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The Fondwa National Peasants' Congress

23- 27 April 2008

Request:

The Fondwa Peasants Association (APF) is seeking \$ 128,200.00 to hold a national peasants' congress that will have the following five objectives

- 1) To nurture shared reflection concerning the experiences that participants have had in local development at the communal level in Haiti.
- 2) To produce a consensus document that will orient sustainable development at the communal level in Haiti.
- 3) To develop a legal framework that would facilitate participation of Communal Sections in ruling the country, as is foreseen in the 1987 Constitution. (See: 1987 Haitian Constitution, articles 61 and 246.)

That framework should:

- 3.1- Enable peasants to receive all public services where they live.
- 3.2- Authorize the government to integrate peasant associations into the national budget.
- 3.3- Authorize the government to finance the training of technicians who make long-term commitments to working with peasants at the communal section level after they graduate.
- 4) To plant 30,000 trees during the Congress.
- 5) To make a copy of the Creole version of the 1987 Constitution available to every Congress participant.

A Short Background on the Situation of Peasants at the Communal Section Level

As of 2008, Haiti has 570 communal sections. 80% of Haiti's population of 8 million lives in them. That's to say that 6,400,000 Haitians live in communal sections. More than 90% of those people live without any public services at all. For this reason, Haitian peasants are the least valued and also the poorest sector of the population. Often enough, peasants walk more than two hours just for access to water. They have no access to health centers. They have no access to technical assistance. They have no technicians assigned to work with them on a permanent basis. They don't have access to agricultural credit, and they don't have the tools they would need to get more out of their harvests. There are no paved roads in the communal sections.

Most of these areas are without even a decent primary school. Youths who want to be educated must leave their homes in search of a better life in the cities. These are the realities that create the slums in our cities. The situation has become the source of the criminal violence that plagues Haiti's larger cities. Finally, these circumstances lead to the poverty, the hunger, which drives peasants to cut down their trees for the charcoal they can make of them. This, in turn, has meant erosion and deforestation in the mountains, which leads to flooding in times of heavy rain.

Most peasants lack any official identity papers. We might just as well ask whether the Haitian government exists for these peasants in the communal sections any more than they exist for it. What use are the various ministries to these rural peasants? What use are the ministries of agriculture, public health, public works, interior, environment, education or finance? What alternatives, what hopes, remain for rural peasants?

The History of APF and its Achievements over 20 Years

APF is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2008, twenty year since it began working for sustainable development at the communal section level in Fondwa. Our mission has been to help peasants develop themselves as they develop their region as well. Since the day we founded the organization, we've been working tirelessly to help peasants organize themselves, to secure them access to technical assistance from specialists in agronomy, administration, accounting, medicine, veterinary medicine, and engineering, and to bring public services to the community.

Our overarching goal has been to help peasants gain access to the services that the government would normally be responsible for providing them in their community. Peasants are people like all people; they're citizens like all citizens. As citizens of their country and children of God, they have the right to find whatever someone needs to live with dignity and the respect all people are entitled to right where they live.

Here is a partial list of the projects APF has put in place towards that goal over the last twenty years:

1. The construction and maintenance of the Fondwa road, leading from the Jacmel highway at Anba Tonèl to Ka Foumi.
2. The organization and construction of a school: Preschool, primary, and secondary with 650 students and 35 teachers. The school offers ongoing faculty development for teachers, a school lunch program, a library, and a computer room for students.
3. Sending over twenty young people to study overseas in the US, France, Trinidad, Cuba, and Costa Rica. They return to work with us in Fondwa.
4. Establishing an orphanage for more than 50 children, ages one month to 25 years. Many of the children have moved on to university or professional school.
5. Organizing a nine-month popular university from July 2001 to March 2002 in which everyone was both teacher and student. The peasants themselves were the history professors.

6. Establishing more than 30 cooperative projects with overseas partners – Canadian, American, French, Cuban, and Dutch – since 1993. Partners have stayed in Fondwa for anywhere from six months to three years.
7. Since 2005, providing a home to a retired African-American Holy Ghost priest.
8. Offering courses to local youths in computer literacy and languages, but also in cooking, sewing, embroidery, baking, and carpentry.
9. Organizing many training sessions for local peasant organizations in agriculture, animal husbandry, administration and accounting, creating model gardens, tree nursery, reforestation, seedling production, soil conservation, honey production, animal health and production, food production, project administration, etc.
10. Sending Fondwa peasants to participate in training in other parts of Haiti, like: Marmelade, Papaye, Hinche, Jean Rabel, Limbé, Vali, La Vallée, Dondon, etc.
11. Since 1993, planting more than 50,000 trees in the area every year.
12. Organizing training for peasants from other parts of the country, like La Vallée, Petite Goâve, Beladère, La Gonave, etc.
13. Organizing literacy programs for local peasants.
14. Organizing a savings and loan association.
15. Organizing a health clinic and pharmacy.
16. Capping over 16 water sources and building reservoirs and cisterns for them.
17. Constructing more than ten rainwater cisterns.
18. Creating several income-generating activities, like a welcome center for visitors with an eco-tourism program, a bakery, a restaurant, a soft drink warehouse, a cement dealership, a construction materials rental service, an auto parts shop, a pigsty, and a chicken coop.
19. Setting up a radio station.
20. Creating a transportation service.
21. Organizing internet access in collaboration with a satellite internet company.
22. Founding a university on the mountain for peasants' children, where we train them to become specialists dedicated to working for rural sustainable development.
23. Establishing the basis for APF to become a national NGO.

In 2002, APF became a NGO as a means of sharing its resources with the rest of the country, especially with the other 569 communal sections. We undertook this as a step towards establishing the University of Fondwa 2004 (UNIF 2004), where we are educating young people from all communal sections so that they're return to work with peasants when the graduate. UNIF 2004 opened its doors January 12, 2004, with 20 students from twelve communal sections in six of Haiti's departments. The University still struggles with its finances, but we remain intensely committed to its task. We will fight for it until the end.

Project Details

In honor of its 20th anniversary, APF would like to share its resources, its experiences, and its know-how with the rest of the country by hosting a National Peasant Congress. It would be a means for us to help the Haitian government accomplish the task

set for it by the 1987 constitution, to integrate peasants into the work of running the country.

1. We will invite:

- 100 delegates from peasant organizations in and around Fondwa.
- 100 delegates from peasant organizations from Haiti's ten departments.
- 30 students and professors from the national university and other universities that work in the country.
- 50 officials (ministers, members of parliament, mayors, and local officials).
- Assorted other delegates from women's and other organizations that work in rural communities.

2. The following criteria will be applied towards the selection of national delegates:

- Organizations must be able to show that they've existed for more than three years.
- They must be able to demonstrate that they've completed at least three projects in their communal sections.
- They must have a board or an executive committee and they must furnish all officers' names.
- They must have legal status.
- The delegate an organization sends must reside in the communal section he or she represent.
- Delegates must understand their section's problems well and be able to defend their section's interests.
- Delegates must have photo IDs.
- They must agree to participate in all of the Congress's activities.
- They must agree to accept all rules and regulations established for the conferences.

2.1- Delegates from northern Haiti will meet in Port au Prince for transportation to the Congress.

2.2- Delegates from southern Haiti will meet at Carrefour Dufort.

3. We will pay for transportation, food, and lodging for all delegates except those from Fondwa. We'll pay for food only for the delegates from Fondwa.

4. Each delegate will plant 100 trees in the planned model forest.

5. Signs announcing the Congress will be posted in various parts of the country: two in Port au Prince, six on the Jacmel highway, and two on the Léogâne highway.

6. We will organize musical performances. We'll invite the Gwoup Kontredans Fondwa and other music groups, especially those that perform traditional Haitian music.

7. We will rent spaces in Fondwa in which organize larger meetings.

8. We will celebrate mass in St. Antoine's Church in Fondwa on April 24, APF's anniversary.

9. We will invite all the other local churches to participate in a day of praying for peasants to be able to assume their rightful role in governing the country.

10. We will organize various debates and discussions

11. We will produce a number of joint documents

12. We will organize an agricultural exhibition for agricultural products, crafts, and livestock.

Congress Objectives:

1. Provide peasants the opportunity to share their various experiences in sustainable development at the communal level.
2. Collect their experiences in a document that can serve as a general introduction to sustainable development at the communal level.
3. Draft a law for the participation of communal sections in the governance of the nation, as is required by the 1987 Constitution. (See: 1987 Constitution, articles 61 and 246).
4. Plant 30,000 trees during the Congress.
5. Provide each Congress participant with a Creole copy of the 1987 Haitian Constitution.

Budget (attached)

Congress Results:

- a) Drafting a document that can serve as a general orientation to sustainable development in at the communal section level in Haiti.
- b) Writing proposed legislation for the participation of communal sections in the governance of the nation, as is required by the 1987 Constitution. (See: 1987 Constitution, articles 61 and 246).

That law must:

- 1- Enable peasants to receive all public services where they live.
 - 2- Authorize the government to integrate peasant associations into the national budget.
 - 3- Authorize the government to finance the training of technicians who make long-term commitments to working with peasants at the communal section level after they graduate.
- c) Organizing a model forest in Fondwa with 30,000 trees.