

## **LITERACY FOR LAGONAV: The Mother Tongue Book Project**

A Proposal from the Matènwa Community Learning Center (MCLC)

To Build on the Foundation Enabled by Rotary International and its affiliates

July 30, 2011

**BACKGROUND:** MCLC has a vision, slowly forming, as if being shaped with large pieces of model clay. The vision is not only for Haiti's children to become functionally literate, but also to be authors of their own lives, their own histories, their own creativity. We see this vision as vital to the success of Haiti's children in becoming literate.

Haiti's children, like all children, deserve the pursuit of happiness and the permission to dream. Right now most Haitian children are born into a life of physical work in the fields, or in city slums. For 50% of them the classroom is unobtainable because they cannot afford the costs to even get through the door. Entrance fees, uniforms, books, semester fees, test fees, and a daily meal absorbed in the stomach in order for information to be absorbed in the brain are all beyond these children's reach.

But what about the 50% who are in school? Even if half of those attending get all the supplies they need, how many actually succeed inside a school and what does "succeed" really mean? After elementary school why are only 20% go on to 7<sup>th</sup> grade? How it is that 10% graduate from high school? Who is looking at these numbers and saying, "Unacceptable"! Who is looking at these numbers and seeking a solution that is about each child's future and not just about the test scores? In the present classrooms of Haiti, especially in the countryside, where the majority reside, the pursuit of the learner to uncover the mysteries of the world and find one's talent and ones' contribution to society, is not nurtured but rather smothered under the memorization of the colonial language of French. We must recognize what a serious injustice this is to the children and teachers of Haiti where 100% of them speak Creole yet the present system favors 5%-10% that are fluent in French and continues to leave the mass majority paying for schooling that does not educate them. Yes, French should be acquired in school as a second language, because the Haitian elite prefer to do business in French. The question is: how can we spark the initiative of learning, beginning with the child's native language, Creole, and then move towards fluency in the second national language, French.

We have experienced governmental inspectors' meetings where the directors of schools are all brow beaten in French about how badly their students are doing on the national exams and how this number has to improve. They sit in silence with the exception of one or two men who are confident enough in their spoken French to pose a question. The rest sit waiting to hear a grammatical mistake out of the mouth of the inspector. This is what they will talk about after the meeting instead of the serious business of how to create an environment to develop a classroom of learners who love to read for information and write to communicate. The schools are trying to force the children to memorize facts in a foreign language that they do not understand, killing the spirit for learning in 80% of their students.

Our simple but vital argument is that schools should not feel like prisons but rather lively, peaceful and creative learning environments. Here there should be a place where children are absorbing knowledge because they are reading, hearing, and discussing information in their mother tongue, the language that they understand. At the same time, they can learn a second and third language, as one does the first, orally and then written. If a child's first experience of reading is actually the "reading" of sounds without any understanding of the actual vocabulary, as Haitian linguist Ives Dejean points out, this impedes a child's ability to learn either language well.

**BREAK THROUGH:** The Matènwa Community Learning Center has set the stage for the rest of Haiti. We are on the edge of a huge break through. Initially MCLC was able to lay the foundation for real change because of the confidence of two Rotary Clubs: San Juan Rotary and Rotary Skidaway. We were then able to build the framework because these two clubs encouraged other clubs to join and also get Rotary International involved. With the support of Rotary funding, MCLC has changed the attitude of its community about language learning, and in turn the existence of this community has changed the attitude of several communities across an island of Lagonav as well as the mainland. Now we are at the stage where there is a network of schools on the island of Lagonav who are connected through an influential inspector who is responsible for 48 schools on Lagonav.

And, we believe we have found the solution to the Creole/French literacy challenge. We have found it in the very people that we are trying to educate: the children. We call it the “Mother Tongue Books” (MTB) project. The MTB project was created by MCLC in 2008. Books written by children for children are translated from one mother tongue into the mother tongue of the children who are to receive their books. Many children around the world do not acquire functional literacy skills even if they have had a k-3 education because they are not learning to read in their mother tongue. It is illogical to think that a child can read for meaning in a language for which the child does not have an oral vocabulary. By sharing books across borders and translating them into a local mother tongue children are contributing to each other’s education. Children are helping one another become literate. This is a social justice project that is bringing joy to all who are reading, writing, and exchanging books.

We have built a library, a computer room, a book making room, a bookstore, and an outdoor classroom (training center). We have trained several teachers and children how to make books. We have made alliances with several schools in Haiti in the US and Puerto Rico that are planning to produce Mother Tongue Books.

The first book exchanges were between the Fayerweather Street School (FSS) in Cambridge Ma. USA and MCLC. FSS books were translated into Haitian Creole and brought to the MCLC library and MCLC books were translated into English and brought to the FSS library. We now have a growing network of schools in the US who are eager to make Mother Tongue Books.

The year ahead is critical because there is now a high interest and motivation to make MTBs, both in schools in Haiti, the United States including Puerto Rico.

**PROPOSED PROJECT TASKS FOR ROTARY FUNDING:** Building on a foundation of literacy development that Rotary International and its affiliates have supported, the Matènwa Community Learning Center proposes to take the following next steps:

1. Increase the capacity of MCLC to produce selected Mother Tongue books by acquiring a robust printer and adequate generator to print books at Matènwa.
2. Leverage a recent Boston Foundation grant that reaches into ten Lagonav communities\*, bringing the Rotary-created CLE method to the creation of Mother Tongue Books in each of these schools.
3. Involve the local school official who is responsible for 48 schools on Lagonav in our 10 school program such that he will understand the benefit and the literacy capacity developed as a result of the Mother Tongue Books project.
4. Assure that several schools in the US (including Puerto Rico) are engaged in a productive contribution to the Mother Tongue Book library. At least 10 original titles will come from the US

this year. Assure that they have their own funding for printing a copy for each of our partner schools.

5. Create and assemble, up to 50 original single Mother Tongue starter books in Creole only from the 10 new schools and MCLC. Then chose 25 to be translated and printed as multi lingual books in Creole, French, and English to enhance the MCLC library, and to add to beginning library spaces in each of the ten schools identified above.
6. Introduce the capacity of electronic delivery of Mother Tongue Books, by recording 25 such books and acquiring 12 IPADs for school use. The books will be placed on [www.lago.ht](http://www.lago.ht) for universal access.
7. Use the 12 Ipad in the Rotary funded computer room as a tool with educational software to help students, especially those with learning disabilities. This will expand on the 1 donated Ipad that was introduced to the staff by a special education teacher from Colorado in July 2011.
8. Continue writing workshops by professional authors for Haitian teachers to develop their own writing skills and techniques for teaching writing and creating MTBs.
9. Add more Creole published books from various publishing houses to our bookstore to be made available at affordable prices to other schools following our model.

\*This grant will involve the following communities: Gransous, Plezans, Nan Kafè, Bwabrile, Nan Iske, Plenn Mapou, Bwanwa, Nan Tè Wouj, Masikren and La Palmis.

#### ROTARY PROPOSAL - BUDGET: July 29, 2011

Line Item	Amount
Printer with one year guarantee	12000
Printer supplies	2000
Generator	1200
Books purchased	9000
MTBs - web site	2000
MTBs - translation	2000
MTB printing (paper and covers, book stapler, etc)	5000
Art supplies	2805
Internet communication	1200
Transportation in country (printer installation, etc)	2285
Training materials & food	1854
IPADS and apps	7000
2 macbooks, apps and repairs on previous macs	2500
MTB/CLE Training	2400
Writing Workshops	1000
Computer Training & MTB printing	2400
Project Direction & CLE leadership	26400
Project administration	2400
5% Beyond Borders Accounting	4161.6

TOTAL

85856.22

Budget Notes:

**Printer:** WorkCentre 7120 with one full year service. Purchased in Port-au-Prince, this printer is of robust, versatile quality that will allow MCLC to begin its own book printing operation, greatly enhancing the distribution of Mother Tongue Books across Lagonav.

**Printer supplies:** one set of color ink cartridges plus a second black ink cartridge, and toner. Supplies sufficient for production of draft and final copies of published books, and printing of books from each of the 10 newly-participating schools as well as MCLC.

**Generator:** a small 5 kh generator to enable reliable printer usage. Solar power is not sufficient to run this copy, printer machine.

**Books purchased:** \$500 math/science books in Creole for each of 10 schools listed above, plus \$1k books for MCLC Library and \$3k educational Creole phonics and science books for bookstore. Books to be purchased from: Henri Deschamps, EducaVision, Kopivit, Indiana University, and Universite Caribe.

**MTB Website:** Placement of MTBs on [www.lago.ht](http://www.lago.ht) web site to provide examples, increase access and encourage universal usage of MTBs.

**MTB translation:** The 25 books will be in 3 languages, Creole, French, and English. Additional MTB books from Puerto Rico will be in Creole, Spanish and English.

**MTB Printing:** 25 books, with an average of 16 pages each. 100 color copies of each at an average of \$.10 per page. Use of newly acquired Printer is anticipated. \$4000.00. CLE/MTB 50 starter books 12 copies \$1000.00

**Art supplies:** Creation of the books is expected to require:

Art paper pads \$7 x 10/school x 11 schools = \$770

Watercolor brushes, various sizes \$2 x 25/school x 11 schools = \$550

Watercolor paints (multi color sets) \$100 x 11 = \$1100

Art marker and pencil sets \$35 x 11 = \$385.

**Internet Communications:** Internet communication remains an emerging capacity in Matènwa. It is vital for communications with schools in the US as MTB collaborations develop. The service to be provided for the coming year will be by Hughes Net at a rate of \$99/month.

**Transportation in country:** No international travel is included in this cost. Five round trips from Matènwa to Port-au-Prince are costed, for purposes of transporting supplies and meeting with host partners.

Airfare: Lagonav/Port-au-Prince: 5 trips x \$255/MAF = \$1,275

Truck to carry supplies from Lagonav Airstrip to Matènwa: 5 one way trips x \$100/trip = \$500

Motor taxis Matènwa to airstrip: one way trips 5 x 22 = \$110

Local travel PAP and Lagonav (trucks, buses, taxis, cars): 5 visits @ \$80 = \$400

**Training materials and food:** Participant training expenses, materials and food: These costs are for 30 teachers in 10 days of seminar work, for a total of 300 training days. The materials and food include: \$10/per person for notebooks, pencils, needles, thread, staplers, glue, pads of paper (\$300)  
\$300 teaching materials: exemplar storybooks and teacher guide  
\$3.30/per day for 10 days breakfast and mid-day meals x 30 teachers and 8 staff (\$1,254)

**IPADS:** We are finding that the macbooks are very useful tools for the adults and children, but that more educational games can be used on the IPADS. We are also in the process of putting the MTBs on Interactive Books, an application on IPADS. This gives children access to many books with one IPAD. Children all over the world will have access to MTBs. A special Education teacher will be advising us on which education apps to use for Haitian children having difficulty reading and writing. Right now only half classes can work in the library because of the limited number of computers.

**4 Macbooks:** Two macbooks are for administrative use by the project director and project administrator. Two others for teacher use. They need Microsoft office applications. Two Rotary donated Macbooks need new batteries, two others need repair.

**MTB/CLE Training:** Five of MCLC's most experienced teachers and creators of MTBs will spend 20% of their time in teaching teachers in the ten selected communities how to engage their classrooms in making MTBs. At an average salary of \$2,400/year, each teacher's cost will be \$480 x 5 teachers = \$2400

**Computer Training and MTB Printing:** A local Matènwa resident who is computer-literate will provide guidance to MCLC teachers and students in use of computers to author and prepare stories and books. This individual will also be responsible for printing the 40 books selected as part of this project. This individual will be paid \$200/month.

**Project Direction and CLE Leadership:** MTB leadership is critical to (i) establishing the process of guiding the MCLC teachers who will work with the 10 new communities' schools, (ii) sustaining and building interest world-wide in MTBs as well as getting new books from these schools to the Haiti partner schools, (iii) articulating and maintaining a high quality standard for books that will be printed, (iv) selecting the 25 top quality books to be published as Matènwa's first publishing effort, (v) assuring a reasonable and high quality translation process, and (vi) managing the tasks and the opportunities that this project will engender. The project director has a master's degree from Lesley College in Elementary Education and Creative Arts, is fluent in Creole, and has 25 years experience as a teacher, including 17 years work in Haiti. The project director will be paid \$2,200/month.

**Project Administration:** The duties of the project administrator are to track the schedule and budget of the project, to identify local purchases to be made, to prepare invoices and receipts and monthly project update, and to interface with the host partner on these matters. The administrator must be a local Matènwa resident, fluent in Creole and familiar with vendors in Haiti. The administrator will be paid \$200/month.

**Beyond Borders accounting:** Beyond Borders has been the fiscal agent of previous grants. Jonathan Haggard has guaranteed the smooth distributions and recording of funds in the US and moved from the US to FONKOZE bank for the organized poor and aided in overseeing the Haitian project administrator's accurate reporting.