

Sherlyne Joseph

A Leader in Agribusiness
Peasant Association of Fondwa (APF)
HAITI

Sherlyne Joseph, a dynamic young community leader for the Association of Peasants Fondwa (APF), is one of the founders of OFPF, an APF peasant women's group. She is committed to lifting up women, providing them with income-generating activities, and empowering them to have a voice in the community. She is role-model for peasant women of Fondwa.



Why did you form OFPF?

Before creating OFPF, there were many APF groups, including groups for youth. There were none for women. In 1990, we met together for the first time.

What impact has OFPF had on the women in Fondwa?

In the past, women would stay home to cook and to get the children to school. We began to gather women to cook together, but also to create activities to draw them out of their houses. The group has had an impact on women; now they feel free to leave their homes to advance themselves, seeking training and developing skills in health and child care through Haitian women's networks. We started with 15 women and today there are 25. Women are motivated!

What else does the group do?

We not only empower women, but we have created a small vegetable enterprise. We established an agri-business for food processing. We added our revenue to help the business grow, sharing profits at the end of the year. We also have a savings pool among us that we can use if a member's family has an illness or other needs. Each group member contributes \$12 per year towards membership.

Where did you receive your training on food processing?

Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) offered training in Port-au-Prince on food processing and business planning. They taught us how to make marmalade, drinks from mangoes and coconuts, and peanut butter. Two people from OFPF went to the training.

How is business?

Our house where we worked was heavily damaged in the earthquake. Our food processing building and our products were all destroyed. We need to begin all over again.

What is your vision for OFPF?

Our vision is to have a new building for our food processing business and employ 50 women. We need initial capital to purchase equipment for processing. We stopped using firewood, because of environmental concerns, but our gas stove was damaged, so we need to repair or replace that as well. We need financing for materials, building, and additional training.

What do you need to set up your business again?

We already have the land in Twoukoffi [a small community in the valley of Fondwa] for our new business. We plan for the building to have 1 small and 3 large rooms with concrete floor and walls so we can wash the surfaces. We want to make it environmentally sustainable so we plan to incorporate bamboo into the building, as well as solar energy for lighting and electricity. We need 3 cookstoves, a computer and desk, and food processing equipment. We will need approximately \$15,000 to build the building, buy processing equipment, set up an office with a computer, as well as purchase agricultural products, such as mangoes and sweet potatoes.



Photo: Sherlyne Joseph and Bob Theis, GMf Architect, designing the new OFPF building