



## Haiti Trip Report – February 13-19, 2011



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## **INTRODUCTION**

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Steve Brescia, Groundswell's International Director, and I (Christopher Sacco, Program Officer) traveled to Haiti during the week of February 13 – 19, 2011, to meet with Partnership for Local Development (PLD), Groundswell's main partner organization in Haiti, and to observe and assess the work undertaken during the past year, strengthen the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) system, and collaborate to adjust strategies and plans for the future.

During our trip we had the opportunity to meet with two of PLD's current partner organizations, the Peasant Movement of Saint Michel in Artibonite Department and Bailly in the district of Bahon in the Northeast Department, as well as an emerging peasant organization in Saint Raphael, where PLD is expanding its program activities. We also met with the Peasant Organization of La Victoire, a strong, long-time local partner in North Department that is now helping other communities to organize. The last day in Port-au-Prince we met with like-minded NGOs to discuss collaboration.

The following report provides a more detailed look at some of the key activities and outcomes of our trip.

## **ITINERARY & MAIN ACTIVITIES**

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Sunday, February 13 – Arrived in Port-au-Prince. Initial meeting with Cantave Jean-Baptiste, PLD's Executive Director, and Mislaine Odany Louissaint, PLD's Office Administrator.

Monday, February 14 – Orientation at PLD office in Port-au-Prince. Traveled north to Bahon to meet with community representatives who are members of PLD's local partner Bailly.

Tuesday, February 15 – Traveled to Saint Raphael, Saint Michel, and La Victoire, where we met with local partners and communities and observed work they had undertaken in recent months. On route we visited a tree nursery run by communities belonging to IPGB. In Saint Raphael we facilitated an analysis with farmers on opportunities to strengthen local food systems.

Wednesday, February 16 – Full day meeting with PLD staff to strengthen a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan for current programming.

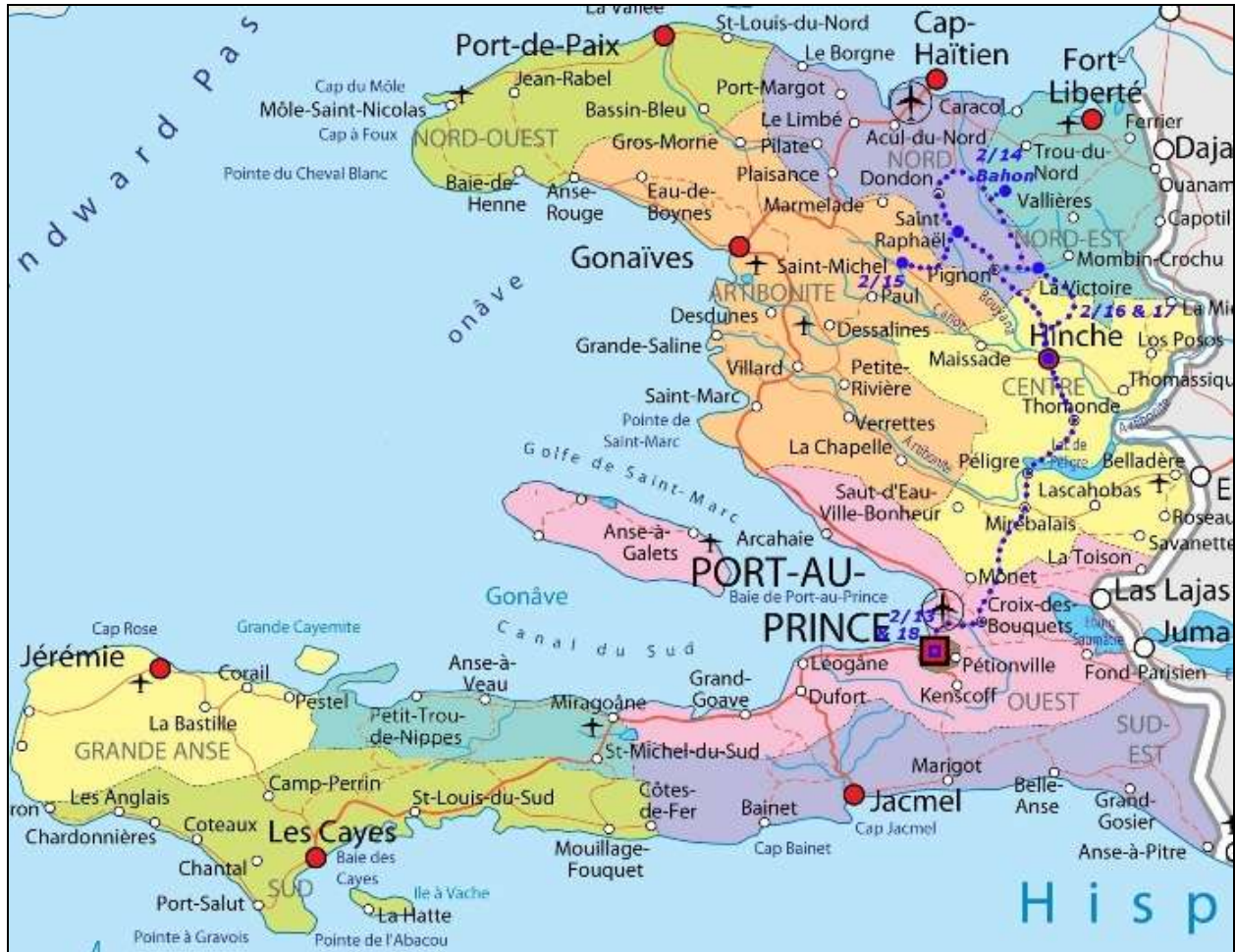
Thursday, February 17 – Morning meeting on PM&E system and session on improving PLD disaster risk reduction and resiliency work.

Friday, February 18 – Morning meetings with Cantave on program strategies, and Ulrick Sampeur, PLD Program Coordinator, Odany, and other staff regarding accounting

procedures and other office systems. Afternoon meetings with Haiti-based staff from Lutheran World Relief and Beyond Borders.

Saturday, February 19 – Returned to the U.S.

### Route and Principal Destinations



### Day-by-Day Review of Activities

#### February 14

Much of our second day was spent traveling north from Port-au-Prince to Bahon. The trip illustrated just how remote and difficult it is to reach PLD program areas. During the rainy season many of the roads we traveled on are impassable, and even when they are dry, they take a toll on vehicles and passengers alike. In terms of program needs, it was immediately clear to me why PLD is in constant need of four-wheel drive vehicles and motorcycles. Without them and a sizable maintenance budget, it would be impossible for staff to stay in regular contact with local partners and communities.



In the evening we met with members of the local organization in Bailly. PLD began supporting Bailly, in the Northeast Department, in October 2009. Two months after the earthquake (March 2010) Steve Brescia visited Bailly. At that time, PLD had supported local people to form about 80 *gwoupman* (solidarity groups of 10-15 women and men), and Steve witnessed the *gwoupman* open Bailly's first community-managed savings and credit fund. Some 110 people deposited 3,500 gourdes (US\$89) on that day – about 82 cents per person. They established their own interest rates at around 27% a year- far below the rates of 250% and above normally charged by money lenders. When we returned to Bailly a couple of weeks ago this same savings and credit cooperative had grown to 329 members with 78,000 gourdes (US\$1,934) worth of savings.



Even in a year that saw an earthquake, a cholera epidemic, and upheaval around elections, the people of Bailly are making progress. In our meeting with community members, they described their advances, reading from notebooks where they keep data on their activities. After the earthquake we supported the people of Bailly to replenish their seed stocks – which were depleted in feeding people who had fled the destruction. By using sustainable agricultural techniques, farmers increased their production. They then formed seed banks and repaid the seed borrowed, with interest. As the rainy season now approaches again, they have 19% more seed stored than when they started. Here is a summary:

Type of seed	Number of beneficiaries	Seeds (April 2010)	Interest generated	Seeds (Feb 2011)
Beans	661	664 cans*	92 cans	756 cans
Pigeon peas	288	298 cans	41 cans	339 cans
Peanuts	103	1,021 cans	255 cans	1,276 cans
Corn	76	76 cans	10 cans	86 cans
Black eyed beans	70	50 cans	7 cans	57 cans
Beans (another variety)	70	50 cans	7 cans	57 cans
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,268</b>	<b>2,159 cans</b>	<b>412 cans</b>	<b>2,571 cans</b>

\* a local measurement, approximately 1 lb.

The *gwoupman* have organized coordination committees in nine villages, and in March 2011 these committees will hold an assembly to elect leaders, make plans and formally establish the Union of Peasant Gwoupman of Bailly (IPGB in Creole). The goal of PLD

and Groundswell is to strengthen organizations like IPGB so that they can continue to improve life, grow enough food and generate prosperity. That means linking organizational strengthening and community leadership to practical activities like soil conservation, seed selection, grain storage, and community health promotion.

### **February 15**

On the five-hour trip north, the signs of the cholera epidemic were everywhere – as were community responses in virtually every place where PLD had influence. It was encouraging to see hand-washing stations like the one pictured here. Interventions like this explain why the morbidity and mortality rates are generally lower in PLD program areas than in other similar areas in their vicinity; no members of PLD’s local partner organizations have died since 39 tragic deaths at the outset of the epidemic in late October and early November 2010.



On the morning of February 15, Nicole Romain, PLD’s Health Coordinator, and Shaudine Gilles (pictured below), Program Promoter in Sans Souci and Savanette, briefed us on the work PLD and its local partners have done and continue to do to ensure that cholera does not claim any more lives.



Under Nicole’s leadership, PLD staff and local health committees continue educating families about preventative sanitation measures and providing basic supplies (chlorine for water treatment) and knowledge (how to prepare homemade oral rehydration solution). By all accounts, their efforts have saved many lives. This is a clear example of why strengthening and empowering communities works. When there is strong, local leadership communities can marshal their own resources and strengths to respond during times of crisis.

Building water filters is another key health and sanitation activity. Since the earthquake, PLD has supported the construction of almost 700 filters. PLD helps local partner organizations obtain moulds, which cost approximately \$600 each, and train water filter technicians who then help families build their own filters from readily available local materials. More moulds and more technicians are needed to expand the filter program.

A water filter technician from Bailly showed us how the filters are built and how they work. The mould and filter are shown in the three photos below.



*Water filter mould*



*Trained filter technician*



*Finished filter in home*

In the afternoon we traveled to Saint Raphael, Saint Michel, and La Victoire where we met with local partners and communities and observed the work they had done in recent months. On route we visited a tree nursery run by communities belonging to IPGB. When we arrived, representatives of various communities near Pignon were filling soil bags for tree seedlings. Their nursery (shown below) will produce 5,000 trees every year.



In Saint Raphael, PLD is expanding its work to reach communities that produce vegetables and rice on small plots of rented land. In spite of their access to flat, irrigated land, poverty levels are equal to those of subsistence farmers working steep mountainsides without irrigation. We facilitated a participatory analysis (first photo on next page) to look at their expenses and income related to agricultural production, and opportunities for improving production, community wellbeing and local food systems. These farmers are dependent on rented land, external inputs, such as seeds, chemical fertilizer and pesticides, and middlemen to obtain loans and sell their crops. PLD will



work with these farmers to experiment with more sustainable production methods and to strengthen local organization to improve their economic standing.

### **February 16**

We spent the entire day working on the PM&E system. By the end of the day the system had been thoroughly socialized and both Groundswell and all PLD staff had reached a consensus on the indicators and tools for measuring them. A number of key revisions were made to better align the system with the current reality. Local peasant organization leaders play a lead role in planning and monitoring the activities of their own organizations, and PLD staff support this process, collect complementary information, and synthesize reports at the national level.



The final logical framework matrixes as well as a list of tools that will be used to capture the information will be completed by mid-April 2011.

All quarterly reports will now be done using this format, and then information will be taken from these reports and incorporated as necessary in the reports required by each financial partner, if they are not able to use our existing report format.



As you can see from the photo here, we held our staff meetings outside. This is what PLD and partners normally do because most partners do not have large enough indoor meeting spaces. During nice weather this is not much of a problem, but during inclement weather it can cause delays and negatively impact the quality of meeting outputs and opportunities for community training sessions.

PLD staff highlighted the need to support local peasant organizations with improving physical infrastructure. Though we do not normally focus on this sort of need, we believe in this case that it could substantially benefit the capacity building work. After talking with PLD staff and local partners, we identified the need to build seven multi-purpose community centers. In addition to serving as a place to meet and conduct training workshops, the centers would provide partners with an appropriate

place to keep seed (now most store it in thatch huts where vermin can be a problem), tools, money from savings and credit activities, etc. Also, if built appropriately, they could also serve as emergency shelters.

### February 17

In the morning we reviewed the PM&E framework to be sure there was consensus and to clear up a few pending issues. Afterwards, we spent several hours doing an assessment of PLD’s disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness work.

We discussed staff members past experiences with DRR and response work, including the projects PLD undertook following the January 12, 2010 earthquake and in response to hurricanes and droughts in recent years. PLD already works proactively to build community and family resilience in the face of regular shocks that characterize Haiti, and these mitigation and preparedness activities are integral to strengthening local capacity for rural development.

Finally, we spent some time brainstorming about what PLD is currently doing to increase community/family resiliency to priority hazards, and also what more they could and would like to do to improve resiliency if resources were available. These discussions are partially captured in the table below.

	Hazards					
	Hurricanes	Floods	Earthquake	Drought	Landslide	Epidemic
<b>Doing Now</b>	Preparedness training	Preparedness training	Preparedness training	Management of organic material	Preparedness training	Train health promoters
	Emergency action committees	Emergency action committees	Emergency action committees	Grain storage	Emergency action committees	Family health education (hand washing, etc.)
	Evacuation as necessary	Evacuation as necessary	Evacuation as necessary	Crop diversity	Soil conservation	Health committees
	Soil conservation	Soil conservation	Soil conservation	Reforestation	Social maps (serve as risk/asset maps)	Latrines
	Social maps (serve as risk/asset maps)	Social maps (serve as risk/asset maps)	Social maps (serve as risk/asset maps)	Credit (S&C groups)	Reforestation	Water filters
	Tool banks (for clean-up)	Reforestation	Reforestation		Tool banks	Distribute ORT
		Tool banks	Tool banks			Evacuate patients to clinics



<b>Priority Future Activities</b>	More explicit risk/asset mapping	More explicit risk/asset mapping	Knowledge about earthquake-resistant building	Rain water harvesting	More explicit risk/asset mapping	Expand latrine and filter use
	Multi-use community centers /shelter / seed banks	Multi-use community centers /shelter / seed banks	More explicit risk/asset mapping	Family cisterns and/or ponds	Multi-use community centers /shelter / seed banks	First aid training and equipment
	Networking among local organizations for mutual disaster aid	Networking among local organizations for mutual disaster aid	Multi-use community centers /shelter / seed banks	Micro-irrigation	Networking among local organizations for mutual disaster aid	Networking among local organizations for mutual disaster aid
	Equipment for response (first aid kits, boots, shovels, megaphones, etc.)	Equipment for response (first aid kits, boots, shovels, megaphones, etc.)	Networking among local organizations for mutual disaster aid	Plowing systems	Equipment for response (first aid kits, boots, shovels, megaphones, etc.)	
			Equipment for response (first aid kits, boots, shovels, megaphones, etc.)	Food preservation		

Given the unfortunate reality that there will likely be more disasters in Haiti, we agreed that PLD and Groundswell would continue to prioritize building community resiliency. To that end, Groundswell and PLD will work to order the outputs of this session into more coherent plans to strengthen the DRR/resiliency work and identify appropriate funding.

### **February 18**

We spent the morning of our last day at PLD’s office in the capital discussing long-term program strategy with Cantave, and going over their management and accounting systems. We decided to upgrade PLD’s accounting software to QuickBooks 2010 so that it would be compatible with Groundswell’s. Also, we went over a compliance table of existing grants to be sure we were all on the same page regarding donor requirements and deadlines, and we discussed how we could better work together to prepare reports and proposals in a timely manner.

In the afternoon, we met with Jameson Salomon and his colleague Nousta from Lutheran World Relief to brief them on our trip and to discuss progress in the program area. Following the meeting with LWR, we met with Coleen Hedglin from Beyond Borders to discuss areas of potential collaboration – including promoting child wellbeing in rural communities, strengthening rural schools, and strengthening rural livelihoods strategies.

## CONCLUSION

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When I got on the plane to go to Haiti I was not sure what to expect. It was my first time in the country, and I knew the trip would challenge my ideas: about Haiti, about how development works (or does not work), and about many other things. It did, but more importantly it inspired new ideas and it cemented in my mind a new vision for Haiti and for humanity based on solidarity and sustainable, people-centered action.

Cantave is one of the main architects of this new vision in Haiti, so it is fitting that I describe it using a metaphor he shared with us on our last day:

“In our approach, when we strengthen local organizations, we are not trying to just plant ‘annual crops’ but to plant and grow a strong tree that can continue to give life and fruit for the long-term. We have to nurture the young seedling with a lot of intense care and support at the beginning – to water it, give it organic matter, and make sure the animals don’t eat it. Then when it is a young tree we provide less support but continue to make sure it can grow strong and bear fruit. And then, when it’s strong and can flourish, we leave it to grow on its own. We continue a relationship and a connection, but the goal is that the tree, the local organization, is growing strong on its own, without us, and is giving fruit and life to the community for many, many years. And we are seeing that this approach works.”

Seeing Cantave and PLD on the ground using this approach with the team’s local partners leaves little doubt that they will reach their goal of helping 340,000 more Haitians (through 20 peasant organizations) launch and sustain their own processes of local development.