

PRODEV

with BLAISE ARIDOU

EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR

01. Nutrition

PRODEV schools operate under the understanding that a reliable canteen service is linked to lower absenteeism, better involvement from students, and higher success rates in their schools. Both Zoranje and Labadie have a daily canteen, and for most students, their meal from the canteen is the only meal they will receive all day. Three weeks after COVID-19 school closures, the two schools emptied their pantries and gave the supplies away to parents; however, they have received a growing number of calls from school directors, alerting them that, at home, students are in nutritional distress. Of PRODEV's 15 other schools, 12 have canteen programs, run either by BND or WFP.

02. Resources

Parents in the communities in which PRODEV works usually invest over 50% of their income in school fees and education related expenses. In Zoranje, parents pay a nominal fee of 3,000 to 3,500 HTG (\$35 US) per year. In Labadie, all expenses, including books, uniforms, meals, and transportation are covered by Royal Caribbean Cruise Line. PRODEV's students come from communities where electricity is a scarce or non-existent resource. Additionally, internet is a luxury for these communities, and nearly none of the students have access to a computer. PRODEV's initial efforts to create WhatsApp groups to share homework and material in the south, have failed for lack of connectivity, leading PRODEV to realize that the only accessible media for their demographic is radio.

03. Initiative

Today, PRODEV is working to create a radio program that is an adaptation of classroom material and follows the traditional MENFP curriculum. They are in the recording phase of the project, and each segment will be 30 minutes long. Despite familiarity with the field, Aridou, an Education Technology graduate from France, says the project has been an immense challenge. One of the next

Background

PRODEV, a Haitian NGO, runs 17 schools across Haiti, serving 3,000 students. In this brief, Blaise Aridou, an education program director for PRODEV, shares some practices of two of PRODEV's schools in response to COVID-19 school closures: one in Labadie, near Cap-Haitien and another in Zoranje, part of the Cité Soleil municipality on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince. The schools offer classes from early childhood (Pre-K) to 9th grade. In Zoranje, a community center is attached to the school and operates as the social heart of the community. Children can stay after school and practice art, music, or sports. There is even a media room with computers for the children.

steps in implementing the program will be distributing a radio to each of PRODEV's students' families. Due to a lack of electricity, the radios will have to be solar-powered, and although an initial quote for these radios priced them at \$35 per unit, PRODEV plans to redirect some of its development funds towards purchasing 3,000 radios. The investment is worth it: the brand of radio is proven to last years on the market, and PRODEV's primary objective is to invest in the long term.

According to Aridou, Haiti has only just begun dealing with school closures. With an election year coming and growing vulnerability to environmental threats, schools are bound to be interrupted frequently in the future. PRODEV is committed to investing in high quality material that will make distance learning a reality for the marginalized communities it serves. Aridou says he does not want the next lockdown to be experienced as an emergency with educators running around putting out fires. They want to be prepared. Today, the missing links in their initiative are:

- Finding a qualified audio producer to edit the material they recorded;
- Gathering funds for production services;
- Creating relationships/contracts with the community radios for broadcasting.

PRODEV welcomes impactful collaborations and partnerships to move their vision forward.