Supporting economic justice, democracy and sustainable development in Haiti

MISSION

The Lambi Fund’s mission is to assist the popular, democratic movement in Haiti. Its goal is to help strengthen civil society as a necessary foundation of democracy and development. The fund channels financial and other resources to community-based organizations that promote the social and economic empowerment of the Haitian people.
ANNUAL REPORT 2003
Project Review

Since its inception in 1994, the Lambi Fund has supported over 100 projects throughout Haiti’s nine departments. Most of these have become self-sustaining community efforts within the first 18 months of operation. In 1993, we supported 24 projects in Haiti in four different program areas.

As part of our selection criteria, all projects supported by the Lambi Fund are based in strong and established community organizations which are: nonviolent and nonpartisan; directed and evaluated through democratic processes; and supportive of the larger democratic movement in Haiti. We remain committed to giving rural peasants control over production, especially food processing and distribution. While smaller projects remain the norm, we are responding to the increased strength and sophistication of larger peasant organizations by funding more large-scale projects through a combination of grant and loan funds.

1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Most Haitians live in the countryside and rely on agriculture for their livelihood. Lambi focuses our work on accompanying this group of people, recognizing them as the only truly productive segment of an agrarian-based economy. This support helps to ensure food security for the entire nation. However, due largely to exploitative conditions, many peasants don’t have adequate access to the inputs and infrastructure that they need to produce profitable harvests and process their commodities for sale. Since women bear proportionally more of the burden in the agricultural economy, it isn’t surprising that many of the agricultural projects we fund are developed, organized, and directed mainly by women.

Community Farmland (One new project)
Landless peasants in Haiti are often forced into sharecropping agreements with wealthy businessmen. The peasants pay all the expenses for farming the land and do all the work; they then pay half their harvest for the use of the land! It’s like the Haitian proverb says, “The donkey works so the horse can gallop.” This project aims to break that cycle of exploitation by providing the members of a peasant organization with the seeds, hand tools, cattle plows, inputs and training they need to cultivate nearly 4 hectares of land which they rented. The profits from their collective efforts will go towards purchasing land outright. To ensure food security in the area, this project also involves a complementary grain storage depot, also funded by Lambi.

Coffee Plant Nursery (One new project)
Coffee can be a profitable crop for Haitian farmers, but not when big landowners and speculators manipulate the price for their own advantage. By banding together in a cooperative of small coffee growers, farmers were able, with Lambi’s financial support, to establish their own successful coffee washing workshop, thus eliminating the need to sell their coffee before harvest at artificially low prices. Now the same cooperative has asked Lambi for further help. In order to increase local coffee harvests, the farmers need new coffee plants, some of which haven’t been replaced in thirty years. This project will establish a nursery of 35,000 coffee plants and 15,000 shade plants that will be grown alongside the coffee. Local farmers will be able to purchase the plants at low prices, and within four years they should see significant increases in their production levels and profits.
Pig Husbandry (Two ongoing projects)
In the 1980’s, an outbreak of swine flu in the Dominican Republic alarmed the U.S. pork industry. With enormous pressure from the U.S. government, the Haitian government, under the Jean Claude Duvalier dictatorship, carried out a wholesale slaughter of the Creole pig population. This left peasants economically devastated, since farm animals are one of their few investments. These Lambi-funded pig husbandry projects aim to help farmers recuperate the loss by providing grassroots groups with a herd of hardy pigs, along with veterinary care for them. After only two years, 36 pigs in one project produced nearly 300 piglets, which were distributed among members of the organization running the project.

Grain Storage (Three ongoing projects, one new)
Forced sales to middlemen crush small peasant farmers, who lack the resources needed to store and preserve their own grain until the next planting season—or until market prices are advantageous. The Lambi Fund provides funds to peasant associations in various regions of Haiti to build small grain depots and to provide training to improve and control grain quality. Stored commodities include corn, beans, peanuts, and millet. The depots insure that adequate grain is available for purchase for local consumption during the dry season, and that seed is available to local residents at planting time. One of these projects complements a community farmland project run by a group in the South.

Irrigation (Two new projects)
Without access to irrigation, Haitian farmers are forced to leave many acres of land uncultivated, thus reducing not only their profits but their ability to feed their families. One of these new projects involves building irrigation ponds and canals in a rural area that will allow an additional 115 hectares of land to be put into production. The other project uses the simple technology of motorized pumps to draw water up from wells throughout three rural communities, allowing farmers to cultivate twice as much land as they usually do. In both cases, the local grassroots organizations requesting this assistance will be trained in the use and maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure.

Cereal Mills (Three ongoing projects)
Farmers producing corn and millet, two of the staple crops of Haitian agriculture, need access to mills in order to process their commodities and sell them at the market for a decent price, or use them to feed their families. However, oftentimes mills are scarce and women walk for hours to bring their grain to be milled, which uses up a great deal of their caloric energy and their time. The milling fees they pay eat up the small profits they make. These Lambi-funded projects provide grassroots organizations, two of them specifically women’s groups, with motorized and hand-powered mills that provide rural communities with the much needed milling service close to home and at reasonable prices.
Motorized Tiller  (One ongoing project)
Much of the farming in the Haitian countryside is done by hand. Rice production on the flatlands, however, can be done much more efficiently with motorized tillers. This grassroots group rents out the tiller, run by a Lambi-training operator, to farmers in local communities. In the first eight months of the project, the tiller prepared over 100 hectares of land for cultivation. This new technology is enabling farmers to grow more rice, both to sell and to feed their families.

Ox Plows  (One ongoing project)
Much of Haiti’s landscape is hilly and strewn with rocks, making motorized tillers impractical. Ox-driven plows, however, are a reliable and appropriate technology, and greatly enhance food production and revenue in these circumstances. In this project, an association of farmers rents out its cooperatively-owned ox plows to association members at reasonable rates, enabling them to put much more land into production.

Agricultural Stores  (Two ongoing projects)
Peasant groups have organized these agricultural stores and tool banks to serve hundreds of farmers by providing tools and seeds at affordable prices. In one area, a viral illness has attacked local rice plants. The local group was spurred to open the store so that farmers could have access to a new rice variety resistant to the illness. In another area, large landowners were renting tools to the peasants who worked for them and taking the rental fees out of the workers’ pay. Thanks to the agricultural store, the peasants can afford to purchase their own tools and avoid that exploitative situation.

2. COMMUNITY MICRO-CREDIT PROGRAM

Haiti’s poor are often denied access to the traditional banking system, and are usually forced to rely on loan sharks, who charge 20% interest monthly (that’s an annual rate of 240%! ). Obviously, this unbearable situation can quickly lead to a downward spiral of insupportable personal debt. Members of grassroots organizations band together to form collective funds to provide one another with much needed capital. Lambi is supporting a small number of these funds to undergird the organizations’ broader development goals.

Micro-credit Funds  (One ongoing, one new project)
These two projects address the need for credit by providing small loans, administered by grassroots organizations to their members, at reasonable interest rates (2-5%). These loans are especially useful to ti machann—the women street merchants who are the backbone of the local retail economy, and often the sole means of support for their families. Organizations, two of them specifically women’s groups, with motorized and hand-powered mills that provide rural communities with the much needed milling service close to home and at reasonable prices.

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Micro-credit Funds for Farmers (One ongoing, one new project)
Even when farmers have access to needed agricultural infrastructure, such as mills and storage depots, they can’t always afford to plant more crops. These two projects provide money to grassroots groups to expand their revolving loan funds, which will give farmers access to the credit they need to purchase seed, fertilizer and tools. One of the groups runs a mill financed by Lambi, which will also benefit, as increased local agricultural production will bring more milling business!

3. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Every Lambi-funded project includes technical and management training. Beyond these seminars, however, Lambi also organizes regional training conferences to bring together members from grassroots groups whose projects we fund, to exchange ideas among themselves, build solidarity and increase their knowledge. In 2002, we organized and funded five such conferences, on topics such as animal husbandry, micro-credit project management, and organizational capacity building.

In 2003, we will concentrate on promoting Sustainable Agriculture; one series of conferences will provide an introduction to the topic, and a second will delve into the practical application of sustainable agricultural techniques. As in years past, we will also again organize a large conference for women from grassroots groups on organizing women.

4. ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

The conservation of Haiti’s waning natural resources is central to all Lambi Fund projects. Community cisterns and irrigation
systems help communities secure safe and efficient water supplies while community reforestation projects curb deforestation – the most rapid in the Western Hemisphere

**Access to water for household use**
(One new project)
“Most people in Haiti live in very bad, unsanitary conditions. One must be healthy to volunteer, to organize, to learn and to lead!” This observation from Lambi’s Haiti office director Josette Perard explains why Lambi has agreed to fund this cistern construction project for a grassroots group whose grain storage project we financed a few years ago. The residents of the area have little access to water, and particularly to clean drinking water. They walk hours to the nearest springs or well to tote water back to their homes, or even use river water for drinking. Water-borne diseases are rampant, especially affecting children. This project will provide 15 cisterns spread throughout the area, which will serve 45 families. Nearby access to water will free up a lot of time for the beneficiaries, which they can then dedicate to organizing and income-generating activities.

**Access to water for economic activity**
(Two new projects)
In recent years, Lambi has provided funding for mill projects that are now asking for assistance in accessing water. In one project, a mill which processes sugar cane, the organization needs to clean the milling equipment regularly to keep it in good working order. The local water source is barely sufficient to provide for the needs of the residents, which makes it difficult to obtain the water needed for this maintenance. At another organization’s grain milling project, people must walk over two miles away to obtain the water they need to wet down their millet before it is milled. In both cases, the organizations have asked for Lambi’s help in constructing cisterns near the mills, which will greatly facilitate the milling operations.

**Grassroots Democracy** – Integrated into all Lambi projects is the opportunity to reinforce indigenous democratic practices while enhancing skills in accountability and project implementation. The Lambi Fund focuses on the grassroots level through four mechanisms: community organizing, organizational development, civic participation, and promoting leadership by women.

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FINANCIAL SUMMARY

REVENUES
Grants $213,200
Donations $136,054
Other $7,616
Investment Income $2,047

EXPENSES
Program $356,700
Management and general $45,650
Fundraising $57,097

THANKS TO MAJOR SUPPORTERS IN 2003

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