



SUCCESS STORY

Business Plan Competition partners with local university in rebuilding efforts to recruit, train and reward young entrepreneurs who can assist with Haiti's economic recovery.

“What I would like to learn is how to manage my company better and to eventually succeed,” says *Millsah Belotte, a university student.*



Photo credit -- HIFIVE

Steering committee members Maxime Charles, President of the Haitian Bank Association; Olivier Barrau, President of Alternative Insurance Company, and Marie Laurence Boyer, Director of the Department of Supervision for Credit Unions of the Central Bank of Haiti discuss the BPC at the re-launch.



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Miss Belotte displays her local, traditional products on sale in a Petionville grocery store. They share shelf space with a sea of imported products.

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Hoping to inspire Haiti’s entrepreneurs to play a key role in the rebuilding of their country, USAID and the Inter-American Development Bank re-launched their business plan competition (BPC), “Mon Entreprise, Mon Avenir” (My Business, My Future) or MEMA on June 1, 2010. The BPC, implemented by the USAID-financed project HIFIVE¹ in partnership with the local University of Quisqueya, had been suspended in the days after the earthquake and its implementation schedule and goals were reassessed in view of the earthquake’s impact.

The interest level in MEMA had clearly been high: 300 applications had come in by the original cutoff date (1/20), of which 50 had been submitted after the earthquake. The creation of a dynamic sector of micro, small and medium enterprises would be a key element in creating employment and rebuilding the economy. The re-launch of MEMA included re-opening for more applications and a new emphasis on rebuilding and expanding activities in key sectors of agriculture and agribusiness, cultural products (tourism, handicrafts, etc.), and innovative products (healthcare, sanitation, renewable energy and information technology).

Ms. Millsah Belotte, one of the 50 who applied after the earthquake, has a business plan that focuses on organic agricultural products such as cacao (chocolate), spices and herbs. “Haiti is taking in too many products from abroad and that is not helping our economy,” she stated. Needing to expand her production to meet the growing demand for traditional products, she hopes that MEMA will provide the tools to help her business realize its full potential.

Using a methodology of TechnoServe (TNS)² adapted to the context of Haiti, MEMA unrolls from July until mid-December. After on-line applications, 80 candidates will be selected to participate in training over six weekends in which they will master all of the components of a business plan. After a month of working with a consultant, their business plans will be submitted. A jury will select 20 of the business plans for the final competition in Port au Prince, where they will present their plans to a jury of business experts. The ten winners selected will each receive \$10,000 and additional assistance to realize their ambitions.

Ms. Belotte hopes to be in this elite group. “What I would like to learn from the competition is how to manage my company better and to eventually succeed.” By helping entrepreneurs like her, USAID hopes to inspire and to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit in Haiti, a spirit which can become a real force in the recovery and rebuilding of the country.

¹ HIFIVE, a USAID-funded project implemented by World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) and AED, empowers Haitians by providing access to innovative financial products and services with a focus on rural areas, value chains, remittances, and use of technology to expand financial inclusion.

² TechnoServe, a subcontractor to HIFIVE, helps entrepreneurial men and women in poor areas of the developing world to build businesses that create income, opportunity and economic growth for their families, their communities and their countries.