By Sarah Leavitt

It was a warm, sunny day in Les Cayes, Haiti. The city was bustling with activity – merchants hustling to sell their merchandise, moto taxis weaving in and out of traffic and school children with their cleanly pressed uniforms walking to and from school. Amidst this hustle and bustle, representatives from 14 grassroots organizations throughout southern Haiti filed into an airy meeting room. They were there to discuss life since October with the Lambi Fund of Haiti.

Last October, just before Hurricane Sandy moved on to batter the eastern coast of the United States, the storm cycle hit Haiti with days of unrelenting rain. While the brunt of the storm sidestepped the island, rains pounded the South for four days straight, resulting in widespread crop damage and loss of livestock. Haiti’s Ministry of Agriculture estimated that 70-90% of planted agricultural crops were lost, resulting in severe food security concerns.

With these dire prospects in mind, Lambi Fund field staff mobilized 14 grassroots organizations to assess damage and to determine how best to respond. As a result, emergency relief grants were provided to each of the organizations to purchase seeds and fertilizers needed to replant crops, to repair damaged irrigation canals and to replace animals lost in the storm.

Now, on this sunny day in late February, Lambi Fund staff met with representatives from each of these organizations to discuss the impact of these relief grants.

A member of AFDL explained, “The emergency relief was an opportunity for us. Sandy was during the planting season, so we weren’t prepared to repair the land. With this money we re-tilled the land. We planted again. Now we have corn, nuts, and black beans…we have begun harvesting.”

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Another said that, “Lambi Fund provided support to our members when they weren’t sure how they were going to undo the mess of Sandy. They helped us replant and start again.”

As Lambi Fund staff sat and listened while representatives shared with the group how the emergency relief grants were used, it quickly became apparent that several vulnerabilities were making it difficult for farmers to move forward.

As an elderly member of ODRO shared with the group, “I remember when I was young hurricanes really shook the country - they were a rarity. At the age of 25 I’d only experienced two hurricanes. Now, we have them almost every year. I can tell you that Haitians are not a lazy group of people. Unfortunately though, it seems that every year there is an event that shakes the country more and more. The rains, the sun, the cholera... every event in our country is a hurricane.”

Farming Difficulties Continue

The most troublesome news was that it has not rained since Hurricane Sandy. At the time of the meeting, it had been four straight months without rainfall. A member of TK-Bedo said, “After every hurricane there is a major drought. The land is dry and hard.”

He continued on to explain that, “When there is rain, it is guaranteed to flood. In January, everyone was ready to plant, but there was no rain. We continue to wait and wait and the rain never comes.”

One after another, grassroots leaders shared their woes regarding the drought. It seems that organizations located in areas near a river or with irrigation fared much better. Members were able to take the emergency relief grants, purchase seeds, make repairs and replant.

For those less fortunate organizations with no means to water their crops aside from rainfall, the outcomes were not as significant. Most were waiting to plant their crops until the rain arrived.

These types of circumstances are typical in Haiti. Living a life of poverty leaves Haitians open to numerous vulnerabilities. A degraded environment from years of deforestation leaves the soil devoid of nutrients essential for growing bountiful crops. Climate change is bringing unpredictable growing seasons and lowering crop yields. Farmers that lack access to irrigation canals and water pumps are at the mercy and unreliability of rainfall. High interest loans with untenable loan requirements tie hardworking Haitians to a never ending cycle of debt.

It is a compounding of circumstances like these that has lessened the overall impact of Lambi Fund’s emergency relief. While the Lambi Fund of Haiti clearly would have desired to see more marked impacts, this meeting has required the organization to take a long, hard look at its efforts and realize that life in Haiti is changing. Each and every day life gets harder and the multitude of struggles that rural Haitians face continues to mount.

This hard reality is what makes Lambi Fund’s partnerships with grassroots organizations so important. As an organization, Lambi Fund realizes that it will never have, nor should it have the capacity to address the myriad of issues that leave communities vulnerable and make development in Haiti difficult.

It is in the face of these vulnerabilities, however, that Lambi Fund recognizes the ever present importance of communities uniting, working together and calling on the government to make changes that will benefit the greater whole of society.

This is why Lambi Fund’s work to strengthen organizational capacities and teach civil rights is an irreplaceable part of its efforts. Providing communities with the tools they need to respond to changing needs, problem solve and advocate for change in their community will be an integral part to advancing Haitian's quality of life.

Take the Women’s Organization of Jabwen (OFJ). Continued on Page 6
Training for Tomorrow

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Innovative Training Methods

Here, organizations that have received previous technical training from Lambi Fund and currently run their own community enterprises are employed to provide the training and transfer skills to new partner organizations.

For more than ten years, Lambi Fund has applied this strategy to mill projects where members of one organization facilitate workshops for members of another organization on the operation, maintenance and management of a grain mill. For example, OPG has facilitated workshops for the organizations OPTM and ACHVRO. These learning exchanges typically occur with organizations located in the same region.

The first organization to ever participate in a grain mill training with Lambi Fund had to travel nearly eight hours to the closest training center. Now, thanks to an increase in grain mills, members no longer have to travel such long distances. Most can even sleep at home. This reduces the costs of transportation, lodging and causes less disruptions to one’s family life.

These workshops are usually held just as the project begins. Lambi Fund’s first priority is to ensure that its partners are provided with the tools and techniques that will enable them to manage projects successfully.

Designing Effective Workshops

Workshops are designed to be inclusive and comprehensive. In the case of grain mills, this includes discussing grain production, commercialization, and the troubles tied to processing grain. Members also discuss ways to make the mill profitable, market the mill, bring in more clients and efficiently manage mill operations even when harvests are sparse.

We have found that this model is mutually beneficial. Both the trainers and trainees benefit because facilitators are challenged to adapt their curriculum to meet the specific needs of a new community. The facilitators’ experience working as educators also strengthens their own understanding of the realities in which they live. Leading workshops also breeds experts on the subject matter, while helping them to understand and address the productive capacity and challenges of partner organizations.

Aside from a simple transfer of knowledge, these workshops create the space for two hardworking grassroots organizations to come together and connect on multiple levels. The facilitating organization has the opportunity to share the positive impacts of the project, along with what has worked and what has not.

Forming Lasting Partnerships

This creates stronger bonds of friendship and solidarity between the two organizations. The trainers, in a sense, become a model or source of reference for the recipient organization. Members can consult with one another regularly and ask for assistance when needed. This encourages a more autonomous progression of projects.

As a result, mills no longer sit idle, as had been the case in the past. When a motor breaks down or a spare part is needed, mill operators are able to quickly fix the problem thanks to the support of their partner organization which has most likely addressed and resolved similar issues in the past.

In short, these partner-to-partner and community-led workshops offer a plethora of benefits. Up-and-coming partner organizations are paired with “veteran” organizations who can in turn teach them the ropes, while rich and lasting relationships form across organizations, creating lasting opportunities for networking, guidance and shared best practices.

I am proud.

Lesange Henry

Member Profile

I am the president of the Coordination of Peasants of Mark (KPM). KPM is an organization that has existed for over 30 years and spans across five different localities. As an organization, we have planted over 100,000 trees, built 31 family rainwater cisterns, and launched numerous projects in the community.

In 1999, KPM partnered with Lambi Fund on a reforestation project that produced 55,000 seedlings. In that project we were very successful – 90% have grown into full, mature trees. If you look around at these hills, the trees are a result of that 55,000. Unfortunately though, there has not been 100% survival because we Haitians live under very arduous conditions. Sometimes, in order to get food, a tree has to be cut down to sell for charcoal - we have no other alternative. If this becomes the case, we try to stress that members just cut a branch or so, not the entire tree. This ensures that the tree can keep on living and producing for our community.

In our newest project with Lambi Fund, KPM is working to plant 100,000 seedlings. We need to do this project to progress ourselves. We live on this land and every time there is a natural disaster, there is major destruction. If we allow the mountain to deteriorate, the water will one day not find land and will wash us away. We are trying to prevent landslides and save our local environment.

Since seedlings are like kids, the attendants go where the seedlings are planted to take care of them and make sure they grow. They monitor them. A tree is your child, your future. This is an investment and you must protect it. When I walk in my community and I see a tree from KPM, I am proud.
The Demands of Daily Life in Haiti

Bonjou Zanmi!
Kate’s First Visit to Haiti

By Kate Dill

When the entire Lambi Fund of Haiti team traveled together in February to meet a few of our partners in the South, Nippes and Artibonite Departments, the trip was also my first time in Haiti.

The visit allowed me to witness firsthand the challenges that the Haitian people face, but it also reinforced my strongly held belief that grassroots organizations provide a critical space for community members to identify shared challenges and devise solutions.

For those who have not had the opportunity to travel to Haiti, I know that you do not have to search long to read accounts of the extreme poverty that exists there. Thus, I will not dwell on it here longer than to say, as someone who has traveled elsewhere in the developing world, I still find it incredibly difficult to witness the hurdles such a taxing environment raises in people’s daily lives.

However, I choose to focus on the many wonderful memories I have traveling throughout Haiti - a truly unique country. If someone asks me in ten years what my first impressions driving around the country were, I know that the street vendors and vibrant, colorful marketplaces will immediately come to mind. All sorts of goods were sold in the street markets, ranging from clothing to vegetables and tropical fruits.

I frequently observed two vendors selling the exact same items right next to each other, and I became curious how they make a living selling their products. A member of our partner organization Women in Action in GwoMon (AFAGM) later told me that each vendor has her regular customers. She takes orders, travels four hours in a crowded tap-tap to Port-au-

Prince to purchase her goods, and then returns to GwoMon to deliver the orders and sell the remaining merchandise on the street. With this money, she is able to feed her family and send her children to school.

This is an example of how people in Haiti are working hard to survive and create opportunities for their families. It is also indicative of how important it is to talk to people to really understand what their daily lives are like.

The people I came into contact with during my stay inspired me to ask how my efforts can more effectively support my colleagues in Haiti and Lambi Fund’s partner organizations as they undertake the truly challenging and courageous work of improving their communities, creating opportunities for themselves and future generations and doing so in a way that restores and sustains the environment.

Our visit to the Association of Youth in Saint Martin for Community Development (AJSDC) provides an example of the power of organizations to move their communities forward. AJSDC approached Lambi Fund with a proposal to install a rice mill in their community. Lambi Fund toured the area and, observing that corn and millet were common crops, suggested that AJSDC instead purchase a standard cereal mill.

AJSDC agreed, purchased and installed the mill, and began operations, serving the entire community.

Using revenue generated by the grain mill, AJSDC made two strategic purchases:

1) a sorting machine that separates the processed grains from dust and foreign particles, making the output a more desirable product, and

2) a used rice mill, which they put into service a few months after the grain mill opened.

All three machines are located in the same space, creating a central location for women to come and process all of their grains at once.

Our conversation with AJSDC revealed not only that they took initiative to grow the services they provide to the community, but also that they think creatively to identify problems and formulate solutions that responsibly address those problems. AJSDC is evidence of grassroots organizations’ capacity for innovation and self-determination, and I feel lucky to have met them.

This project is a reminder that Lambi Fund has much to gain
Strengthening Goat Breeding Efforts

Project Update:
The Peasants Organization of Bige

Founded in 1987, the 340 member strong Peasants Organization of Bige (OPB) has a long history in Haiti. In 2011, OPB partnered with Lambi Fund to launch a goat breeding enterprise and open an animal pharmacy.

To begin, members of the organization received trainings on organization-al capacity building, project oversight and management, modernized goat breeding techniques, and how to care for and grow feed for goats.

Following these workshops, OPB set out with the support of Lambi Fund to build 23 pens and enclosed grazing pastures. Then, for each pen, 10 female goats and 1 male goat were purchased (253 in all).

Despite some losses, 228 kid goats have been produced and the entire goat herd has grown to a total of 416. OPB members’ diligence in caring for the goats is paying off, because female goats are pregnant and the nearby environment is being protected from open grazing.

One by one, members are reaping the benefits of these births. A young, twenty-something member of the organization: John Joseph said, “I received one goat and she got pregnant. I now have three female goats. Once they have kids, I’ll be a rich little man soon.”

The second aspect of this goat breeding project was opening an animal veterinary pharmacy. Members of OPB identified this as a need because there was nowhere nearby for goat owners to purchase medicines for their goats. Now, a pharmacy is open in their community. The organization is working to stock and sell medications to locals at an affordable price. This has not come without its challenges though.

OPB’s president explains, “The problem we have run into is that lots of goat owners don’t know most medications. We’ve also run into the problem of meds expiring. In town when medications expire, pharmacies sell them anyhow. Here, with our pharmacy though, OFJ has a reputation to uphold. We won’t sell the product and this is a loss for us. This is very difficult for our organization.”

Another concern is that, “Most members and residents in the area don’t want to go to the pharmacy until the goat is sick or dying. We try to tell people that preventative care is the best way to care for goats, but in this culture and with a lack of money, people generally don’t do that.”

Ultimately, the organization is struggling with supply and demand issues. Like any new business, OPB is tracking purchases so that they can stock more of the popular medications and less of others.

Additionally, OPB is trying to educate goat owners on medication care as an investment that will promote the health and overall productivity of goat breeding. OPB is confident that the pharmacy will have a more reliable stream of customers.

Eventually, OPB would like to expand the pharmacy to include supplies for other livestock.

Kate walking up the mountainous hillside to meet with KPM from our partnership with rural grassroots groups. We are constantly learning from them and using those lessons to inform how we support new projects and evolve Lambi Fund’s programmatic focus areas.

On my last full day in Haiti, we drove from the relatively quiet city of Ennery in the Artibonite back to hectic Port-au-Prince. The drive afforded me one more glimpse of all the activity that goes on every day in Haiti.

We passed expansive rice fields, where groups of neighbors were working together to care for each other’s crops. We saw denuded mountainsides, stripped of all but a few trees and bushes. We drove through Saint-Marc, where people played on the beach and frolicked in the water. We passed a funeral procession, and children walking to school, and women carrying huge loads in baskets on their heads. We saw people washing laundry in dirty rivers or bringing heavy containers of water from the nearest well back to their homes. All this, and much more, happens every day in Haiti.

As I reflect on all that I saw during my trip, I am reminded that, though Haiti is a complex place, life there goes on. I spend much of my time in the US talking about the major challenges the country faces, of which there are many, and it sometimes feels overwhelming. But my trip reminded me that the Haitian people are survivors.

With that in mind, the road ahead does not seem so daunting.
Lambi Fund Welcomes New Board Member

The Lambi Fund of Haiti is happy to announce that Jessica Hsu is the newest member of the Board of Directors. She was approved as a voting member at last December’s board meeting. Jessica joins Lambi Fund with a range of experiences that will be an asset to this organization. She is an Anthropologist and Community Organizer who has been working with Haitian communities for over the last decade. Her work and advocacy research, primarily focused in the Grand Anse Department of Haiti, are motivated by community-based, socio-environmental justice and development. Jessica actively participates in a number of collaborations and solidarity efforts which bridge the rural, to the urban, to the international. She received a BA from Rutgers College in Journalism, Psychology and English (focused in African-American literature), an MA in Social and Cultural Anthropology, and is working towards her PhD. From everyone at the Lambi Fund of Haiti, bienvenue Jessica!

Leave a Legacy
Include Lambi Fund in Your Estate Planning

Has the time come to begin making plans for your will? Would you like to make a lasting impact long after you have passed? If so, there are numerous ways to include the Lambi Fund of Haiti in your estate planning that are both flexible and effective in leaving behind a legacy that will continue to support the empowerment of Haitian communities for years to come.

One way is to include a bequest provision in your will or revocable trust. By bequeathing land and other monetary assets you ensure that what you leave behind is utilized to its maximum potential, without affecting your cash flow during your lifetime.

For some, your retirement plan may be worth more when donated to the Lambi Fund of Haiti. By naming Lambi Fund as a beneficiary to your IRA, 401(k) or other qualified plan, the residual assets can pass on to the organization tax-free after your lifetime (please check with your retirement account manager to verify that your plan qualifies for these types of benefits).

Another way to make a significant impact is to list the Lambi Fund as a beneficiary on your life insurance.

Organizations like OFJ are an exemplary model of what can be done when communities unite and go beyond the work of an individual. This group has gone beyond just this project to launch numerous efforts that are working to strengthen the community. When organizations like OFJ transcend unitary efforts to address a number of initiatives, the true power of being united is realized.

So, in the short-term, as communities continue to recover from the impacts of Hurricane Sandy, the true rebuilding continues as local organizations work to improve their communities and strengthen their voice.

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A member said, “At first, our husbands would always ask, ‘Why are you part of that organization? It takes up too much time.’ Then we became partners with Lambi Fund [for goat breeding efforts] and they began to see our projects and the impact. Now our husbands will ask, ‘What are you doing home? Go to your meeting!’ They see the value of our work and want to be organized too.”

Planned giving supports the future of Haiti

For more information on how to include the Lambi Fund of Haiti in your estate planning or to discuss with the organization a plan that fits your needs and fulfills your vision for the future please email marie@lambifund.org.
I lived in South Florida for many years and have always admired the Haitian women for being so strong and determined. After the earthquake, the media brought to light the living conditions in Haiti. I just knew I had to help in some way. I made donations to various organizations. During this time, I took a course on globalization and my term project was on the Lambi Fund of Haiti. After much research, I fell in love with Lambi Fund and decided if I was going to donate money to Haiti - it would be through the Lambi Fund of Haiti.

The main reason I decided this is because through Lambi Fund’s model, it is the people of Haiti who make the decisions in what is needed to improve their lives and not some corporate board. The people of Haiti know what is best for them. They bring their ideas to Lambi Fund, and in turn, Lambi Fund provides them with the resources and tools they need.

Overall, my dollars may help the people of Haiti, but in reality, I am being helped because by seeing their resilience and strength, this encourages me to be the best that I can be. Not to give up on my dreams, and with enough hard work, I can do anything.

Susan’s jewelry shop Strum and Sparkle donates 5% of all earring purchases to the Lambi Fund of Haiti. You can visit her website at www.strumandsparkle.com/earrings.
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.