon programs are continuing to cause positive change and we continue to focus on the real and very worthwhile things that we are accomplishing!

Alpha

As Maria von Trapp (Julie Andrews) so famously said, “When you read you begin with A, B, C ...”, and for many adults worldwide the beginning of their formal education starts with Alpha, the Greek letter for “A”.

Education is a key component for anyone attempting to break out of the cycle of poverty, and it is for this reason that Rayjon puts so much emphasis towards supporting the Alpha Literacy Program in places like St. Marc, Haiti. In all there are a total of 190 participants (93% of whom are women) enrolled in four locations.

Being able to “deal with everyday printed materials such as medicine labels, printed instructions,

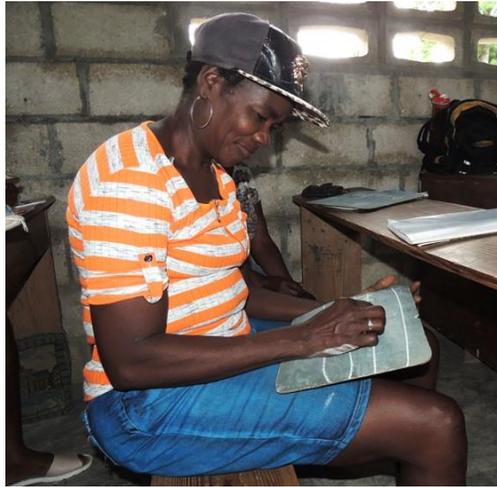
notes from doctors or other professionals” certainly applies to the goals of Alpha ... but probably not in Level I. Level I starts with the very basics: learning the alphabet and the sounds each letter makes, learning to write one’s name (instead of scribing an “X”), learning to put letters together to form simple words, etc.

Possibly the #1 target of the Alpha program is increased confidence and self-esteem. The stigma of “being an X” is a very real problem in rural Haiti. Even participants that don’t reap a practical benefit from classes (i.e. through landing a “better job”), report their deep satisfaction and personal growth because they have gained confidence and can walk away from the inferiority they have felt through being illiterate.



Each level of Alpha includes numeracy skills as well - starting with number recognition and progressing to basic math. We have had participants that could not operate a cell phone, because they could not recognize the numbers (symbols) of a phone number. The importance and application of basic addition and subtraction (and then progressing to an introduction to managing home finances and simple budgeting in the highest level) progresses with each level of the program. Many of our beneficiaries make their living through small scale commerce - buying and selling produce and wares in the local marketplace. Many of them have reported an increased ability to understand transactions, and to make more profitable transactions because of the knowledge gained in Alpha classes.

The length of each level is 9 months, 10 hours per week. Levels II and III apply the basic concepts of reading, writing and mathematics to focus on a series of themes relating to social and economic transformation. All subjects are discussed with the aim of achieving enhanced comprehension and knowledge. Specific sessions relating to health, protecting the environment, agriculture and cooperative development are discussed both theoretically and practically. This enables participants to connect their learning to their environment.



Until this year Level III was the final stage of the program, representing the equivalent of a Grade 6 literacy level. This year we are very excited to report that there are 39 participants in Level IV Alpha. Level IV fosters leadership, advocacy, and collective action (in addition to continued development of literacy/numeracy skills). We also see intangible benefits through the “social transformation” that is brought about by the students/beneficiaries of the Alpha Literacy Program. As Haitian educator Pierre Richard Pierre explains it, they become “new community leaders capable to play a good leadership role in their community. ... That is the way to establish a sustainable development.” Mid-terms were done in December and the results for the Level IV class were excellent, with 86% of the participants achieving a pass result.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Rayjon Yard Sale

The sale is on May 11th, the Saturday of Mother's Day weekend, and once again it is part of the Point Edward wide garage sale. The address is 605 Michigan Ave and it runs from 6 a.m. till noon. Please contact Marlo Beaton (226-886-0476) if you are able to assist as a volunteer or if you can provide donations of household items (no clothing please).



Rayjon / DeGroot's Plant Sale

Rayjon & DeGroots are partnering again to raise funds for Rayjon's Haiti projects through the sale of beautiful 10", red or pink hanging Dipladenia plants that attract both butterflies and hummingbirds.

Date: Friday May 31st until Sunday June 2nd

(Friday 8-8, Saturday 8-6, and Sunday 9-4)

Cost is \$30 per plant. Cash, Cheque. Credit Card or Debit.



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(Friday 8-8, Saturday 8-6, and Sunday 9-4)

Cost is \$30 per plant. Cash, Cheque, Credit/Debit Card

Please bring the DeGroot's planter post card that you will receive in the mail in late May to purchase a plant.

This is a great opportunity for both our community & Rayjon.

To **volunteer** for a 3-4 hour shift, call Dianne @ 519-862-1963.

Thank you!

To our many donors, we must say again a tremendous thank you. With your donation you make a lasting change to the lives of people in Haiti and the Dominican Republic

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Mail Cheques To:

Rayjon Share Care, PO Box 2482, Sarnia, Ontario, N7T 7T1