



Fulfilling a commitment to long-term recovery in Haiti

It has been nearly a decade since the deadly earthquake that destroyed much of Haiti's capital, impacting nearly 3 million people and killing upwards of 200,000. UUSC's response, which is **in its ninth year** and has included partnerships with **more than a dozen grassroots organizations**, serves as an important counterpoint to the humanitarian "crisis caravan" that left Port-au-Prince long ago.

In each of those years, we have been in partnership with Mouvman Peyizan Papay (Papaye Peasant Movement) (MPP), Haiti's largest peasant organization. Together, we have **developed a network of six sustainable villages in Haiti's Central Plateau, and a national school to serve the villages**. By committing to this work for the long term, in the face of endemic corruption, political instability, devastating drought, and other unforeseen challenges, our work together stands out a model for post-crisis recovery and development.

After a 7.0 magnitude earthquake leveled much of Port-au-Prince in 2010, our partner, MPP, used its headquarters in Haiti's rural Central Plateau to shelter nearly 1,000 people who had been displaced from the capital. Despite their limited knowledge of agriculture, many people did not want to return to the city. So, with a significant amount of available land, an expertise in agroecology, and a long-term focus on peoples' rights to healthy, culturally appropriate food, MPP asked UUSC to help create sustainable rural livelihoods for those who wanted to stay.

What emerged was the construction of a series of six "EcoVillages," each with ten households practicing sustainable agriculture. As construction drew to a close, UUSC and a group of Presbyterian churches (the "Atlanta Church Group"), raised money to build a school to serve the many children now living throughout the EcoVillages.

When UUSC traveled to Haiti in June 2016, the then-two-year-old school served children from kindergarten through the fourth grade. Because of construction delays and limited space, two grades were sharing a classroom and another was using a storage room for classes. Moreover, though the first village supported by UUSC after the earthquake was thriving, other villages faced ongoing struggles. In two of the villages, the wells were not yielding any water, so villagers who wanted drinking water had to walk 30 minutes to another village, where a UUSC grant had recently repaired another broken well, and then carry it back home. Every village but the first also lacked electricity, the absence of which prevents anyone from doing much of anything after the vast darkness blankets the area each night.

But what a difference a few years makes. From 2018-19, using emergency assistance from UUSC, MPP was able to connect *all six EcoVillages* to the electrical grid and to fix both of the broken wells. **Now, all villagers have access to clean water and electricity, improving well-being in the villages and leading to new ambitions among the villagers.**

MPP said the electrification of the villages *"destroyed the barrier of access to electricity in rural areas."* This project has *"changed the lives of all residents and families in the villages,"* MPP told us, *"from the moment [they] get up early in the morning [and] work until they*

[go] to bed at night." Life is now *"safer and better for all residents."* In fact, the changes have been so dramatic that *"most [of] residents of the EcoVillages can remember and describe the wonderful instant the lights came on."*

When UUSC has visited with the EcoVillage residents in the past, we have been reminded that they all came to rural Haiti from vastly different lives in the busy capital of Port-au-Prince, where their homes—those destroyed in the 2010 earthquake—likely all had electricity. As MPP put it, *"For most of [the villagers], the instant they turned on the lights still carries a lot of emotion for them, because since they left Port-au-Prince after the quake, this is the first time they are able to see light in their homes."* We only wish we could have been there for that moment.

In addition, the EcoVillage School was recently granted a **certificate of nationalization from the Haitian Ministry of Education**, and the school is now known as "The National School of the EcoVillages of Colladere." **This means that, if and when the state has the funds, all teachers will be compensated by the Ministry, making the school viable for the long-term.**

These are critical steps toward sustainability for both the EcoVillages and the EcoVillage School—neither of which would have been possible without UUSC and our committed members.

