

## **Church World Service in Haiti before the January 2010 earthquake**

Church World Service has a long history of work in Haiti. It supported the establishment of **Service Chretien d'Haiti** in October 1954 by local Protestant churches, to bring emergency assistance to victims of Hurricane Hazel. Since then, Service Chretien d'Haiti has been involved in many emergency and development projects.

On the island of La Gonave, some 200 students have been taking part in classes at the La Gonave Workshop-Vocational School, with the help of Service Chretien d'Haiti and CWS. Students at the school have been gaining skills in tailoring, welding, plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, painting, secretarial work, bookkeeping, and computer operation. In 2009, a new roof replaced the school's half-century old tin roof, and new benches, tables, and closets were built, and tools and equipment including computers, printers and copiers purchased—all with the help of CWS.

CWS began collaborating with partner **Ecumenical Foundation for Peace and Justice** in 1992. FOPJ, based in Port-au-Prince, has been assisting some 100 children in the Carrefour-Feuilles and La Saline neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince through its House of Hope program. These children had been pulled into the worst forms of child domestic work, including situations in which parents have given their children to live and work for someone else (often because the parents lack the resources required to support the child). Many of the children experience abuse and exploitation bordering on enslavement. FOPJ has been providing education and enrichment opportunities for the children and has worked to end this and other forms of child exploitation. It also has been providing guidance and support to employer families in order to minimize abuse and improve the environment for the children.

The January 12 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince has also damaged the two structures that contain the House of Hope compound, reports Polycarpe Joseph, Executive Secretary of House of Hope. Joseph says there were no fatalities, but many injuries, such as broken bones. There is also no water, power or food, and people are very afraid and sleeping outside. He says to CWS, "We know that you are with us."

Another long-time CWS partner, the **Christian Center for Integrated Development, SKDE**, initiated its activities in October 1991 to provide education, awareness-raising activities and development assistance.

In 2005, CWS began a program with SKDE to mitigate the effects of chronic drought, poverty and food scarcity due to natural and human-caused disasters. SKDE has been helping families in the Artibonite and Northwest departments to improve their access to food through affordable agricultural credit, training and technical assistance. CWS assistance is been helping hundreds of women and men from 14 poor communities who are part of a network of rural cooperatives working together to create economic security and sustainable food sources for their families. And, despite some losses experienced due to hurricanes and tropical storms in recent years, these farming cooperatives were steadily producing and flourishing.

Another partner, **KORAL (Konbit Pou Ranfose Aksyon Lakay)**, has been providing capacity building assistance to local organizations as they help communities develop agricultural and animal-raising projects and develop income-generating projects. Assistance to communities has included purchase and distribution of grains, as well as animals such as goats and chickens, development of savings and loan programs and income-generating projects—particularly for women--and training in production and preparation of seeds and stock management. KORAL has also assisted communities with disaster mitigation and response initiatives.