



SUCCESS STORY

Haitian Artisans and Merchants Improve Earnings from Tourism

"Access to credit has helped me! As I've been able to diversify the handicrafts I offer and expand inventory, my store looks better and brings in more clients."

—Jean Rose Antoine, a Labadee merchant since 1986



Jean Rose Antoine participates in the new CPF credit program for Labadee merchants. Shown in front of her store in the market, she is pleased that access to credit has enabled her to buy new inventory that will appeal to Labadee tourists.



Ronald Laratte is one of the artisans selected to participate in the artisanal fair at Cormier Plage Hotel. He brings hand-carved stone bowls and plates from his hometown Leogane, the epicenter of the earthquake that hit Haiti last year. Access to the Labadee market allows him to expand production and provide much-needed jobs in his community, which is still struggling to rebuild its economy.

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More than 700,000 visitors a year come to Labadee, Haiti's largest tourist destination. Passengers from Royal Caribbean cruise ships have enjoyed the beautiful north coast site with its bay, beaches, and amenities since 1985 when it was developed for the company's use under a lease agreement with the Haitian government. Although Labadee has created many permanent jobs for those that manage and support the industry, converting such tourist sites into an important source of revenue for local residents is often a larger challenge.

USAID/HIFIVE* has responded by working to reposition Labadee's handicraft market. In collaboration with local partners, the Federation of Merchants and Artisans of Labadee (FAML), the Tourism Association of the North (ATH-Nord), and *Caisse Populaire de la Fraternité* (CPF), a vibrant local credit union, HIFIVE has used local solutions and a holistic approach to address the multifaceted problem.

More than 950 micro and small enterprises, all members of FAML, sell handicrafts to visitors and provide an important source of employment and revenue to the local population. Nevertheless, sales have been disappointing. Haitian crafts are well-known throughout the Caribbean, North America, and Europe for their quality and creativity, but Labadee merchants have not been able to identify or implement strategies as successful as those in other Caribbean destinations.

Working with FAML to improve the quality of the merchandise available for tourists has been one key part of the solution. ATH-Nord and CPF have arranged three artisanal fairs at nearby Cormier Plage Hotel, bringing outstanding artists and the best of Haitian crafts to Labadee. At the same time, a new CPF credit program allows Labadee merchants to recapitalize their businesses and restock with higher-quality merchandise that is adequately displayed, sized, and priced for the target market. An initial goal is to double the amount of money each tourist spends on handicraft purchases in Labadee. If successful, this could inject **another \$7 million** into the local economy.

USAID's emphasis on local solutions has improved the livelihoods of both artisans and merchants. Haiti's artisans now have access to a market with high potential for growth, and merchants are able to improve their inventory and boost sales. Connecting the country's artisans and merchants with access to credit is helping Haitians optimize revenue generating opportunities from the tourist activities they have long supported.

*HIFIVE is a USAID-funded program implemented by World Council of Credit Unions (WOCU) and FHI 360. It empowers Haitians by providing access to innovative financial services and products with a focus on rural areas, value chains, remittances, and the use of technology to expand financial inclusion.