



SUCCESS STORY

Rebuilding Haiti's Credit Unions Helps Rebuild Lives.

“We are happy that my family came finally back together and we recovered our dignity.” says Wilner Michel, a credit union employee in Léogâne.



Photo credit -- HIFIVE

Wilner Michel, a credit union employee of 12 years, and his family at their temporary house in Léogâne.



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M. Gesner Pierre works on the rebuilding of the credit union and community center in Fond des Negres. He hopes that the new facility will provide greater opportunity to the people of Fond des Negres.

Disclaimer: This “Success Story” is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of AED and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

USAID’s HIFIVE¹ project had only been operating for seven months when the earthquake struck Haiti on January 12th, 2010. Many of the microfinance institutions and *caisse populaires* (credit unions) the project worked with to provide financial services to the rural poor were severely damaged or destroyed. USAID and HIFIVE launched an Earthquake Recovery and Stabilization Fund to help them. To supplement funds coming from USAID and other donors, the implementer of HIFIVE, World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU), also launched a fundraising campaign to aid the damaged credit unions.

USAID’s HIFIVE and WOCCU partnered to bring immediate relief to credit unions in the areas of Port-au-Prince and Léogâne, near the epicenter of the earthquake. Through the WOCCU Recovery Fund, the HIFIVE project was able to provide large office tents to enable the credit unions to continue operations and to provide their employees with tents for temporary housing.

Wilner Michel, a father of three, has been an employee of the CLEF² credit union in Léogâne since 1998. The earthquake completely destroyed the new house he built with loans from CLEF. “I thought that I would never be able to get out of the situation. Even when I finished with my daily work hours, I stayed later at the *caisse* because I did not want to take too much space at my host’s house,” Mr. Michel remembers. A large, high-quality tent provided by the WOCCU Recovery Fund changed that. “With the WOCCU tent, I was able to return with my family to my plot of land and install our tent on the ruin of my house. We are happy that my family came finally back together and we recovered our dignity.”

In Fond des Negres, a small community roughly 3 hours from the capital, the WOCCU fund is being used to rebuild the local credit union CAPOSJ³. The building will host primary and secondary schools, as well as a health clinic. Rebuilding the credit union and community center will provide new hope and opportunity for the people in Fond des Negres.

Addressing employee’s needs and re-building credit unions will provide the catalyst for change needed in underserved communities. Help from USAID and the WOCCU Recovery Fund will enable these financial institutions to resume the key role they play in their communities, to help their clients rebuild their lives, and to contribute to the economic recovery of Haiti.

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 CLEF- Caisse Leoganaise d’Epargne et de Financement

³ CAPOSJ-Caisse Populaire de Saint Joseph