



CWS

Autumn Story 2015

ACTION AGAINST POVERTY



Credit: Trish Murray

By Gillian Southey, CWS communications coordinator.

The children of Cotterelle are eager to learn in their new classrooms.

Many Hands make Things Happen

The story begins in the rugged hills of Haiti where people are poor and are used to doing things for themselves. The setting is a new four roomed school, the only new building amidst small homes and low level trees. Inside, 67 children are spread through four classrooms, dressed in bright colours with hair neatly tied. Two boys are deep in thought – trying to find the words they need to write a story about their lives. The school is humming. It has not always been like this.

Not far from the school is a grain mill. Inside François is hard at work grinding corn. Injured in an accident, he earns a small wage for himself and more importantly a little profit to help fund the school's operations. The parents try to pay the fees – around NZ\$8.36 a year but it is not enough to cover all the running costs. Sometimes there is no money for the teachers, but they are never discouraged. "We want to help the children," one teacher says.

As peasant farmers the parents spend their days coaxing corn, manioc, bananas and beans out of tired soil. Life has got harder as the fertility falls and with cheap imports that make it more difficult to make a living off the land.

Some years ago the local peasants of Cotterelle formed a local association *Tet Kole* to further their interests. Their priority was to improve schooling for their children. The old school was one room and the children had neither pencils nor books. The education was poor and many dropped out because their families could not afford to pay the fees. Their new school is precious because it belongs to them.

The parents meet regularly to discuss school matters and worry they can't always pay the teachers. "The teachers need to eat," they say. The parents are determined their

children will be "big people tomorrow". They may live in a country rocked by earthquakes, poverty and political turmoil, but they are not waiting for someone else to fix their problems. They know if you want something, you have to do it yourself.

When school finishes at 2pm the teachers become the students. They meet with Joanne, the pedagogy adviser who comes every few months. Like more than 85% of Haiti's teachers, they have no training. Joanne encourages them to review their day and plan for the next - to remain one step ahead of their students. Committed to their students, the sessions are lively.

Getting involved with the Institut Culturel Karl Lévêque has transformed the community. ICKL helps the people find solutions to their common problems. They are



Parents are deeply engaged in the running of their school, partly funded by the proceeds of the new grain mill.



Credit: Trish Murray



a member of

actalliance



Credit: Act for Peace

Residents of Tongoa Island are grateful for food and water filters after Cyclone Pam.

proud of their new school, built and furnished with the help of ICKL's international partners including CWS. "CWS is part of everything here," said one of Tet Kole's coordinators.

In Vanuatu the first supplies were delivered to Tongoa Island, the local people were waiting on the beach. Desperate after Tropical Cyclone Pam, community leaders organised a human chain to unload the boats. Food, water and other supplies were distributed in an orderly manner.

Eriz Pakoa credits much of the success to the disaster preparedness training he had received and the

planning he had done as a member of the local disaster committee over the last six years. Preparations began well before the cyclone hit. They made sure everyone including old people and children took shelter in the school where they were safe even though the roof blew off. One woman gave birth to a baby. The minister led them in prayers. "In the morning we could not believe our eyes. I will never forget. Our gardens were all gone, our houses were all damaged," he said.

After the cyclone the people are working hard to rebuild homes and gardens, especially those of the elderly and the widows. CWS has sent funds to help them in their work thanks to your support. The global ACT Alliance appeal has raised over \$1 million. Now the story stretches to the mountains of Nepal where a magnitude 7.8 earthquake has caused widespread damage. CWS will help. Based in Christchurch, we know it takes a long time to recover from disaster.

The people of Haiti, Vanuatu and now Nepal have proved themselves resilient. They are working hard to build back better with your help. We could not do it without them and they could not do it without us. The same story ends with this remarkable chain of people from Haiti to Vanuatu to Nepal and to Aotearoa New Zealand - linked by their determination to make good things happen.

Please support the Autumn Appeal to make sure that people have food, water, education and hope long after the disaster has struck. ■

Take One More Step

Writing a will is a time to reflect on what is most important to you. It is an opportunity to give to what you believe in. Leaving a legacy to CWS will mean you can help people survive disaster and escape poverty. Please contact David at david.lawson@cws.org.nz or (09) 571 9150 if you would like to find out more.

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