

# A CITY IN THE SAND



NAVA ALMOG AND NADINE PUECHGUIRBAL

Haiti – named “the Pearl of the Antilles” by Christopher Columbus, is a country that has known only coups d’états, harsh regimes, a precarious economy adversely affecting the majority of the population, endemic violence, social-political crises, and natural disasters. But Haitian women keep their heads held high in the midst of this turmoil.

This book tells the story of a group of Haitian women, leaders in their communities, who, with strength and perseverance in the face of

adversity, participated in a training and Coaching program aimed at strengthening the capacity of women in politics. With eyes wide open, they advanced in the program, questioned their habits and behaviors, and came to understand that in order to change their country they had to begin by transforming themselves . . . and they did it!

This book tells the story of a training program, but it is mostly a story of the courage and will of these Haitian women who represent the true wealth of their nation.

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**Women in Politics for the  
Transformation of Haiti:**

The Story of a Coaching Program  
for a New Leadership

# General Information

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## Foreword



The dung beetle:

The dung beetle is a harmless little beetle that spends its days searching for food in order to survive.

This little beetle builds its “house”, a small hole in the ground, not far from its “supermarket” – a heap of dung.

This little creature subsists by searching for its little bundles, which it rolls to its hole in the ground, and going back out for more. It does not stop to eat until its hole has thus been filled.


It will continue to roll little bundles into its hole indefinitely. If an ill-intentioned passerby steals its bundles, it will continue to look for more; if the bundles disappear as they are brought in, it will just keep on looking for more. This little beetle does not stop to eat; it will not stop until its mission is accomplished.

The story of the dung beetle is a sad one; it continuously repeats the same movements, the same behaviors, the same actions. It will die in the end, unfortunately; it will die of hunger because it does not learn. . .

Our world is full of people who behave just like the dung beetle; they



repeat the same fruitless actions, never stopping to reflect or to make the changes and adjustments necessary to elicit results, to achieve success.

This program has been created to help the participants, a few Haitian women in politics, to break the cycle of the dung beetle, to stop repetitive behavior that leads nowhere, and to help them to evolve into Ladybugs. . . 

## Introduction



In February of 2004, President Aristide leaves Haiti. A Transition Government is formed and Resolution 1542<sup>1</sup>, adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations, authorizes the deployment of a peacekeeping mission, the MINUSTAH<sup>2</sup>.

Security remains unstable, however, and human rights violations as well as high levels of violence, corruption and unemployment, continue to be the norm. The country, one of the poorest in the region, is in a perpetual state of crisis and the plight of its women is very worrisome. Poverty breeds crime, which directly impacts the basic human rights of women and girls in Haiti in the following ways: the traditional preference for sending boys to school rather than girls, particularly in rural areas; the use of children, girls in particular, as domestic workers; trafficking of women and children across the Dominican border; the feminization of poverty and AIDS; and the ever increasing vulnerability to sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence.

Although Haiti ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all



Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1981, and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence to Women in 1996, the government has yet to implement a program which would honor this international commitment.

In 1999, the Special Rapporteur for Violence against Women visits Haiti<sup>3</sup>. The observations and recommendations of her final report remain true today: violations of the rights of women continue to occur at all levels of state institutions; legislation to protect women is non-existent; and her recommendations to eliminate violence against women have never been taken into account. Other than the contributions made by the Ministry of Women's Condition and Women's Rights (le Ministère à la Condition Féminine et aux Droits des Femmes) and those of civil society women's organisations to implement Resolution 1325 (2000)<sup>4</sup> of the United Nations Security Council on "Women, Peace and Security", there is no other concrete political evidence to express a willingness, on the part of the government, to fight against the violence to which Haitian women fall prey on a daily basis.

In his report dated 25 January 2005, the UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Haiti sounds the alarm on the issue of violence against women. He writes: "Most recent studies show that the situation is worsening. [ . . . ] This evolution is all the more troubling in that practices heretofore relatively marginal are on the rise – collective rape organized by gangs who have made it their specialty, repeated rape as a direct or indirect form of blackmailing of the families<sup>5</sup>."

In fact, the state of violence against women is alarming. In October 2005, a statistical compilation report by the National Concertation against Violence to Women<sup>6</sup>, found that of all instances of violence documented by the four institutions working with the victims thereof: minors represent half of the women raped; a large number of rapes are perpetrated by armed and unknown aggressors; the high percentage of gang rapes is alarming; cases of conjugal violence are often reported to at least two of

the institutions and the number of women and girls who seek help from these institutions is on the rise (which could also indicate that women are better informed of the services available to them).

This grim reality makes it abundantly clear that women must participate in the politics of their country. If the voices of women are not heard in defense of their very interests and rights, and if women remain absent from the assemblies where laws pertaining to their condition are debated and passed, no sustainable change to their condition will be possible. Women represent 52% of the Haitian population, yet, for cultural and traditional reasons, they have been excluded from positions of power. If women truly want to find the means to work against this scourge of violence, poverty and marginalization, they must be present at all political echelons in order to influence the politics and laws of this country which often discriminate against them.

Therefore, in an effort to promote equal opportunity and access for women to all levels of decision making as well as their participation in good governance, the MINUSTAH Gender Bureau has implemented activities that will allow women to fully participate in the electoral process as both candidates and voters. The Coaching program for a new Leadership of women, as described in this book, takes place in the post election phase. It is one of the activities designed to promote a more just society and a more egalitarian State of law, at the heart of which men and women can make their voices heard and enjoy their political freedoms as citizens in their own right.





This project tells the original story of a group of Haitian women who, without the means, without training, and for the most part without support, accepted the challenge and participated in the elections, embarking on the complicated and hazardous course that is Haitian politics, in order to broaden the horizons of all women and to bring about change for their beloved Haiti.

Who are these women?

What are their personal histories?

How did they end up in this Coaching program?

How have they weathered their plight?

## A. Program Chronology



### 1. Report: marginalization of women in politics

From an international perspective, women in Haiti are under represented in the political sphere and at all echelons of power. Politics are not viewed as the traditional domain of women. Those few women who have gained positions of power have suffered humiliation and criticism which further served to marginalize them.

Interestingly enough however, Haitian women mobilized early on. The establishment of the Women's League for Social Action (LFAS) in 1934 marked the beginning of the fight for political rights for Haitian women. The eli-



Election Day (Sophia Paris, MINUSTAH)



gibility of women for select elected positions was recognized in 1944 (paradoxically, women could be elected but could not vote). It was not until 1957 that Haitian women were fully granted the right to vote (in 1950 the right to vote was limited to municipal elections)<sup>7</sup>.

Democratic elections have become a key element to building and peace-keeping in societies recovering from serious socio-political crisis or armed conflict. The importance of elections is directly related to the fact that legitimate institutions, elected by the men and women of the country, can be key to finding sustainable solutions to conflict. Member states of the United Nations recognize that, in order to achieve viable and sustainable peace, full and equal participation of women and the introduction of gender perspective in conflict resolution are indispensable. Resolution 1325 (2000) underscores the importance of equal participation and the commitment of women to conflict resolution.

Nevertheless, although the participation of women in elections is generally accepted, the implementation thereof is often ill adapted to reality. There are many obstacles to the equal participation of women: traditional obstacles, a lack of resources and training or a lack of time, to name a few.

In Haiti, five main obstacles have been identified by women's organizations that keep women from participating in the electoral process:

- a) Education and tradition do not encourage women to be interested in politics;
- b) More than 60% of heads of families are women who shoulder sole responsibility for the home and fear the violence and insecurity often associated with politics;
- c) Traditionally women have fewer financial resources for running political campaigns;
- d) Politics are often linked to corruption and as such are not considered to be a suitable environment for women;
- e) Some women do not involve themselves in politics for fear of becoming "like men" thereby becoming "de-feminized".

In the words of former Senator Mirlande Manigat, "[women] rightfully fear that their political involvement would put them at risk personally and would also jeopardize the survival of their families for which they are the sole providers. There is, therefore, a direct correlation between the social structure of the country, the predominance of the single parent family, poverty, and the level of participation of women in politics"<sup>8</sup>.

Experience shows that years of political, social, cultural and economic marginalization have kept women from the public sphere, where all of the major decisions affecting the entire nation are made. **Women lack everything they need to succeed in politics, and mainly they lack the self esteem necessary to build their capacity.** This is what Haitian feminist Myriam Merlet calls "the devaluation of women in politics". She explains that this subordinate status leaves women ill prepared for politics (gaps in formal education, training and self confidence).<sup>9</sup>

Very few women have been elected in past political races in Haiti. Women campaigning today, therefore, have very limited experience and political savoir faire necessary for building a strong political platform through which to win the election. Available figures show that in 1999, women represented a mere 3.5% of members of Parliament, and 4.5% of mayors<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, women only held 14% of all government positions (not to mention that none of these positions involved any important responsibilities).

Following the Legislative Elections of 2006, four female senators and four female deputies were elected to the 129 positions available (30 for the Senate and 99 for the Deputies), representing 6%. It is important to note that large numbers of women ran in the 2006 elections, which is an encouraging sign for the future, even if only a few were actually elected. Furthermore, women represented 48.59% of the electorate.

As for local authorities elected in the 2006/2007 elections, women made a small breakthrough representing 3% of those elected. Nevertheless, when compared to the figures available from the 1999/2000 elections, there is an increase in the number of women elected Mayor: 25 compared to the 6

elected only a few years earlier. The participation of women as candidates has also increased<sup>11</sup>.

## 2. An analysis of the needs of women in politics

In light of this report, the Gender Bureau, in collaboration with the MINUSTAH integrated training center, established, in July 2005, a training program for women in politics entitled “Women and Leadership”. The first phase of this program was carried out in 2005 for a group of potential female candidates to the 2005/2006 elections; the project focused on their personal and professional development. Two of the four senators and two of the four deputies elected participated in this first phase (the other two elected deputies are part of the Coaching program).

Following the election results, and after an analysis of the situation, the second phase of the program was created. This consists of a continuation of the post-electoral training in order to strengthen the capacity of the women elected as well as those who were not elected but who wish to continue their political career.

To summarize:

- Phase 1, pre election period: training for potential female candidates (July/August 2005);
- Phase 2, post election period: training and coaching for women elected or wishing to remain involved in politics (July 2006/December 2007).

The first phase was carried out by the MINUSTAH in collaboration with its national and international partners and consisting of two intensive training courses lasting one week each on **personal and professional development for approximately 40 candidates from various political parties**.

The training course was developed according to the needs of the candidates and included the following subjects: peaceful conflict resolution;



Training Session August 2005, Moulin sur Mer

communication; planning; project development and implementation; public speaking techniques; and current events debated over the course of the electoral campaign (human rights, disarmament, AIDS, etc.).

In order to ensure an impartial project with candidates from a relatively large pool of political parties, the participants were selected by the Haitian Collective for the Participation of Women in Politics, Fanm Yo La, an executive partner to MINUSTAH. The two training sessions were financed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Office of Public Information of the United States Embassy in Haiti.

Following the training, a group of candidates decided to establish the “Network of Women Candidates Who Aim to Win” (RFCG) for the purpose of bringing together all women irrespective of their political affiliations, thereby creating a network of candidates that transcends politics. The main objective of the network being to support the women candidates over the course of the various steps that comprise the electoral process, in

order that they free themselves from their political invisibility and become motivated to compete in the elections and overcome whatever obstacles they may encounter.

Phase 1 training team consisted of **Nava Almog**, member of the MINUSTAH training center, (shown on the left), with more than thirty years experience in coaching and capacity building. Nava worked in close collaboration with a local consultant **Edith Adrien** (shown seated). Phase 2 will be implemented by the same team who will be joined by a member of the Gender Bureau, **Coty Beauséjour** (shown on the right).



It is important to note that the international consultant, who is the veritable pillar of support for this training session, participates in capacity building both for women in politics and for co-team members and trainers in order to transmit her skills to the Haitian-born trainers who will take over the training and coaching at the close of the project in 2008.

The second phase of the program is a continuation of the first because the involvement of the MINUSTAH Gender Bureau does not stop with the elections. **This next phase aims to sustain the personal development of**

### **women in politics through training sessions and coaching for both women elected and those wishing to be candidates.**

The “Training Center for Commitment, Responsibility and Capacity Building” (CERAC) is chosen as national partner for the implementation of the training project. The French Cooperation in Haiti, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDF), with the support of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), are the principal donors.

The specific goals are as follows:

- a) Within the context of the post electoral process, build and develop the capacity of women in politics and facilitate their individual and personal development in order to bridge the gap between men and women on the political scene;
- b) Develop a strong bond between the newly elected political leaders, their electorate and the local women’s organizations, in order to create synergy between these women for the implementation of projects for the good of their communities.

Through building and consolidating of the aptitudes of women in politics and by striving to overcome the cultural stereotypes that have prevented them from becoming engaged in politics, this project will also promote an environment conducive to sustainable peace and good governance. This project is unique in its approach in that it differs radically from the traditional training model which only allows for passive learning. Through individual coaching sessions each participant will feel better equipped to take on the responsibilities inherent to politics (*empowerment*); she will gain confidence and self esteem and, thanks to the acquisition of new techniques and knowledge, she will become more in tune with the needs of her community.

The expected results will allow women to gain **confidence** in order to take a more active role in the politics of their country. They will put into prac-



tice **their knowledge newly gained in the field** for their electorate, through the implementation of small projects initiated and managed by the women themselves and closely monitored by the consultants.

In fact, between two cycles of training, each participant must define, develop and implement a relevant community project thereby testing her ability to mobilize as a leader and reinforcing her commitment to her electorate and to her community.

It is important to understand that the value of such a project lies in the long term and that it is therefore difficult to measure the effects in the short term, except through the visibility of small projects. The results in the long term will be measured by the extent of the political action of the women who will have undergone the training and by the number of women who will become candidates and get elected. Moreover, as the project unfolds, the participants will be better equipped to develop a discourse on women in politics and their public appearances will increase in quality and frequency.

## B. Program Components



### 1. Coaching, innovative approach

The training program held in July of 2005, before the elections, served to highlight the gap that exists between the needs of the participants, both their on site needs and their knowledge, and lead to a new conclusion: offering training is not enough, the participants must be closely monitored, we must “lend them a hand”, accompany them in their advancement, their progress, coach them.

The proposed project for the second phase is innovative for Haiti in that it aims to build and reinforce the capacity of elected women and women in politics, through individual **coaching** sessions. This approach will allow for the implementation of a quality program intent on individual development.

Coaching has its origins in the field of athletics and serves to bring an athlete to his or her full potential and to achieve high levels of performance. The working world, in both Europe and the United States, has adopted the technique and the precepts of athletic coaching in order to increase competitiveness. Properly applied, coaching techniques allow management to get business moving, to mobilize their managers in order to achieve extraordinary performance and increased productivity.

Coaching gives the Coached person the opportunity to stop, look at herself, analyze her behaviors, change what needs changing, act according to the newly made resolutions, and, finally, with the help of the Coach, to analyze the results and start over on the right path.

Personalized coaching is a means of transforming problems into opportunities, developing constructive and positive behavior, identifying and establishing creative methods of communication, and building individual efficiency for better performance. With the personal coaching approach, the Coach and her Coachee identify and analyze beliefs and behaviors which are limiting in nature and which prevent the Coached person from becoming truly efficient. Together, they will define a clear, ambitious and obtainable goal along with a rigorous action plan. The idea is to test the limits and transform old inefficient habits into dynamic behaviors that positively impact paralyzing habits believed to be unchangeable.

The role of the Coach is to closely monitor the evolution of the Coached person while listening to her, providing her with the proper **framework** in which to do her work and **advice** that will help her advance in her own internal “journey” as well as in her role as her newly acquired self in the outside world, in the pursuit of planned and expected results.

#### The goals of coaching:

1. Help the Coached women to connect with themselves in order to gain better decision making skills pertaining to how they wish to advance in life;
2. Help the Coached women to see themselves as well as their situation in an objective fashion, in order that they may confront reality rather than allow themselves to become caught up in subjective speculation;
3. Help the Coached women to recognize and realize their potential;
4. Coaching creates a work space – far from work – a space which allows for a perspective removed from the daily grind. With the help of the Coach, the Coached person can achieve a new understanding of day to day activity;
5. Improve and develop talent – at work and in relationships – such that the Coached women become more productive and better able to meet their goals in a well balanced way;



Individual coaching session

6. Help the Coached women to remain focused on their vision and encourage them to work towards the realization of that vision;
7. Help women leaders in the process of their personal transformation and the transformation of their subordinates and team;
8. Form a partnership to shoulder changes, development and the creation of objectives and action plans;
9. Help the Coached women to maximise their strengths while containing their weaknesses ;
10. Help the Coached women to give the best of themselves, to clearly see their intentions, their goals, their desires, in order to coax them into action.

#### In Summary:

Coaching must enable the Coached woman to:

- Get out of the rut in which she is “stuck”
- Develop her awareness
- Discover her potential and develop her talents
- Create and implement action plans.

**The Coaching Priorities = The Goals of the Coached Women**

## **2. Organizing of training cycles and follow-up between cycles**

### **a) The various project phases**

The training project is divided into workshops with all the participants, followed by individual coaching sessions for each participant.

An assessment of needs was made before planning the training to ensure that the coaching sessions would be well adapted to the needs of the women in politics themselves and their expectations once elected.

The project is divided into **seven cycles two months apart**, as follows:

- i) Every two months, two groups of 15 women each (for a total of 30 women) participate in a one day workshop;
- ii) Each workshop is followed by individual coaching sessions attended by the Coached women, the international Coach and two Haitian Coaches; each session lasts one hour and a half and covers the accomplishments made since the last session as well as the action plan for the following month.
- iii) During the two month interval between coaching sessions, the participants work on small individual projects to put into practice their newly acquired knowledge. They are in contact with the local Coaches with whom they meet at least once a month to follow up on their work;



after each contact, the local Coaches receive a long distance session with the international Coach.

The workshops and coaching sessions include topics like decision-making, conflict resolution, communication, presentation techniques, team work, stress and time management, as well as planning, organization and management of projects.

### **b) Originality of the training workshops**

The program was very creatively thought out. It is important that participants become implicated from the very beginning in all that is happening, from the workshops to the coaching sessions.

To better understand the training method used, we decided to present the example of the first workshop held.

This first workshop began with the story of each participant: each woman tells her story, a personal experience pertaining to the last elections, and explains the lessons learned from that experience. The international Coach



tells the story of the dung beetle that repeats its mistakes, without ever learning its lesson, in order to convey the following three important points:

- a) We are not going to repeat our mistakes;
- b) We are not going to continue doing things that do not bring about the desired results;
- c) We are not going to keep going around and around in circles.

With this new state of mind, the participants will create the “order of the ladybug” which, unlike the dung beetle, is a very intelligent, brave and hard working insect, with excellent self defence mechanisms. The Coaches distribute Ladybug brooches to the participants: symbolically, the “order of the ladybug” is formed. The brooch will be a constant reminder of their new resolutions and their new behavior.



Participants show their Ladybug brooches

Now the time has come to analyze the obstacles to success and to define a new model for behavior that leads to success. In order to tackle a problem, however, it must first be identified, its origins must be found, and from there, it is possible to take “the path towards the solution”. To do so, we use three Haitian slogans that stand in the way of Haitians taking responsibility for their own actions:

“SE PA FOT MWEN” (it is not my fault)

“MWEN PA KONNEN” (I don’t know)

“MWEN PA KAPAB” (I can’t).

These three slogans are written on a large sheet of paper that is then ripped to shreds by the participants whose duty it will then be to replace them with new positive and constructive slogans and to encourage the individual taking of responsibility.



The participants defined new slogans to describe their commitment to the training and their intent to come up with a group emblem pertaining to their sense of individual responsibility. The newly chosen slogans are:



The participants exhibit their new slogans

“MWEN RESONSAB, MWEN ENGAJE M”

(I am responsible and committed)

“MAP APRANN TANDE AK RENMEN AYISIEN PAREY MWEN”

(I will learn to love and to listen to my compatriots)

“ANN CHANJE PEYI N NOU KAPAB”

(We are capable of changing our country, let's do so).

With these new slogans, and the resolve to effect changes in their communities, their environment, and perhaps even their entire country, the program sets its course towards success.

### c) Training cycles

#### First cycle

- An analysis of the situation in Haiti ;
- Taking responsibility;
- Motivation.

#### Second cycle

- What is a Leader?
- Why create projects?
- How to create projects.
- Decision making.

#### Third cycle

- Priorities and urgencies;
- Change: does it require a magic wand or simply hard work?
- Capacities of the Chief of Project.

#### Fourth cycle

- Site visits.



### Fifth cycle

- Building a team from A to Z;
- Team work;
- Obtaining results.

### Sixth cycle

- A city in the sand.

### Seventh cycle

- Site visits.
- Closing.

### d) Other project objectives

Aside from the personal development of each participant, the project has two other objectives which are: i) the creation of a group that will become a team and that will, by the end of the program, remain a source of strength and a point of reference for all the participants; ii) Strengthening the capacity of the local Coaches who will learn new training techniques such as coaching, heretofore unknown in Haiti.

The idea is to leave behind a new framework of national trainers capable of carrying on this innovative approach, working with new women leaders and trying to reach the “Tipping point”<sup>12</sup>, to diffuse the message by “contagion”, and by provoking all these subtle changes that will one day bring about the awaited upheaval.

## 3. The team members



### Nava ALMOG, International Coach

With more than 25 years experience as a coaching consultant (long before it was known as coaching) and an organizational advisor, I oriented my work towards gender issues and the autonomy of women after my stay in Haiti. Today my interest lies in the creation of a new leadership for women, in how to help them reach their goals in their chosen field, and in how to promote the commitment of women to decision making.



### Nadine PUECHGUIRBAL, Head of the Gender Bureau, MINUSTAH

After many years spent working around the world in the humanitarian field, I focused my professional life on gender issues with the objective of bringing women out of their social invisibility imposed upon them by their cultures and traditions. Today, I am particularly interested in working to enable women to have a say in the running of their countries and to become citizens of their own right by taking their share of the political power.



### Coty BEAUSÉJOUR, National Coach (Program Director for the Gender Bureau, MINUSTAH)

I joined the United Nations roughly ten years ago having worked in the Ministry as a Cabinet Member, then as manager of a Public Institution, a Municipal Management Advisor and a language teacher. My priority, one year after having joined this coaching team, is to lend my support to women working to build a new modern, democratic and autonomous female leadership in Haiti.



**Roody BASTIEN, Team driver, MINUSTAH**

In traveling the bumpy roads of Haiti with this team, I have not only gained a better appreciation for women but have also learned to participate in their struggle, which has become my struggle as well. I have been a witness to an enriching program both for me and for these women participants. I am motivated to follow this course all the way to political parity.



**Edith ADRIEN, Local consultant**

After more than 20 years in Canada Edith returns to Haiti, and joins the first training team in 2005. In 2006 she began the Coaching program that she unfortunately had to leave after three cycles.

## C. The Participants



### 1. Profiles of participants

In the context of the 2006/2007 elections, the selection of participants was made according to the following criteria:

- a) Priority was given to women who participated in the “Women and Leadership” training in 2005;
- b) Elected women who were not participants in the 2005 training;
- c) Women new to the training but candidates in the elections.

We also felt it would be judicious to include a representative from the Ministry of Women’s Condition and Women’s Rights which has lent its support to the commitment of women in the electoral process, as well as members of the “Network of Women Who Aim to Win” (RFCG). The idea is to firmly implant this training into Haitian civil society in order that women in politics may take responsibility for their own electorate.

This training project brings together women from Port-au-Prince as well as from other regions in an effort to decentralize our endeavor and to obtain a more representative group of participants. The following list provides details of where each candidate is from, their history as politically active women: presidential, senatorial chamber of deputies and mayoral candidates.

The final training cycle took place in November and December of 2007 and ended with a group of 18 women who participated throughout. Although the

program started out with thirty participants, in the end only the most motivated and determined women remained, those with a clear vision of their commitment and who were able to understand, over the course of these training cycles, how to learn and how to continue to move forward.

### Introducing the participants:



#### **Judy C. ROY, Presidential candidate**

First female presidential candidate in Haiti. Doctorate in Political Science and Economics, University Professor, a fighter and a true woman of the field. She is currently working to implement a project to support women victims of violence in Gonaives. She is convinced she will win the next presidential elections.



#### **Marie Roselore AUBOURG, Candidate for Deputy, Grande Anse**

Known for her combativeness, her dynamism, her competence, her straight talk and for being a “woman who never gives up”. She is currently a cabinet member at the ministry of Commerce. Former candidate for Deputy, she remains a point of reference for her community where she works hard to lend her support to women who produce cocoa, dried fish, ginger, etc.



#### **Betty Vivianne JACQUES, Candidate for Deputy, West**

Candidate for Deputy in the 2006 elections. After the elections, she remained in the field and contributed to the victory of her team in the municipality of Fond Verettes. She wants to put her strengths to use in the field mobilizing people to participate in a reforestation project in a community that lost 3000 people in the most recent floods.



#### **Rosenie GUSTAVE, Network of Women who Aim to Win (RFCG)**

Comitted to politics from the age of 16, Rosenie Gustave is currently Director of the Organization Fanm Vayan of Marigot that has formed a school that supports young women in various activities. She combed Haiti looking for women candidates to whom she could extend her support. Supporting these women was often to the detriment of her own political party. Who does not know of Rosenie’s work for women?



#### **Hélène CÉLAN ALEXIS, Mayoral candidate for Pétion-Ville**

Trained in law, she is a former mayoral candidate for the city of Pétion-Ville where she was the Departmental head and the Executive Secretary to the Directorate General. She is currently working on setting up a community school with a cafeteria. She is also working to bring together several grass roots organizations for the next elections.



#### **Tania JEAN-PIERRE, Network of Women Candidates Who Aim to Win (RFCG)**

Trained in law, she currently holds the following political positions: Secretary of the Convention of Political Parties, the Association of Locally Elected Social Democrats and member of Fusion of Social Democrats. She currently represents the Federation of Universities in Haiti at the Congress of Students in Ecuador. For the time being she wishes to gain experience and to specialize in the field of territorial collectivities. She is a great observer and political analyst.



**Marie Aurore LAINÉ, Senatorial candidate, Grande Anse**

Former senatorial candidate for the Department of Grande Anse, she is currently the principal of a nursery school in the town of Jérémie. Her first foray into politics was during the student struggles. She is an autonomous woman who would like to make civic education for women a priority.



**Ruffine LABBÉ, Candidate for Deputy, South**

Former candidate for Deputy, she has been a school teacher for the past ten years in La Vallée in Jacmel. Despite her lack of political experience and background, she came in second in the elections, with a difference of only 100 votes. Coaching has enabled her to understand what this slight difference in votes represents: a lack of realism, the absence of a plan, team difficulties, etc. Through her alphabetization program for women, she has become a true figure in her community.



**Marie Thérèse PACAUD, Candidate for Deputy, Grande Anse**

She has been active in politics since 1986. She has taken a special interest in the fight against violence to women, the prevention of AIDS, and the popularization of human rights. She has directed Fanm Lakay, since 1998, which is an organization of woman artisans, women who produce natural remedies and fruit products. Former candidate for Deputy, she also hosts a radio program for women every Thursday.



**Gislhaine MONPREMIER, Senatorial candidate, North**

Senatorial candidate for the department of the North, under the banner of the political party Fusion of Social Democrats. She is the regional director of the Ministry of Women's Condition and Women's Rights in her Department; she is a lawyer, a nurse, a member and a former director of AFASDA (Asosyasyon Fanm Soley Dayiti). She has worked for many other institutions as well, namely the Organization of American States (OAS) where she was responsible for building the capacity of women's organizations in Haiti. Through the Coaching program, she runs her political team as a soccer team.



**Carline CHARLES JOSEPH, Candidate for Deputy, Artibonite**

Former candidate in the 2006 elections. She is a lawyer and entrepreneur and is currently working on a Master's Degree in conflict management. She is currently director of SOFAGO (Solidarité Fanm Gonayiv) which promotes economic and political rights for women by giving them the means necessary to protect themselves from the high instances of violence and the prevalence of AIDS in the region.



**Marie Sylvia FABIEN MOISE, Candidate for Deputy, South East**

Candidate and finalist in the legislative elections of 2006. An anthropologist by training, with great intellectual capacity, she is also very active religiously, socially and politically. She works both nationally and internationally. Modest and humble, she has honored her commitment to stay in the field irrespective of the outcome of the elections and to expand her mutual savings and loan company in order to provide support to women.



**Mona BERNADEAU, Senatorial candidate, Center**

Lawyer, political pundit, journalist, accountant, she is a former candidate and finalist in the senatorial elections of 2006. She is a dynamic woman whose activities extend over the entire department of the Center. She is involved in the production of artisan goods to promote autonomy for women, and the production of briquettes in search of alternatives to charcoal. She is also director of the women’s organizations affiliated with the peasant movement “Papaye”.



**Josette MACILLON, Candidate for Deputy, South**

She is the youngest of the group of women in politics. Former candidate for Deputy, she currently hosts a radio show in her community. She has also organized a multidisciplinary and multigenerational team that has set up a henhouse project which aims to build the economic capacity of her organization. She is very well known in her community.



**Marie-Denise BERNADEAU, Candidate for Deputy, West**

Former candidate and finalist in the 2006 elections, she plans to run again in the next elections because she defines herself as a dynamic woman who is courageous and who will fight to the end in order to reach her goals. She is currently director of OPPAF (Organization for the Promotion and Active Participation of Women) based in Thomonde, in the department of the Center, whose priorities include setting up a community store and a mutual savings and loan company.

## 2. Four portraits of women in politics

We have chosen to tell, in detail, the following stories of four participants who best represent the commitment of women to politics, in order to illustrate the dangers and difficulties they face and the price they have to pay to participate in and remain in politics:



**Portrait of Barbara GUILLAUME (Lady BG)**

Barbara Guillaume is a resister. For years she has been fighting against injustices committed in her country. She is an activist in human rights and especially the rights of women. Barbara, née Rebecca-Marie Guillaume, is also an author, a composer and a singer.

Barbara wins you over upon initial contact, with her warm smile and her strong personality, and when she sings, you are captured by her deep and generous voice.

Barbara puts her art to good use with her activism. In her latest album “A Country that Suffers”, released in 2004, she has compiled songs written about Haitian men and women and their resisting of the day to day miseries of life, poverty and violence.

- Rezistans o rezistans o nou se yon fanm ki genyen rezistans  
*[Resistance, o, resistance, o, we are resistant women]*
- Nou pase trant sezon doulè, nou pran nan toubiyon malè  
*[We have survived 30 seasons of pain and are caught up in a tornado of misfortune]*
- Nou panche men nou pa tonbe, nou se yon fanm ki genyen rezistans  
*[We have bent but we have not fallen, we are women of resistance]*
- Nou pase jounen san manje, nou travèse dezè a pie  
*[We have spent days without eating, we have crossed a desert on foot]*
- Nou fè nuit san n pa fèmen je n, nou se yon fanm ki genyen rezistans  
*[We have spent sleepless nights, we are women of resistance]*

This song, “Resistance” pays homage to the commitment of women to politics, to their courage as true pillars of Haitian society and also to the victims of violence, poverty and marginalization.

Mayoral candidate for Cité Soleil in the local elections of 2007, Barbara experienced the political battle first hand. During her electoral campaign she implemented a magnificent project for children in Cité Soleil: she removed 150 children from the most dangerous slum and relocated them in a rural setting, away from the violence. She manages her campaign all the while raising funds to keep these children away from violence where one can easily become lost. In many cases, unfortunately, the lack of support and funding has meant that several of these children have had no choice but to return to their families in Cité Soleil. Nevertheless, Barbara, who has learned through the Coaching program to value herself and to recognize opportunities, has made it possible for thirty of these children to remain in school where they are learning to read and write. The older children are enrolled in a program where they learn practical skills, and are far from the misery of Cité Soleil. Thanks to Barbara and her capabilities, these children have won their freedom, and perhaps even their futures.

Despite her social project to transform the slum and despite the support of a large part of the community, Barbara did not win the elections. Her dream of becoming the first female mayor of such a difficult neighborhood was shattered in the face of harsh political realities. The shock of her defeat forced her to reflect on her political commitment, her strengths and her weaknesses, and the direction of her fight. Barbara understood from her experience that, thanks to her ability to sing, she could perhaps serve her country in another way, a more creative way.

Song is a structural element of Haitian society. Through her lyrics, Barbara tells stories, relives her country’s past, bandages the wounds of the present and builds hope for the future. This formidable tool for communication has enabled Barbara to remain involved and to practice politics in a different way, bearing witness to her love of her country.

Despite her failure, and like most of the participants, Barbara has not lost her hopes of changing her country; she remains committed, active, and optimistic. One day or another she says: there will be “a better Haiti”.



### **Portrait of Ogline PIERRE**

First female Deputy of the town of Camp Perrin, nothing indicated that Ogline would become involved in politics or that she would ever become a candidate, much less the first female candidate of Camp Perrin. She is 32 years old and the youngest of 9 children. She is also the youngest person in the history of Camp Perrin ever

to be elected and is currently the youngest Member of Parliament.

Where did she acquire her strength and leadership? In 1990, Ogline decided to move to the Dominican Republic in order to pursue her studies. In Camp Perrin, meanwhile, her family remained active in lending social and religious support to the community which served to reinforce their popularity in the region. As the elections approached, one of her brothers decided to run for Deputy of Camp Perrin. His talent as a singer had made him well known in his Church and he was able to rally much support for his political aspirations.

By a strange twist of fate or misfortune, depending on how you look at it, he fell unconscious between two electoral tours. Presumed dead, he was taken to the morgue. A few hours later his family arrived to identify the body and instead made a frightening and incredible discovery. His body was swollen and mutilated, with rivulets of blood dripping on the floor. It turned out he was not in fact dead when he was brought to the morgue and the undertaker, realizing he was still alive, murdered him in cold blood. In Haiti, funeral services are expensive and had he lived, the funeral home would have lost a lot of money.

The whole community was in emotional turmoil, especially his family and friends and his political party. His partisans demanded that the political battle continue. Electoral law provides that a political party is entitled to replace its candidate should that candidate die. After much deliberation, they settled on Ogline.

Young and politically immature, she inherited her brother's popularity along with the hatred of his enemies who would become intent against

her as a woman in politics, an arena from which women had long been excluded. Her adversaries cried from the rooftops that she was not Haitian, that she only spoke Spanish and that she was only a child.

Those accusations were partially true. When we first met her in May of 2006, part of her interview was conducted in Spanish. Over the course of the program, however, the team of Coaches recognized her as being courageous, calm, patient, able to listen, and infinitely desirous to learn and to succeed. Little by little, she won over a large number of people, rallied different groups, strengthened the political party of her late brother, and defined and refined her own political strategy. One after the other, she won the three electoral races. She became a great leader and, contrary to Haitian tradition, power did not turn her head, she remained herself, always listening, aware of her weaknesses and ever ready to learn.

In the Coaching program we have watched and accompanied her along this journey. She is now running two projects for her commune: one which supports women artisans and one which aims to bring electricity to a part of her town. She understands that being Deputy does not end with her duties in Parliament; she must give back to her community that has shown such confidence in her abilities, that has believed in her, and that is now in need of her assistance for its development.

A year and a half ago Ogline could not communicate in French or Creole. She arrived on the political scene at the insistence of her family. Today Ogline is 100% Haitian in Creole and French; she knows the ins and outs of politics and is ready to pay the price for her commitment. She wishes to be elected and reelected; she wants to see her name go down in the annals of Haitian history as the renowned political woman of Camp Perrin.



### **Portrait of Jacqueline LAGUERRE**

Jacqueline Laguerre is a former Mayoral candidate in the 2006 elections in Arnaud, a town in the Department of Nippes. A political militant, she possesses an iron will and gives the impression that she is well prepared to take on adversity. Firm handed leader and woman of the field, she commands respect. Within the coaching context she developed great self assurance and flexibility

as well as a heightened sense of compromise.

Of all the participants in the program, Jacqueline was certainly the most sure of her electoral victory. Her adversaries, she said, were merely wasting their time and their money thinking they stood a chance.

Her arguments were simple. She is the only person in her commune doing concrete things and obtaining results. She boasts the construction of latrines with the help of the MINUSTAH and the upkeep of 7 km of road. Secondly, her adversaries all have terrible handicaps. One is a former live-stock thief and one does not know how to read or write. To top it off she claimed to hold the support of the entire population of Arnaud who is grateful for her efforts and who believe in her leadership.

On Election Day, however, reality set in and the power of money and organized violence triumphed. Jacqueline tried desperately to make things right but in the end was forced to accept her defeat.

Guided by the team of trainers, she later offered the new mayor of Arnaud a hand in his difficulties with his constituency. The best interests of “her” population are foremost in her mind and as such she is willing to set aside her pride and her ego. Unfortunately the new mayor rejected her offer of assistance.

Jacqueline managed, by the end of the program, to overcome her defeat, her anger and her feelings towards all those who, in her mind, did not help her out in times of need. Today, having undergone more than one

year of coaching, she understands that she must continue on her path, whether elected or not, because the good of Arnaud remains her priority. She is taking care of her organization and her team. Her goals are to build a community school, to set up a savings and loan company and to build a corn mill to meet the needs of farmers and women merchants.

The Jacqueline of today is much more relaxed, she smiles, she is fulfilled and she seems better equipped to handle the ins and outs of the political and electoral system.





### Portrait of Marie-Jossie ETIENNE

Marie-Jossie was unable to attend all the training and coaching sessions due to her responsibilities of Deputy and her commitment to her constituency. Her campaign story and her election, however, constitute proof of the courage and determination which characterize all the women participating in this program.

Upon first meeting, one might think her a young girl, lost, and liable to run away at the slightest provocation. But with Marie-Jossie Etienne, her looks are deceiving. She was born in the small town of Milot in the Department of the North. She worked in the field of human rights with the Civilian Mission of the OAS/UN in Haiti before running for Deputy with the National Liberal Party created before the 2006 elections.

Despite her lack of support and funding, Marie-Jossie is determined to win the elections. She is running a close campaign, targeting both men and women, and aiming to explain the problems of the commune and to propose concrete solutions. Most of her adversaries are richer and better connected, are running media campaigns, and are underscoring the power of money and violence. Her main adversary seems to have the political acumen as well as the means and connections needed to take advantage of the weaknesses of the electoral and security systems in place: and he too is determined to win.

Simple and discreet in appearance, with a small often barely audible monotone voice, Marie-Jossie has an innate ability to withdraw and adopt a low profile to suit her goals as dictated by circumstances.

Her self effacing attitude leads her opponents to underestimate her and to make careless mistakes. When the partial results for the Deputy election came in, her main opponent was sure to have won. So sure was he of his victory, comforted by his impending power, and unaware of the hidden strengths of his opponent, he took a trip to Miami to buy a new suit to wear at his swearing in.

Unlike what other candidates might have done in her position, Marie-Jossie chose not to publicly contest the elections. Instead, with great discretion, she collected evidence of multiple cases of fraud committed by her adversary. Despite her lawyer's failure to show up on her day in court to present the facts of the case, Marie-Jossie did not concede, she fought alone, she will fight to the end, confident in her rights she will prove the existence of fraud and the election will be hers!

To the president of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) who required the presence of her lawyer, she calmly stated that justice is a matter of evidence and not profession. Evidence she possessed in great quantity and she submitted it to the CEP who then voted in her favor. Late at night, the day before her swearing in as Deputy, a radio station in the capital announced her election.

The next day, Marie-Jossie went to the Parliament to claim her office, her title. Her adversary, having already purchased his new suit, is unwilling to concede. He turned up with three body guards, armed to the teeth, and nothing would make him back down. Marie-Jossie would not back down either.

Brandishing her official government journal, in which the presidential decree concerning her election is published, before the skeptical eyes of the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Marie-Jossie is finally made Deputy. Her adversary, no longer able to deny the unfavorable change of circumstances, is wild with rage and swears to seek revenge. In order to leave the Parliament building alive, Marie-Jossie had to disguise herself with a wig and a change of clothes. Back in Milot, she lived in fear and in hiding allowing for tempers to cool.

Marie-Jossie is a courageous and stubborn political woman who beat two odds to become the first woman deputy from the Plaine du Nord (a minority constituency) and the first and only Parliamentarian of her political party.

## D. Site visits



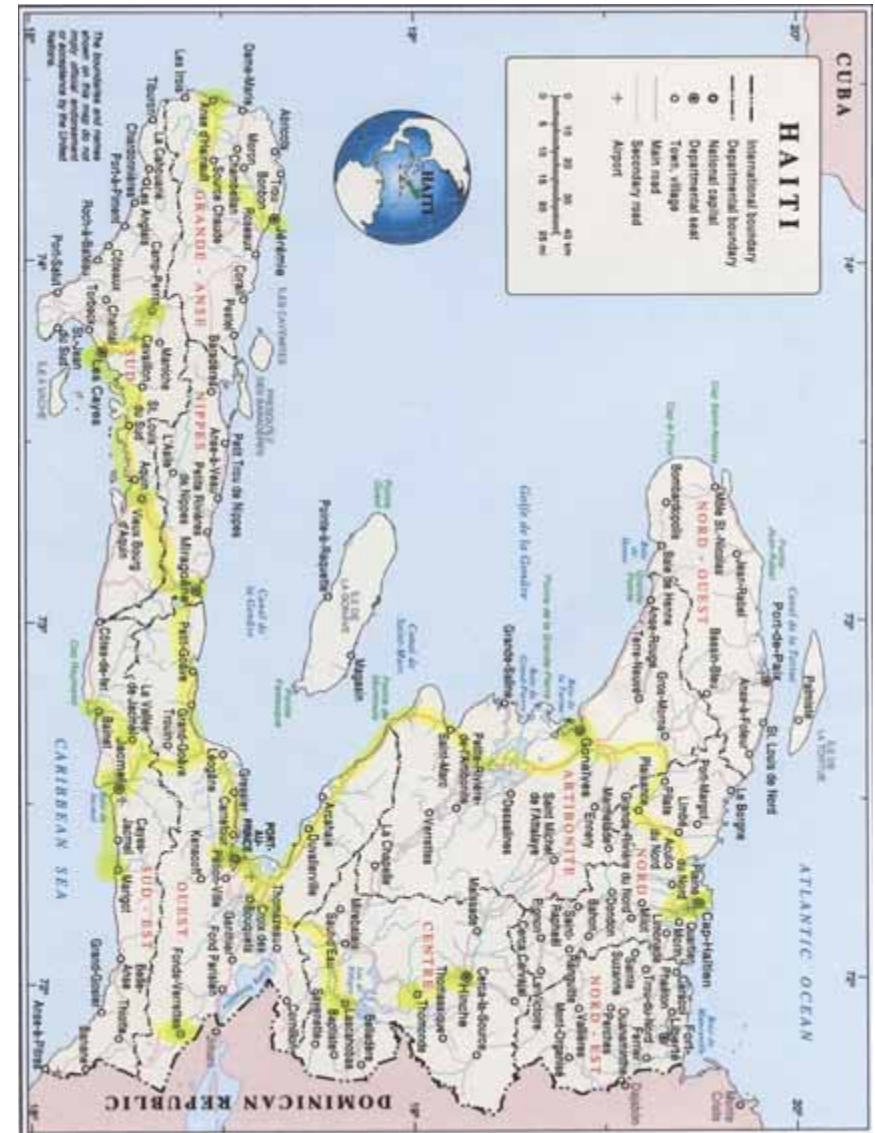
After three cycles of training, in the middle of the program, the team of trainers visits the sites by car, airplane or helicopter; whatever it takes to see the participants in action in their milieu.

The training and coaching take place in a bubble, far from the daily grind and the worries thereof. It is also necessary to take stock of the accomplishments of the participants in their own environments, with their teams, living their own realities, beyond mere testimony.

Although each and every field visit was interesting in its own right, we cannot tell of every one so have chosen a few to illustrate the nature of these trips. . .



## Site visits February-March 2007 and November-December 2007



Source: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, Map No. 3855 Rev. 3, June 2004

## Jacmel, Thursday February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007

A light breeze creates a cloud of dust on the tarmac of the MINUSTAH heliport in Port-au-Prince. We are off to Jacmel to visit Sylvia Moise and Ruffine Labbé, two participants in the training whom we wish to see in action in their communities.

To get to the 9<sup>th</sup> district of Bainet, where Sylvia is waiting for us, we drove over three hours of rocky road so narrow that passing cars would scratch ours on their way by. Across a dry riverbed we drove, waiting patiently behind trucks, heavily laden with merchandise, which we were only rarely able to pass. We looked out at the passing green countryside and at women carrying heavy loads on their heads on their way to market. The women work all the time, without rest. In Haiti women truly are the economic pillars of their communities and have only an informal power that does not grant them their emancipation from the patriarchic society they live in.



The welcome we received from the women of Bainet warmed our hearts and made us forget our uncomfortable and bumpy journey. They were there at the meeting place, having traveled hours by foot to discuss their activities with us; they were there out of respect for us, and they were especially there to lend their support to Sylvia who has been committed, for a long time, to helping them.

Sylvia is a great leader: she managed to mobilize more than 300 women from different groups of the 9<sup>th</sup> district. With the help of Sylvia and her organization, these women are becoming economically independent and they bear witness to this independence through their songs, their skits and their discourse.

A group of women put on a skit about the creation of a “sol” which is a communal savings account (a tontine) into which the women each pay a certain amount of money, the balance of which is given in full to one woman at a time when her turn comes. Before this system, these women depended upon a usurer who would ask for excessive collateral each time he lent money. This unscrupulous man would ask for family land deeds or mortgaged homes as collateral. These women became victims of a vicious circle of debt.



Today, thanks to Sylvia's leadership, they have understood that they have to help each other and not rely on men to manage and use them in the process. They have understood that they are capable of organizing themselves and of pooling their meager resources. With the money from the "sol" a few women have started small enterprises such as buying and selling cloth or food (oil, flour, beans, rice, etc.). These capable and dynamic women know how and when to invest their borrowed money.

January, February and March constitute the "thin cow" season for the sale of grain; it is the season for seeds. At that time of year, if one were to buy grain, it would be only to wait six months before reselling, by which time the prices would have gone up and making a profit would again be possible. Selling too soon would represent pure loss. Those with insufficient means do not invest because interest on borrowed money cannot wait six months. Mutual credit is the answer of the season. It represents economic strength and can build capital by stocking and speculating on commodities to be resold after six months at a higher price. After such transactions, credit is available to these women. These transactions will profit women who have earned money selling products for the new school year and the year end

holiday season: a practical and profitable choice of merchandise that will allow them the maximum sales before it is time to repay.

We go back on the road to La Vallée where we will be welcomed by Ruffine Labbé in her home which she transforms three times a week into a classroom for illiterate women. In 2006 she created OFADEV (Organization of Women from La Vallée of Jacmel), that brings together underprivileged women who have never had the opportunity to attend school. She works with them on alphabetization so that they can participate in the social economic activities of La Vallée. The dream of creating a school for the women of La Vallée has been on Ruffine's mind for a very long time; thanks to the Coaching program she now has the opportunity to make that dream come true. With the support of her trainers, she puts her dream on paper, writes a proposal, and takes the first step towards its implementation. Coaching has helped transform her ideas and concretize her dreams.

From October 2006 to March 2007, Ruffine and her organization implemented a six month project with 32 women who, in the beginning, did not know how to read or write. A woman tells her story: she grew up in a poor rural family; she knew only the marketplace where she had been going with her mother since she was a child. She never learned to read or to write. Her face bears the markings of time and labor.

Having gone through Ruffine's program, she is now proud to explain that today she can sign her name and read her son's school homework: "He can't cheat anymore", she says with a smile. She tells of how one day she was called in to her son's school where his teacher asked her to sign some papers with





an “x” to mark her name. To the great surprise of the teacher she was able to properly sign her name for the first time.

In this very special classroom there are women of various ages: a young pregnant women, a grandmother, a mother and her young 20 year old daughter. They are all there to learn how to read and write. They each know that at their age this opportunity, offered to them by Ruffine, is unique and must be taken.

On the blackboard in Ruffine’s school are the first and last names of these women who have been given back their dignity and that are no longer subject to the indignities inherent to being defined as illiterate. The “next step” says Ruffine proudly, will be to teach them basic math. “It is my duty to teach these women to become more independent, more capable and more responsible”.

## Jérémie, Tuesday February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007

In the Port of Jérémie, men load merchandise onto an already overloaded boat. Sacks of mangos and charcoal are added to the cargo. Passengers wait on the pier, standing or seated on sacks. Last month an overloaded boat capsized a few minutes after setting sail and there were ten casualties and several wounded. Decrepitude, irresponsibility and neglect on the part of the charter companies are the cause of such drama, but this does not prevent the passengers from taking these perilous trips; other means of transportation are even more onerous when transporting such a large quantity of goods.

We have a meeting with Thérèse Pacaud: the Fanm Lakay Organization is at her house in the heart of the city. We are met by songs with lyrics that convey the sadness of the women who sing them as well as their hopes and their willingness to fight. The word misery is in the lyrics of all the songs and can be seen in the faces of these work weary faces. Nonetheless, these women continue to fight, on a daily basis, for the survival of their families and within their organizations; they display their many talents: they can make home remedies with plants for various ailments; they can transform various agricultural products (making peanut butter for example); and they can make sculptures from river stones, they are artisans.





Thérèse does her best to uphold the morale of these women, to encourage them to work despite their limited means. Every Sunday they gather to discuss the trials of life. They all contribute to raise money to be used for medical emergencies, for deaths and for other calamities. Thérèse would like to set up a micro credit company to help these women become more autonomous, more financially independent and more aware of their rights as women who, in Haitian society, are second class citizens.

Thérèse's courage is reflected on the women of her organization. Having invested what little she had in her electoral campaign, she is on the verge of bankruptcy after the elections. Thérèse has been looking for work since the end of elections, she has a daughter to raise, and she still dreams of running and winning in the next elections. Despite her limited means, she is dedicated body and soul to her organization and to the women that believe in her and who look to her to guide them through this tough time and to show them the way to becoming independent women.

We leave Thérèse to pay a visit to Roselore Aubourg in Anse d'Hainault. The MINUSTAH security stops us however, as the road is blocked. There are riots and burning tires on the road. The community of Chambellan, which is half way between Jérémie and Anse d'Hainault, is contesting the results of their local elections. The violence has escalated and we are forbidden to travel. We are forced to postpone our visit but the women have gathered and have been waiting since four in the morning. Roselore, our participant from Anse d'Hainault receives the bad news: the training team will not be able to make it. The first reaction is to panic; but after a few minutes she pulls herself together, picks up the microphone, and asks the international Coach to address the women over the phone. Roselore is a leader who does not allow herself to become discouraged under pressure. She knows how to make the most of her abilities thereby increasing her popularity among women.

## Anse d'Hainault, Tuesday May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007

Things calmed down and, with a MINUSTAH police escort, we were finally able to get to Anse d'Hainault. We drove two hours worth of bumpy road through the countryside, often along the shore with its brilliant blue water the same color as the cloudless sky above. The beauty of the scenery was in stark contrast with the misery in which the majority of the Haitian population lives.

Roselore was waiting for us at the entrance to Anse d'Hainault with a delegation of women singing songs of welcome to the visitors. They led us to a school where a large crowd of men and women had gathered, protected from the sun by tarpaulin hung overhead.

Yet again we have been witness to the great capacity of our participants in the Coaching program to mobilize large numbers of people: Roselore addresses the crowd of women, several of whom had walked long distances from the most remote areas to receive her message of hope. Caught



up in the spirit of it, Nava took the microphone in hand and began singing a Hebrew song. The crowd joined in and sang along “we bring you peace”. This was a great moment; a moment of cultural exchange that lent strength to the women’s movement that Roselore is trying to consolidate in her region, a movement which would grant these women their economic independence.

MOFEDGA (Women’s Movement of Grande Anse) brings together more than ten organizations and aims to provide women with the means and the know-how to exploit the resources available in their region: fish, cocoa and ginger. Given that existing cooperatives are mainly intended for men, Roselore wanted to encourage women to come together to create profitable enterprises.

Roselore presents to the training team a plate of dried fish produced by the women. While handing the plate to Nava, she explains that Anse d'Hainault is where you find the best dried fish in Haiti.



In fact, dried fish with white yam and/or plantain is one of the most prized Haitian dishes. There is a good market for dried fish in Port-au-Prince and among the Haitian diaspora overseas. In order to meet the needs of these women, Roselore is working to develop these markets.

### **Hinche, Friday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007**

Plateau central is a dry region with a seemingly infinite horizon. On the road to Thomonde, north of Hinche, we see small wooden Creole houses whose colors have faded over time.

On the side of the road, a woman is seated in front of her roadside boutique that sells a few basic necessities. This little store of hers illustrates one of the realities of Haitian society. Notebooks, tins of condensed milk, bottles of malt extract, a little box of spaghetti, cigarettes, matches and probably some laundry detergent constitute the capital, not to say the burden, of this enterprise. The total capital of this store, not more than 500 gourdes (roughly 15 dollars), would not feed this woman and her family for a month. As paradoxical as it may seem, this little boutique provides the semblance of a more or less normal life. It guarantees access to credit and fills the days of this woman who refuses to remain passive and who is instead increasing her social capital in the region. This is the paradox of underdevelopment in Haiti.







Next we have a meeting with Marie-Denise Bernardeau in Thomonde. She has brought together women's associations to discuss the creation of a community store where they could sell rice, beans and other basic goods.

After introducing the training team, a discussion begins between the many women gathered. These women are a testament to Marie-Denise's ability to mobilize people; they listen attentively and reflect before interjecting with questions of their own. Marie-Denise presents the idea of a community store in simple terms because the mere notion of a "community store" is problematic.

Little by little the women dare to bring up their priorities and to get to the point. Finally, although the idea of community store is still not clear, it is micro-credit that dominates the discussion and animates the gathering. To these women, micro credit represents a broader horizon that offers more opportunities than a community store, even though, in essence, they would both meet similar needs – those of survival. With the support of the

Mayor of Thomonde, who offers these women free premises for their store, Marie-Denise wants to help, but has learned that she also must listen. She believes, nonetheless, that she must follow the path already begun. She is going therefore to attempt to clear up any misgivings by trying to better explain the benefits of a community store.

The presence of all these women infuses Marie-Denise with strength; she is sure of herself and expresses herself with assurance, she knows whereof she speaks, she has studied the subject. She wishes to respond to the immediate needs of the women of Thomonde, she is attempting to show new leadership, a leadership of actions and not mere words.

We continue our mission and head to Papaye, known since 1970 for its active peasant movement. We meet up with Mona Bernardeau at the Center for the Peasant Movement of Papaye (MPP), founded in 1986 to lend support to the peasants of the region. Women represent 30% of its membership.

Mona works with a group of women to produce briquettes to replace the use of wood for cooking. These briquettes are made of recovered material, paper, twigs, and anything combustible. They are made with a hand crafted machine that can make up to 200 briquettes per day. The briquettes are then put out in the sun to dry before being used. Mona's idea is to find alternatives to cutting down trees which contributes to the deforestation which constitutes a veritable ecological disaster. Producing briquettes contributes to cleaning the environment and stopping deforestation.





The Briquettes machine

In fact, it is estimated that only 2% of the country is still covered in trees. The most direct effect of deforestation is soil erosion which diminishes productivity and exacerbates flooding with torrential rains pouring down hillsides stripped of their trees and causing hundreds of death and untold damage. Without electricity in rural areas, people resort to the use of charcoal for cooking.

Mona's project is at the experimental stage and more research into the quality of the briquettes being produced is needed in order that they can advantageously replace charcoal

and become the preferred quality combustible. Contrary to charcoal, briquettes do not stain hands or pots, they require less time for cooking, and can be transported more easily at a lower cost than charcoal.

One question remains, however: why, despite all these advantages has the use of briquettes not taken off in rural areas? A closer analysis shows that,



Briquettes drying in the sun

despite official discourse on the subject, finding alternatives to the use of charcoal is not on the agenda of the Haitian government.

Even within the Papaye Peasant Movement, the job of briquette making is relegated to women, feminizing thereby a job which is viewed as an extension of their domestic chores and not as the important contribution it is. It is important therefore that women appropriate this project, not just in terms of collecting dried leaves and so forth, but on the decisional level. Protecting the environment could in the long term, become an important market for women with which to begin a form of development that poses no threat to future generations.

With her own means, Mona is trying to move this project forward, to prevent the major charcoal vendors from cutting down trees; she is seeking help from the authorities, going from one village to the next, house by house, bringing along briquettes and showing women how to use them while giving them pasta or potatoes with which to show them that briquettes can accomplish the job of cooking.

This is a courageous project because the misery of the countryside often leaves peasants with no alternatives. It is ambitious yet realistic; Mona's leadership is recognized and appreciated, she is aware of the obstacles but has also learned to recognize her strengths and she will not waver.

## E. A City in the Sand



As the end of the program approaches it is time to put into action what the participants have learned: they are going to build a City in the Sand.

What is needed to build a city in the sand?

Sand. . .

Then water, and the ocean is there, close by. . .

Shovels, picks and buckets. . .

Moulds and decorations. . .



Mostly what the participants need is a good plan, a good team, motivation to succeed, and the ability to use all that they have learned in the program.

After 5 cycles, 14 months of work, a huge quantity of projects submitted, some implemented, some forgotten, anger, expectations and disappointments, moments of motivation and discouragement, we are left with 19 participants, committed, motivated, courageous, ready to execute the final step of the training and Coaching program: each participant will plan her city, then choose her team, establish a budget and an action plan, and then implement within a specific context, “**A City in the Sand**”.

The final step is a sort of test: from the beginning of the program, one word keeps coming up, **SMARTER**: we need a SMARTER project, a SMARTER program, a SMARTER presentation, everything is within the SMARTER context, this is the big test: have they learned to work in the SMARTER context, to create Specific projects that can be Measured, that are Accessible, Realistic and within a specific Timeframe, with a good Execution plan, and with Results in keeping with the plan?

In order to implement this cycle, we decided to take the participants to Club Indigo, outside Port-au-Prince, for one week. It is important that they be far removed from their daily lives so they can invest themselves with no worries or obstacles to interfere, so that they can work with one thing in mind: building a city in the sand while enjoying the liberty and fresh air provided by Club Indigo on the sea, while observing the training and coaching rules and working within the **SMARTER** context.

Monday: first day of work dedicated to planning

**One must know one’s path before setting out on the road. . .**

Given that a good plan is the basis of any successful implementation, the participants received the following instructions:

They have one and a half hours to plan a city that they will have to build in the sand, on the beach, with the team of their choice.



Their tasks are as follows:

They have to come up with a plan of the city and choose their team from among the participants – the choices are made by order of priority, they must choose seven team members: each team will have four members including the leader (one of the women selected will be the leader's right hand).

To tell apart the different team members, caps of different colors are distributed as follows:

The **RED** cap: for the leader

The **YELLOW** cap: for the leader's right hand.

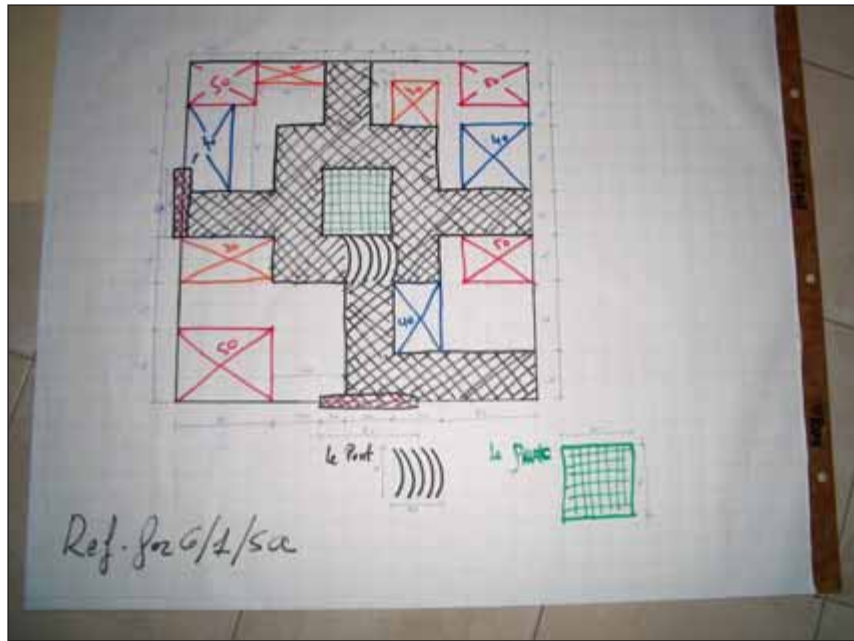
And **BLACK** caps: for the other members of the team (the manual laborers).

Each leader must manage a budget of 6000 US dollars, with which they must purchase building materials and decide how they will divide it between the team members.



The city planning must be carried out as follows:

- Minimum size of the city: 3 meters by 3 meters, no maximum size limit but one must think **SMARTER**.
- The city will have at least ten buildings:
  - ✓ At least 4 buildings 50 cm high.
  - ✓ At least 3 buildings 40 cm high.
  - ✓ At least 3 buildings 30 cm high.
- The city will have at least 5 roads
- A park.
- Two city gates.
- At least one bridge.



Within these parameters, the participants must draw up the city plans in keeping with the **SMARTER** context for implementation.

To make the job more interesting, there will be a competition: the trainers, Nadine, Nava and Coty will serve as referees. At the end of the implementation phase, grades will be given to cities built in the following way:

- Implemented according to plan;
- Team work;
- Dimensions (minimal vs. maximal) : respecting the dimensions given;
- Creativity – you can use your creativity to embellish the city – example: specially built buildings, gardens – gates, etc.
- Beauty.

Since the referees will also have the option to buy these cities, after the first evaluation, prices will be offered as follows:

### Examples of Rewards:

\$100 US per 30 cm building built but not planned;

\$150 US per 40 cm building built but not planned.

### Examples of Fines:

\$150 US per 30 cm building planned but not built;

\$200 US per 40 cm building planned but not built.

Tuesday morning is the first real day of work: the women are filled with strength and enthusiasm, the teams are formed, the leaders give their last instructions, the material is distributed, the “right hands” are nominated and we head off to the beach to begin the work. Each team has its plans posted on a board located next to its parcel of land. Based on these plans the referees decide on the verdict to be given at the end of the week.





The five parcels of sand are distributed randomly and the leaders begin to give orders, the pegs are put in place, the strings are stretched taut, the parcels are drawn up and the tasks are handed out: the construction can begin in earnest.

By observing the teams at work, we notice that as time goes by the participants discover that this “game” is tough, the task is not a simple one, the plans are complicated, the execution of the plans is complicated, perhaps they did not spend enough time on planning. The teams review the plans, then the parcels of sand, they remember the instructions: “a city not built according to the plan will not be taken into consideration. . .”.

They begin to physically feel the weight of the task at hand, they begin to realize that they have not “fully understood the path before going down the road. . .”. After two hours of work, we see signs of discontent and dis-



Team members presenting their city in the sand

couragement, the women are tired, some of them even stop working, and suddenly they are unable to see the point of the exercise. . . . The stronger women, however, keep on going, nothing can stop them, they will work through to the end, not stopping if their backs ache, if it is too hot, or even when their fellow team members stop working. For these women, commitment and final results are what count, they are motivated.

Begun with much enthusiasm, the first day of work on the ground ends very calmly, the general atmosphere is a bit morose, there are whispers, bits of phrases heard, and the question is silently asked: will they continue? Will they make it through? Will they find the strength to make it through to the end of the week?

Back in class, we look at the day together: “It was very hard work, the plans were badly drawn up because the instructions were not clearly understood

(they take responsibility – it was not the trainers who failed to adequately explain, but it is they themselves that did not fully understand or take the time to ask relevant questions). Physically they are drained, they are not certain they will be able to go on. . .

We listen, we agree with them, and the question is openly asked: Do they wish to stop? There is a moment of silence, and then they begin talking about the physically draining aspects of the work. A second question is raised: do any of the women wish to renounce the role of leader? This time the silence is complete, everyone wants to be in charge, to show her ability, to manage the project and the team, to win the contest, they are women in politics, they know how to fight, they must not give up, they have to battle to the end, build their cities, improve daily, even if the task is tough, they must not stop mid way.

So, the program continues, every day there are new leaders, new teams are formed and they go off to work to prove themselves to themselves and to the team of trainers, that they are capable and are not discouraged.

Every day brings with it a new perspective, once the psychological barrier is overcome, and the women no longer feel like “they don’t know how, it’s too hard, there are not engineers or architects. . .”, there are improvements and beautiful cities are built. The women work in harmony for the most part, the plans and instructions are closely followed and they start to see the fruits of their labor over the course of the year: **SMARTER** projects, good teams, endless creativity and cities to be proud of.

At week’s end the leader is named with her winning team, but all the participants know that they have won, won self esteem, because they succeeded in doing what they thought was impossible. They also won respect for their teams and their co workers, they won because they were able to put into practice all that they had learned over the year and today they know they are capable of following the **SMARTER** plan in every aspect of their lives, both in private and in public. . . . They know how to build a city in the sand!

## F. Outcome and Perspectives



### 1. Lessons learned

The project begins in the month of June 2006, and aims to build the capacities of women in politics. The participants are all women who have been or who plan to become candidates for political positions: president, senator, deputy, local elected officials (mayor, etc.).

The program participants were chosen according to their “political history” and their commitment to being part of an innovative project. They are characterized by their courage and their willingness on the one hand, but also by a significant lack of basic knowledge of political and management tools on the other.

This project is based on the principle of actions and not words. The general idea behind all that takes place during and after the training sessions and the individual coaching sessions is to lead the participants to **take initiatives** and to **work** on social and economic projects for their community.

As Dr Younus – the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize laureate – would say, in building this project we have decided that it was time to give them the fishing rod and to teach them how to fish, rather than to continue giving them fish. It is therefore, important to teach these women to take responsibility rather than to sit around waiting for outside help.

The participants, although claiming to be committed, were not ready to face the training system, its content, and the demands of the project. Most of them were depleted after their electoral experiences and this project

started at a time when they did not have the tools to understand, analyze and gain a new perspective from their experiences. For most of them commitment meant participation, attending the “classes”, being present at the coaching sessions and continuing their same rhythm of life, without results for the most part. Participation in this project required of these women an active participation, a real change in their behavior and habits, a physical and mental commitment to everything they would undertake, a commitment to results, with results.

The participants’ expectations that they would receive economic support for the implementation of their projects or for their electoral campaigns, created resistance and malcontent from the beginning of the program. The general attitude was that if there was to be no financial support, there was no point in investing in the program and continuing on “for nothing”. While the program does provide for transportation and lodging for the participants, as well as a per diem, it does not provide them with money simply for participating. This was intended so that there could be no ulterior motive and so that the prevalent assistance mentality could be broken.

The coaching team was often blamed for having given out “homework” because, as one of the participants said: “if you want us to implement projects, it is up to you to provide us with the means with which to do so. If you do not provide us with the means then they will not be projects, but rather homework, and we are no longer in school”.

The implementation of small projects asked of the participants between training cycles required not only creativity and imagination, but also the willingness to invest oneself, to act and to succeed.

The biggest obstacle to the advancement of the program and to helping the participants go in the right direction was their lack of confidence in their own ability, in their strength. There were also other obstacles inherent to proposing an innovative project that required detachment on a personal level and detachment where the values of Haitian society in general are concerned, in order to think and act more efficiently.

In trying to overcome these obstacles, we worked on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the participants, while giving them the practical tools with which to analyze their impediments and to learn to overcome them.

After 14 months of work, the outcome is as follows:

- a) All of the women, without exception, attest to a change in their behavior, their way of functioning and their capacity, a change which they feel is both noticed and appreciated by the people around them.
- b) On our part, we noticed a new self assurance, a new understanding of their strength, an awareness of their weaknesses and the acquisition of tools to transform those weaknesses in to strengths. The participants express themselves with much more confidence, they are more at ease with public speaking, and tell of their exploits with joy and pride. These exploits have given them much satisfaction as well as the courage to continue on the same track. Based on the idea that a project is not a project unless it is implemented on a national scale, they realize little by little that the program is moving forward, that a good project is not necessarily measured by quantity but by quality, that being able to help 30 women to become economically independent is feasible, realistic and is also a personal accomplishment. Whereas helping **ALL HAITIAN WOMEN** is certainly a beautiful dream, it remains in the realm of dreams.
- c) The participants are no longer angry and no longer say things like: “If you don’t give me money, I cannot do anything. . . .” They have realized that not only can they do something, alone and without foreign assistance, but they can also succeed! They now understand the importance of this project and are grateful for it.

Examples of their outcomes vary by subject and by substance, but all made great and visible strides. These projects are just as much personal as community driven, and while advancing themselves they are also thinking of how they can serve their communities, their society and their country in the future as women in politics.



Many interesting projects have been initiated by the participants:

- The fabrication of briquettes for cooking, using recuperated materials, rather than wood – to prevent deforestation, clean up the community and begin teaching children to protect their environment.
- An alphabetization school for women that began with thirty women, who after less than two months were able to sign their full names. (The woman who implemented this alphabetization program began the training with a lot of anger towards the team of Coaches because she expected to receive money for her project. Today, having used her own resources from start to finish, she thanks us for not having provided financial assistance and is very proud of her results which have in turn given her a lot of confidence in her own abilities).
- The idea to remove children from the Cité Soleil slum and from the vicious circle of violence and misery had long been in the mind of one of the participants; thanks to the project and the realization that she can do it, that she must do it, and that talk alone does not yield results, she was able with the help and support of the other participants, to relocate these children in the hope of providing them with a brighter future.
- On a personal note, we had a participant who, six months earlier, dared not speak in public and especially not in French; after the first training cycle she decided to work on her mastery of the French language. In the middle of the program she addressed the participants with a strong and self assured voice, in French no less! Without having to rely on Creole, she now understands that she is capable and that where there is a will there is a way.
- Other initiatives: one participant who has just been elected Deputy was instrumental in obtaining civil status and legal documentation for several hundred children; schooling for children in difficult situations; a center for women victims of violence; and holding public forums on the rights of women which aim to strengthen the capacity of communities to mobilize, etc.

This project also served to create an informal support group comprised of all of these women; a group that is willing to share its successes, to learn through the experiences of others, to support women in elections, both morally and physically, to believe in their individual strengths as well as in their strength as a group.

## 2. End of program

The participants learned to be on time, which for most of them was a novel idea. . . . They learned to be responsible for their path, their participation and their results.

These statements made by the participants after the sixth cycle bear witness to the above:

- “Now I know how to respect working hours. Before, I wanted to satisfy everyone. I know myself and am now more self assured”.
- “I am more organized and more dynamic”.
- “I am a new person, a better leader”.
- “I think I have to continue on in my training. I have a lot of dreams and if I continue I will succeed”.
- “I feel more at ease, I am no longer afraid. People around me tell me so”.
- “This is the first time in my life that I am listened to and encouraged to take care of myself”.
- “I learned that I am capable of doing things that seemed impossible to me before; now people ask me for advice and for my opinion”.
- “The training helped me find my ability to lead and, in an informal way, people in my neighborhood see me as their leader”.

At the end of the program, the training team created a personalized file for each participant to analyze the training sessions as well as the individual coaching sessions and measure their progress over the course of the various

cycles of the program. This file was given to each participant at the final coaching session for their future reference.

The follow-up carried out by the team of Coaches is recorded in each file. The purpose being to make a **S.W.O.T** analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threats) for each participant and to give her feedback on her progress and capacities as well as the tools necessary to carry on; the end of the program is not the end of her fulfillment, the journey is not over, the road goes on.

It is very interesting to note the change in these women who had the strength to stick with the program until its end, their awareness both personal and collective, the changes in their speech, in their actions, the fact that the slogans cited in the beginning of the program. . .

“**Mwen Responsab, Mwen Engaje m**” (I am responsible and committed)

“**Map Aprann Tande Ak Renmen Ayisien Parey Mwen**” (I will learn to love and to listen to my compatriots)

. . . have become their *raison d'être*, their actions, a true desire to work to change their country:

“**Ann Chanje Peyi n nou Kapab**” (We are capable of changing our country, let's do so).

Aware of their strengths and their weaknesses, they are now able to properly analyze their situation, to adopt new behaviors with which to enter the electoral race once again, and now have the tools with which to win.

### **3. Testimony of Coty Beauséjour, the Haitian Coach**

My experience, what I have learned, and my priority.

My experience in this program is unique and has been extremely enriching. There are four categories of people in the program: the head of the Gender

Bureau, the head Coach, whose experience and competence goes without saying, the participants, and me. The profiles of the first three categories are complete, brief and clearly defined. I, however, was both leader and follower, Coach and Coached, in a two part role that favored learning and personal growth. Aware of the terms of this program, I replay the film of these training cycles in my mind and I can think of no possible comparison to any other classic training programs I have ever attended.

It was clear from the beginning of this Coaching program that we would not be working with voluminous texts, memorizing parts of them every day, talking and not taking action. In this program we have an objective, we do, we get results, we evaluate, we gain self confidence, we endeavor to overcome our fears, we have a priority, we identify our strengths and our weaknesses, and we have a vision of the results we are striving to obtain. As the program progressed I became closer to the participants. I discovered simple and important things. Firstly, I learned that women like to be heard, maybe even more so than men, because women in politics are not taken seriously in Haitian society. A woman who is heard has the potential to become strong, to become a powerful woman and by extension a woman who is confident within and *vis-à-vis* her Coach. By listening to these women, I have learned so much about this country, its hopes, its despair and its uncertain future.

Secondly, I realized that a woman's biggest weakness is the woman herself. Women are the majority but act like the minority. To be weak is one thing, but to know you are weak is another. Through coaching, weaknesses are no longer normal, they are socially motivated, and can therefore be transformed into strengths. The strength of women lies in becoming valuable socially, economically and politically. Some women came out of their coaching sessions moved and deeply touched, they were unfamiliar with questions that give them worth, that shake them, make them feel secure and blown away: “What is your greatest strength? As of now, what are your priorities? What are you planning to do to take care of yourself?” One participant even commented that this was the first time in her life anyone had cared about her and told her to take care of herself.

Coaching is the training technique most suited to Haiti and other underdeveloped countries because, in general, women in these countries tend to take care of others and not themselves. Most of the time they resign themselves to the role of victim because they feel they have no choice. This tendency prevails in politics.

I personally understood that what I am today is as a direct result of choices I made yesterday. My choices now will determine my future. Mistakes are opportunities if we can learn lessons from them. Fear, hesitation, and the lack of follow up to ideas are invisible barriers we use to imprison ourselves. To become profoundly aware of this fact is a wealth and I wonder if it is not in fact true liberty.

My Coach asked me to speak about myself, about my experiences as a Coached person and about my personal development. After giving it some thought, I understood the importance of sharing with someone an experience that can serve as guidance or can contribute to building someone's capacity or someone's desire to fully take advantage of life and its vicissitudes.

That is equivalent to talking about my own journey and it is not without difficulty. Firstly, I am not aware of all the changes that have occurred and secondly, it would require a retrospective, a look to the past which has not been entirely bright. Thirdly, I could not do so without calling upon my entourage: my wife, my children, my friends and colleagues. My daily interactions with these people will bring to light any changes in me.

In order to explain these changes, I have a repertoire or many memories of this program. One of the things that most profoundly changed me was the out of context exercise. We were about 33 people in a room trying to decipher the code. Some of the women were tired, sick of looking for solutions, and undermined the moment. The solution was there, simple and original and within reach, as it often is in real life. In a very creative way, the international Coach had recreated the traumas of life. For me it was as if I were reliving my life as a Haitian along with my fellow Haitians. A life full of dreams of all kinds: personal betterment, developing my country, pros-

perity for my family, the fight for democracy and so on. Dreams which, for the most part, turned into nightmares. Because we have tried the same solutions using the same methods. It was time to break free from the traditional ways of thinking. From this moment, life became an opportunity which had to be taken advantage of.

Speaking to my wife on the subject, she says that I have always been disciplined, punctual and responsible, but that now I am even more so and even more determined. Now, the night before, or first thing in the morning, I make a list of everything I have to do the next day. Often time is too short and I have to prioritize. I take the time at the end of the day to evaluate my progress. Another thing that has strengthened me is my new way of looking at my work, I no longer see it as painful or as something that has to be done, there is no longer a set time to begin and to quit. I have become more flexible in my work. My work extends to my house, to the cybercafé, and interestingly enough, this does not prevent me from being attentive to my family. On the contrary our family time is more enriching.

The people close to me have been observing me, and they believe that no one can prevent me from reaching my goals. For a strong believer such as my wife, it is a powerful affirmation. She also notices in me an eagerness to "do". Maybe I am trying to make up for lost time, for the hours of discussions and of sleepless nights looking for ways to change Haiti and our lives. I think I have become more realistic especially where my chances for success are concerned. Success is not a gift, but rather the fruit of hard and constant work. I look at my boss and I have the impression that she is always working. She has had real success in her field and this is very important for other women to know.

Before becoming a part of this program, my biggest frustration in life was not me, it was the situation in Haiti. Today, if I feel frustrated, it is inwardly. I love my country even more. I understand it better. But, the most important thing for Coty is Coty. This is one thing that women need to learn: to put themselves first. Otherwise how do they intend to be of any real assistance to their families, their communities and to their countries?

The contours and the proportions of my dreams have decreased. They are more specific now: a soccer game with my children, their education, the happiness of my family, solidarity with a small <s>, clean streets in my neighborhood before trying to clean the entire country, and motivating children to plant trees. These are measurable and realistic dreams. Because sometimes the little things mean just as much as the big things, it boils down to a state of mind or another little thing that makes a difference. Women should know that. Unlike men, who like to cause a stir, they can identify little things that make a difference. This is also known as creativity.

And finally, there is one more thing that is very important to me and to the men and women of my country. It is the resulting attitude and choice. In the beginning of the program there were things I did not understand which left me perplexed. For example, my Coach asked me to go to the field to meet the women. I wondered if she was planning to follow these women to their deepest trenches. Once I was there, however, I realized that there were differences between what I had been told and the reality in the field. When I got back home, I realized that I must become less subjective and confront the truth. On their part, these women sometimes receive positive feedback that they are free to implement. I have remained open, always ready to learn and to try different options. In fact, these field trips have enlightened me.

It is our choices that create our attitude, our consequences, our results and the cost of time, resources, and energy. This is all part and parcel of our responsibility and we should not look for excuses to avoid it.

## Prologue



The Coaching program for training Haitian women to change Haiti is a great accomplishment. Despite the many obstacles, the pressures and the interferences at the beginning, it unfolded and was a success. Amongst the many needs of this country, particularly the needs of its women, this program represents the cornerstone of change.

As shown, the road to parity is long and painful, not just in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality; changing the “feminine” discourse, ignoring existing political models and creating a new generation of women leaders.

In the very beginning of the project, the training team evaluated the needs of each woman by asking her to describe the strengths that served her during her electoral campaign as well as the weaknesses that handicapped her. It is interesting to point out that a large number of women listed **being a woman** as one of their strengths. This evaluation reveals that the participants attribute to the social construction of their sex, their gender, qualities such as “gentleness”, “femininity”, “patience”, “communication”, “honesty”, the very qualities associated with the stereotype of women upheld in most societies and which reinforces the gender based division of labor. It is as if women in politics claim assets borrowed from the definition of their gender, hoping to do politics differently than men. We realize that this rhetoric continues to marginalize them, keeps them close to the home where these qualities are useful. The men continue to monopolize power in the political arena by exhibiting qualities such as “strength”, “chauvinism” and “aggressiveness” which are the norm for men.

To quote a French compilation that analyses the behavior of women in politics: “In their discourse as reported by the general interest press, they [the elected women] always introduce themselves as “more” or “less” than men: “more available”, “closer”, “more concrete”, “more responsible”, “more conciliatory”, and the opposite as well “less fanatical”, “less ambitious”...”<sup>3</sup>. This is an “**overexploitation of gender**” which is used as a political tool for women to differentiate themselves from men using so-called feminine attributes to create their place. The problem is that politics are defined according to the masculine norms of reference which require new recruits to adopt the rules in effect or to risk being excluded. How can we expect women to “do politics differently” when they have neither the political lingo nor the self confidence, nor the long time experience of men in their public lives? Women, as a result, have a tendency to fall back on qualities they have learned from society and from their education, meaning everything that has to do with relationships, to listening, to conflict resolution, and they even work their political inferiority to men into the equation.

As such, with no political model other than the one invented by men, women who enter politics slowly adopt the masculine habits necessary for their survival. One woman isolated and alone can not make a difference in an environment where the rules are defined by men: only a critical mass of women, defined as 30% by the United Nations, might begin to change the practices of those in power, the dynamics of human relations and the culture of a system entirely under masculine control.

## Annexes



### Annex 1

#### Description of CERAC and the Gender Bureau

**CERAC** (Training center for Commitment Responsibility and Capacity Building) is a new NGO, established in 2006 by young men and women of no particular political affiliation. The purpose of CERAC is to train citizens to become more involved on the political and social scenes in order to create conditions favorable to the fulfillment of a democratic society and a State of Law. The idea of this NGO is founded on the realization that women and youth are marginalized and have no forum where their voices can be heard.

#### MINUSTAH:

The MINUSTAH Gender Bureau has three main mandates which are:

- a) **Promoting women in the political arena:** The Gender Bureau supports the involvement of women in the electoral process as both candidates and voters. In the post-electoral phase, the Gender Bureau is working to consolidate the assets of women in politics in order to create a new leadership and to encourage women to participate in decision-making at all levels;
- b) **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)/Reduction of community based violence:** the Gender Bureau began a qualitative research project in January of 2006 on women in the context of armed violence in Haiti. The results of which study have enabled MINUSTAH

to recommend the implementation of programs to extricate women from this cycle of violence through community action, where women play an important role as agents of change for peace;

- c) **Violence against women:** the Gender Bureau is an active member of the National Concertation against Violence to Women which comprises the main partners and aims to create a common strategy for tackling this problem. The Gender Bureau is also working with the MINUSTAH Civil Police to establish centers within the commissariats for women victims of violence.

## Annex 2

### Table of elections 2006/2007: Number of women candidates and final results

**Table I**  
**Presidential and Legislative Elections**

Ballot	1 <sup>st</sup> round Number of candidates	2 <sup>nd</sup> round Number of candidates	3 <sup>rd</sup> round Number of candidates <sup>14</sup>	Women Elected
President	1	0	-	0
Senator	26 (in 2000, there were only 7 women candidates)	8	-	4
Deputy	76 (in 2000, there were only 22 women candidates)	11	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>103 (for a total of 129 elected positions)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table II**  
**Local Elections**

Women Elected at the Local Elections (2007)				
Function	Men	Women	Percentage	Total
Mayor	395	25	6%	420
CASEC <sup>15</sup>	1658	52	3%	1710
Délégué-e de Ville <sup>16</sup>	442	28	6%	470
ASEC <sup>17</sup>	4887	161	3%	5048
<b>Total</b>	<b>7382</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7648</b>

## Annex 3 Acronyms

<b>AFASDA</b>	Asosyasyon Fanm Soley Dayiti – Association of Haitian “Sun” Women.
<b>ASEC</b>	Departmental Assembly (Assemblée de Section Communale)
<b>CASEC</b>	Departmental Council (Conseil d’Administration de Section Communale)
<b>CEP</b>	Provisional Electoral Council
<b>CERAC</b>	Training Center for Commitment, Responsibility and Capacity Building
<b>LFAS</b>	Women’s League for Social Action
<b>MINUSTAH</b>	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
<b>MOFEDGA</b>	Women’s Movement of Grande Anse
<b>MPP</b>	Papaye Peasant Movement
<b>OAS</b>	Organization of American States
<b>OFADDEV</b>	Women’s Organization of La Vallée de Jacmel
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>OPPAF</b>	Organisation for the Promotion and Active Participation of Women
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>SOFAGO</b>	Solidarité Fanm Gonayiv
<b>UNDF</b>	United Nations Democracy Funds
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women

## Endnotes



- 1 <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No4/332/99/PDF/No433299.pdf?OpenElement>
- 2 United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti.
- 3 E/CN.4/2000/68/Add.3,27 January 2000. <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/Go0/104/11/pdf/Go010411.pdf?OpenElement>
- 4 <http://www.un.org/french/docs/sc/2000/res1325f.pdf>
- 5 Social and Economic Council, Commission on Human Rights, United Nations, “Human Rights Situation in Haiti”, Report by Independent Expert Louis Joinet, B. Violence against women, p. 8 (E/CN.4/2005/123).
- 6 Institution coordinating efforts to combat violence against women which constitutes the Ministry of Women’s Condition and Women’s Rights (Ministère à la Condition Féminine et aux Droits des Femmes), the Minustah, the United Nations Agencies, local NGO’s and women’s organizations.
- 7 Myriam Merlet, *La participation politique des Femmes en Haïti*, Quelques éléments d’analyse, Editions Fanm Yo La, 2002, pp. 3 and 4.
- 8 Mirlande Manigat, *Etre femme en Haïti hier et aujourd’hui, Le regard des Constitutions, des Lois et de la société*, Quisqueya University, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, p. 320.
- 9 Myriam Merlet, op. cit. p. xiii.
- 10 The Parliament was dissolved for fraud in the years following the 2000 election. After a period of political turmoil, followed by a Transitional Government, the next Parliament is elected in 2006.
- 11 See elections table 2006/2007 in annex 2.

- 12 Malcolm Gladwell, *The tipping point – how little things can make a big difference*, Little, Brown and Company, New York, Boston, 2000.
- 13 Catherine Achin, *Sexes, genre et politique*, Ed. Economica, Paris, 2007, pp. 60–61
- 14 A third round of elections was necessary after the 2<sup>nd</sup> round results were contested.
- 15 CASEC : Departmental Council
- 16 Délégué-e de Ville : Equivalent to a prefect in France.
- 17 ASEC : Departmental Assembly