By Josette Perard

On March 8, 2012, women throughout the world celebrated International Women’s Day. On that day in Haiti, various women’s groups convened and held meetings to reflect on the struggles of women in Haiti and discussing: how women can take the lead to obtain their rights, the work being performed, and where current struggles exist.

In these various celebrations, women did not miss the opportunity to commemorate the memory of women who died in the earthquake on January 12, 2010. This included the great champions of Haitian women’s rights Magalie Marcelin, Miriam Merlet, Anne-Marie Coriolan, and Gina Porcena all of whom were among the countless others who disappeared in the disaster.

In Port-au-Prince, the Ministry of Women organized a forum on women’s issues and the Haitian Women’s Solidarity Organization (SOFA) had a march calling for women’s worker rights.

In rural communities where Lambi Fund works, women took the initiative to meet and to reflect on the situation of women in Haitian society and to discuss how they could make claims to obtain their rights as citizens.

The current situation of exploitation, discrimination and mistreatment of women in Haiti is complex. It can be seen everywhere deeply rooted in daily practices - it is an underlying issue and continued crisis in both civil society and politics.

Some discrimination carries the trademark of the feudal system of the 19th century, where little girls serve as restaveks Continued on Page 2

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Fostering practices that yield democratic functioning in Haiti is the overarching principle of the the Lambi Fund of Haiti’s mission. Each and every day, together with our partners, we assess events and situations created by policies or the lack thereof that weaken the capacity of our communities to strive to move forward.

I was never more surprised than when I encountered a Dominican asking me, “Donde está Port-au-Prince?” That was while I was in Ganthier recently, a small town near the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In Petion Ville, when I was hungry, a family member asked me if I wanted some Dominican food that was on hand for an afternoon snack. Whatever happened to Akasans or Fritay (a Haitian medley of fried vegetables and griot), I thought to myself.

When I needed to wash my hair, my choice was Dominican or Haitian hairdressers, not vice versa and with an emphasis on the former.

On the road, travelling from the North to Port-au-Prince, there were Dominican firms building the roads with Haitian spectators watching them work.

I suppose you could ask me. “What does this Continued on Page 3

Making Women a Priority: Thinking About Women and Pushing for Equal Rights in Haiti

Buying Haitian Food and Goods Supports Development in Haiti
Women Play a Key Role in Haiti's Economy

Continued from Page 1 (a form of indentured servitude) to the lady of the house, among others.

This exploitation runs deep in Haitian society - it is deeply engrained in historical and social contexts and is a phenomenon without an easy solution. As all phenomenon, there will be no real solution until the root causes in social relationships are addressed. To come to the end of slavery, the revolutionaries of Saint Domingue had to destroy the relationship of master/slave. So must the feudal republic the women of Haiti are relegated to, be changed.

Looking back, we can see that many advocates of women’s rights in Haiti have led the way. There was a time not too long ago that women could not vote and were not afforded the same rights as men.

Today, for the most part, men and women enjoy equal political, economic and social rights on paper under Haitian law. While these rights are not always fully implemented in civil society, it is important to recognize and appreciate that strides have been made in a legal context. For example, in 1944 women earned the right to hold public office and in 1950, women throughout Haiti finally earned their right to vote.

Passing of the ‘rape law’ was a landmark moment for women in Haiti. Legislation was passed in response to pressure from women’s groups calling for reform on the way rape was treated in the legal system. Under this law, rape is now considered a criminal offense and forced sexual activity is grounds for a prison sentence.

Despite this prevalence of women’s victories in the legal system, women’s social reality weighs heavier than the laws in place.

For most Haitian women, this workload at home where their role is cooking, cleaning, farming, caring for the children and following the orders of their husbands. Why does this traditional role continue to be the norm? Well, there is little space for liberation in Haitian society. Norms and tradition persist and productive forces tend to get squashed. Despite headway made for women’s rights in the legal system, many antiquated customs continue to repress women and their rights.

For instance, under Article 199, a woman can not undertake any legal action without judicial authorization from her husband. Under Article 201, a woman is unable to give away, mortgage or buy property without the written consent of her husband. In order to override this, a woman must seek authorization from the Dean Court of Civil Cases.

Quite simply, this means that Haitian women do not have the freedom to make decisions for themselves. In order women saying: beautiful women are evil, therefore they fall into poverty as punishment. Another proverb likens Negro women to cashews. The more men have in their pocket, the better...

When a woman does work at a business or factories in Haiti they are paid less for doing the same work as men.

In the family, especially in rural Haiti, boys are more likely to attend school than girls. Girls are meant to stay at home for domestic work.

Women are not appreciated as being the pillars of the economy. Women cultivate the fields, tend gardens and sell goods as vendors in the market, yet all of this work is regarded as an “informal economy.” Most men in society do not recognize this as meaningful work. Few women vendors receive respect; their goods are frequently stolen and many customers purposefully short-change them.

Clearly, equality for women as it is written on paper does not play out in Haiti.

Given this reality, average women must unite to make their voices heard. Both in the cities and in the rural communities, citizens must begin meeting to discuss the rights and duties of women in Haitian society. The dialogue must first open up if there is any hope for genuine change within society.

For the Lambi Fund of Haiti, the aim for gender equality is a deep commitment.

As an Continued on Page 4
Investing in Rural Haiti Yields Results

Continued from Page 1 have to do with rural Haiti or the mission that Lambi Fund seeks to fulfill?"

The rural area comprises roughly 90% of Haiti’s population. We are Haiti. We produce and deliver the food. We sacrifice to create access to education for our children. In spite of the failings of governance, we continue to produce and feed the local economy – we want to grow and we have long waited for strong partnership with government entities to strengthen our capacities.

Survival in rural Haiti is dependent on the need to and the ability to produce creatively given a shortfall of resources. Communities continue to face serious challenges without subsidies, without plans for protecting the soil, without plans for watershed management, without alternative energy for daily utilization and the latest challenge is the loss of our borders. The invasion of agricultural production is implicit in the dumping of goods in our local communities thereby reducing the ability of Haitian farmers to compete and reducing the level of profit they can make - devaluing local products such as rice, plantains, coconuts, and lemons.

Whether we invest $300 million or a billion dollars elsewhere, it rids Haitians of job opportunities, the transfer of skills to our youth and for the local farmer it rids him of the right to access the local market. There is a vigorous yet silent invasion in Haiti. It is seeping through not just the culture, but the land, the market, the thinking. Even the clothing is no longer made by local tailors or shoemakers. Education is not guided by normative standards with a set of principles and values representing the needs of our country.

We are allowing all of these goods to come from elsewhere and it is diminishing the internal trade and exchange that can fuel the local economy. This is about recalculating and reversing the trends. Haiti needs policies that reverse these trends and that place value on local markets and local goods. Policies need to help the rural areas to plant, harvest and sell their crops.

The primary result needs to be an integrated practice of development. This will deliver initiatives that put decision-making in the hands of those whose lives are most affected – meaning a much needed inclusion of the rural areas. We must have policies that are dedicated to improving access to land and productivity that will feed all of Haiti’s nine million citizens.

Teach the next generation the value of the land while at the same time stressing the importance of respect towards the environment. Raise the standards, expectations, rights and implemented justice so that we can have a new legacy.

None of this can be done without policies that invite community members to be part of the development program and opportunities. These policies should value community members’ participation in programs and provide opportunities to change Continued on Page 6

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Member Profile
Marceline Joseph
Tet Kole - Northwest

I am Marceline Joseph and I am president of the Tet Kole-Northwest Women’s Organization. I have five children and am also a member of the progressive women’s singing/samba group called Awozam. We are comprised of female artists from Northwest Haiti who sing inspirational songs about democracy and empowerment throughout the country.

KFTK-NW has a long history in partnering with Lambi Fund. A few years back, we partnered with Lambi Fund to build a grain mill in our valley. This mill has done so much for me. As a member I have been fortunate to enjoy all of the benefits of having a mill nearby. I can tend to my animals more effectively now since I no longer have to travel long distances to get my corn and grains milled.

KFTK-NW’s sophisticated motor also produces a higher quality products. For instance, when you mill ten cans of millet, you get nine cans of ground millet which is significantly higher than other millet grinders in the area.

As a result, many dealers are coming to our grain mill to purchase our high quality product. They purchase corn and millet from KFTK-NW members to sell to other vendors and this is a great financial benefit for us.

The grain mill has also been an impetus for development in our community. Since we have an influx of dealers coming to purchase grain from our mill, we as members have decided to work on nearby roads so that they can enter the town with ease.

Our organization is strengthening as well. People in this valley see the success of the grain mill and they want to get involved. We are growing and planning for new projects in the future.
Continued from Page 2

organization, Lambi Fund recognizes the role that it can play in supporting and promoting positive social change. In this sense, Lambi Fund takes pride in supporting numerous women’s organizations throughout the country. In partnership with these organizations women are learning how to breed goats, building grain mills, receiving the training and capital needed to manage credit funds, and reforesting hillsides to name a few of the many initiatives these female leaders are undertaking.

In addition to supporting a variety of projects that build women’s capacity and increase their incomes, Lambi Fund proudly facilitates discussions about women’s rights and gender equality. Lambi Fund recognizes that empowering women is just one piece of the puzzle. Men too must be invested in this social change.

They must see the importance in training women, providing them with leadership roles and in viewing them as equals. If men are not on board and proud of their wife’s newfound independence and economic success, they will feel as though their role as husband and provider for the family is being encroached upon.

With this in mind, Lambi Fund hosts regional semi-annual Gender Equity Conferences in rural Haiti. These conferences provide men and women with the opportunity to discuss gender roles and norms in society. Participants receive training on not just the rights of women, but they also engage in a variety of discussions about how they can work to support one another – including how women can help to play a positive role in Haitian society.

The feedback from these conferences has been overwhelmingly positive. Both male and female participants say the forums provide a safe and productive outlet for discussing changing gender roles in their communities and that they are now equipped to meaningfully address concerns head-on.

That being said, the exploitation of women and repression of women’s rights is widespread. While small, these conferences and the work of women’s groups throughout the country are working to slowly turn the tide. This important work needs continued support because the voices of thousands of women throughout Haiti deserve a platform to voice their concerns and assert their rights.

When the struggle of women’s rights is recognized within civil society as they have been granted in a legal sense, deep changes that benefit the whole of society will finally take place.

New Project:

The Youth Association of Sel

Since the earthquake, the Lambi Fund of Haiti has more than doubled its number of active projects and is constantly expanding. This is proving to be exactly the case in 2012 as new projects with new organizations are being approved on a regular basis. One new partnership is with The Youth Association of Sel (AJS) to build a grain storage facility and to launch a community credit fund.

AJS is a group of youth members who came together to improve the quality of their lives and to increase opportunities for incomes in their community. In partnership with the Lambi Fund, AJS is working to build a grain storage facility that will purchase, store and sell affordable grain and seeds to farmers in the area. Currently, finding local and high quality seeds at a low price is quite difficult. Members have provided the land and labor, while Lambi Fund is providing the materials needed to build the facility.

In addition, AJS is looking to launch a community credit fund that will provide small loans to help 50 farmers purchase seeds, tools and other equipment for their crops. Access to small loans with low interest rates is incredibly tough to come by in Haiti, so this credit fund will offer members an invaluable opportunity to increase their crop inputs, grow more food and to make more profits in the market. In order to make this happen, Lambi Fund is providing the seed money for the creation of the credit fund and providing members with training in credit fund management and bookkeeping. Since the credit fund is community managed, once the loans are repaid, AJS can then issue loans to even more farmers in the area. The money stays in the community and the fund provides a cyclical way to keep reinvesting in the local economy! Additional workshops in organizational capacity building and grain mill management are being provided to AJS members as well. Lambi Fund realizes that members need to be provided with the tools and skills necessary in order to manage and maintain successful business enterprises long after it’s work is done.

Ultimately, this project is exciting because the grain storage facility and community credit fund will work in symbphony to revive local agriculture and to create more employment opportunities in Sel, Haiti.

Storing Grains and Increasing Incomes
Help Build a New Office for Lambi Fund

Join Lambi Fund's Capital Campaign!

The Lambi Fund of Haiti is in desperate need of a new office and we need your help! **Our ambitious goal is to raise $380,835 USD** to cover land and building costs. During the January 2010 earthquake, Lambi Fund's current building suffered a great number of cracks and damage to it.

As it stands, it is no longer structurally sound and there is a large sinkhole in the back. On top of this, efforts to continually expand Lambi Fund’s programs mean that there is no longer enough space for Lambi Fund staff members.

Quite literally there is not enough space for every team member to have a desk!

We have looked into relocating, but since so many buildings were destroyed in the earthquake, open office spaces are incredibly tough to come by and what is available is offered for lease at incredibly high rates.

So, Lambi Fund has decided it is time to build an office space that will fit our growing needs.

Our hope is to purchase an affordable piece of land in or around Port-au-Prince. This provides a central location for our project members coming from both the Northern and Southern parts of the country.

As Lambi Fund envisions it, the office space will have **three offices, a large meeting/conference room, a kitchen, space for a large garden and exhibition space outside, and a small dormitory** which will allow Lambi Fund to offer multi-day workshops and training programs for its community partners that live in rural Haiti.

In addition to providing our organization with a larger working space that is safe, the Lambi Fund of Haiti sees this as an opportunity to truly build back better. Much of the dialogue surrounding rebuilding plans has talked of this, but little has been done to make this a reality.

Haitian architects and contractors will be hired to ensure the office is built to fit earthquake resistance standards and it is using the most environmentally friendly materials available.

Hopefully this construction project will become a model for what is possible in Haiti: earthquake-resistant construction, the utilization of Haitian expertise, and the purchase of local supplies. This will stimulate the economy, provide jobs and exemplify that Haiti really can build back better than ever before.

Undoubtedly, this will be an incredibly large undertaking and we hope that you will join our efforts to make our dream for a new office space a reality. Visit Lambi Fund's website at [www.lambifund.org/newofficespace](http://www.lambifund.org/newofficespace) to read about size specifications, building plans and how you can contribute to and join the capital campaign.
In The News

Ending One Chapter and Starting Another

After five wonderful years, Lambi Fund’s Deputy Director, Leonie Hermantin has decided to move on.

From Lambi Fund and the people of Haiti: mesi ampil for your tireless dedication and commitment to sustainable development and justice in Haiti - you will be sorely missed!

Good luck to you in all of your future endeavors and remember: once a member, always a member of the Lambi Fund family.

Now a Proud Partner of Recession Jewelry

Lambi Fund is happy to announce a new partnership with Recession Jewelry. This online jeweler offers beautiful and eclectic rings, bracelets and necklaces at affordable prices. Just enter LF at checkout and 10% of your purchase goes straight to the Lambi Fund of Haiti. Start shopping at www.recessionjewelry.com.

Check out Lambi Fund's Interactive Program Map

Curious about where Lambi Fund works in Haiti? Want to learn more about Lambi Fund’s current projects?

Browse Lambi Fund’s 2012 interactive program map online at http://www.lambifund.org/programs_map.shtml.

In addition to seeing where Lambi Fund's 24 current projects are located, you can click on each of the pins to learn more about the type of project, how it works and the grassroots organization that Lambi Fund is working with.

Interested in joining the Lambi Fund family? We are on the search for its next Deputy Director. Email Katiana@lambifund.org for a job description and apply today.

Now, as we say goodbye to one member, Lambi Fund family is happy to welcome a new member: agronomist, Bernard Philogene. His expertise is helping train partners throughout the country on sustainable agriculture and reforestation best practices. Byenveni Bernard!

Interested in joining the Lambi Fund family? We are on the search for its next Deputy Director. Email Katiana@lambifund.org for a job description and apply today.

Keep Up With Lambi Fund News
Online at www.lambifund.org/news.shtml

Local thinking and the reverse of negative trends.

This cannot be done “for” Haitians, but it must be done “by” Haitians. We simply cannot wait to be delivered, but we need to deliver ourselves. There once was a time that food and basics used in Haiti were made in Haiti.

Now the restaurants are not ours and the products they use are not either. The frontier is open for anyone to come in and sell their goods, while we destroy the rural economy - the foundation of Haiti’s economy. We cannot have the international community flood the economy with their goods, we need to close that door and build Haiti’s own goods and services.
I was first introduced to the Haitian culture several years ago through Lucina De Martis, my teacher of Afro-Haitian dances in Rome, Italy. Fascinated by the evocative side of these ritual dances I started deepening my interest in Haiti’s culture through its rich literature. I began reading Jean Jacques Alexis, Jacques Roumain, Lyonel Trouillot, René Depestre, Louis-Philippe Dalembert, Dany Laferriere, Gary Victor, Edwige Danticat, Micheline Dusseck… and still I cannot stop. I am completely overwhelmed by the gentleness and creativity of this charming people!

This is why Silvio, my husband, and I decided to look for a Haitian NGO. After some research, Silvio found the Lambi Fund of Haiti and we soon understood how precious the job is that they are doing. Their philosophy of trusting in and engaging with local movements and communities, empowering women, caring for the environment and their reforestation efforts are critical for a suffering yet still wonderful country.

In few words, we were awed by Lambi Fund’s overall approach. We sent an email and a few days later we started supporting the organization.

Finally, last February Silvio and I had the opportunity to visit Haiti for the first time and our good feelings towards this country and the Haitian people were con-
Lambi Fund’s mission is to assist the popular, democratic movement in Haiti. Lambi Fund provides financial resources, training and technical assistance to peasant-led community organizations that promote the social and economic empowerment of the Haitian people.

MISSION STATEMENT

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