

**WATER FOR PEACE: Conflict Resolution through Water**  
**August 3<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>/HAITI**  
**The College of Idaho**  
**Margarette Pierre-Louis**  
[margarette.pierrelouis@votes.collegeofidaho.edu](mailto:margarette.pierrelouis@votes.collegeofidaho.edu)

**Elaboration**

I would like to congratulate the Davis Foundation for being a worldwide promoter of peace. Peace is one of the greatest needs of the world. It does not only mean the absence of war; it means that people have access to their basic needs. Water is the most essential and basic element of life because human survival as well as the environment depend upon it. This is the reason why my proposal focuses on bringing a reliable, clean source of water to a region in Haiti with which I am well acquainted.

According to research done by the United Nations, 58% of the Haitian population still has no reliable water supply. The area where I grew up, *Fond Arabie*, in the western part of Haiti high in the mountains, is one of these regions. In this locality, over 600 families depend on agriculture in their daily lives, so consistent access to water is one of their greatest needs.

These villagers are mostly farmers. They produce for their household with surplus for sale. They work as extended family, with boys mostly helping in the gardens while girls taking care of the domestic labor. They are not mobile, but their land is scattered into different areas.

The only source of water available to *Fond Arabie* is around two hours away on foot over rugged terrain. Daily, women and children from every family must carry five gallon buckets to meet the bare essentials. This source of water is contaminated, and by drinking it, many villagers especially children and old people, fall ill and die. In October 2010, around 50 children and 40 elders died from cholera, malaria and dysentery. In the dry season, the water is dangerously depleted, which creates conflict between residents, loss of food, and loss of domestic animals. In November 2012, I lost my cousin who was killed during a fight over a water source. Reciprocity and face-to-face exchange are part of these villager's core cultural values but have been significantly decreased because of conflict for water. The villagers hardly visit each other because they are in conflict most of the time.

Moreover, because of poor access to education, health, and sanitation, most of the young people move to cities to make their lives better, which causes over population in urban areas, and therefore, more conflicts in the country as a whole. To date, my Water for Peace project last summer was the first and only outside intervention to help in this remote area.

**Proposal**

The collection and storage of rain water, which is abundant and naturally clean, provides a solution to this problem in many developing regions of the world. Haiti receives an average annual rainfall of 54 inches, which could be beneficially stored. Last summer, I worked with Caldwell First Baptist Church to fundraise \$11,580 for the completion of a Water for Peace project in a small part of *Fond Arabie* called *Nan Misye*. I had the support of a local church called Mennonite Salem, the local government, and the local residents to complete this project. With this amount of funds, we installed 19 tanks of 125 gallons to catch rain water, we distributed 300 empty water bottles to treat the rain water with the sun, and we planted 240 different trees to encourage reforestation because we realized that deforestation is one of the main deterrents to water access in this locality. Unfortunately, we

were not able to spread this water project as much as we wanted because the amount of funds did not allow that. However, my goal is to go farther with this project until water is equally shared by everybody who needs it.

This coming summer, in collaboration with the Davis Foundation, if funded, I propose to bring 15 tanks of 125 gallons in another small area in *Fond Arabie* called *Nan Dero*, which has a population of over 400 people. These water tanks are easy to maintain and sustainable, and they are strategically placed so everyone in *Nan Dero* has access to clean water. Rain water run-off from the roofs of local homes channeled to the tanks by gutters will be collected to fill the tanks. All supplies will be purchased in Haiti in order to help the local economy. The local Mennonite church will help transport materials with its truck to a central location where the local residents will bring the supplies to the installation site. I have already received the support of the Mennonite Salem church, the local government, and residents of *Nan Dero* to proceed with this project as soon as everything is ready to begin. I will not be able to provide empty water bottles and trees as I did last year, but I will meet with the villagers to encourage them to keep reforestation by planting seeds from their foods and to keep treating their water with the sun.

### **Outcomes**

One of my personal desires in implementing this project is to inspire young Haitians to be leaders and develop infrastructure in their own locality rather than move to cities. From what I experienced last summer, I know that this project brings reconciliation between residents who are of different religions, intellectual capacities, economic levels and even political differences by creating the need to use and maintain a common water source. This project will also bring hope to Haitians and empower them to make a difference in their own situation by working together.

### **Impacts**

The completion of this project has the potential to greatly improve the lives of more than 400 people. I expect that core cultural values including reciprocity and face-to-face exchange will return to the villagers since they will have more time to socialize. Women and children will have more time for food cultivation, education, and the treatment of their drinking water. The entire community will benefit from better health by drinking safe and clean water. I believe that the impacts of this project are very immediate and effective.

### **Tentative schedule**

I will depart for Port-au-Prince, Haiti on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 and complete the project within a four-week timeframe returning to Boise, Idaho on August 29<sup>th</sup>. I will spend the first week visiting and measuring the houses where the tanks will be installed and meeting with the villagers to encourage and engage them in the completion of the project. During the second week, I will purchase and transport the materials to the installation sites. The final two weeks two weeks will be spent in installing the tanks and the follow up will be done by a local management committee of the project. Upon the completion of the project, a final report will be presented to the College of Idaho.