



# FREDDYLINK

FREDERICTON HELPING HAITI

May 2011

## FreddyLink – The Fredericton-Haiti Community Development Partnership

Linking caring individuals in the community of Fredericton with children and families in need in villages in the Cobocol Area Development Program in the central plateau region of Haiti through World Vision. Together we can:

- give the children of Haiti a sense of hope for the future
- help families in Haiti break the cycle of poverty
- help communities in Haiti to become self-sufficient
- respond to the needs of the world's poor and vulnerable through acts of compassion and justice
- enrich the lives and strengthen the sense of community among FreddyLink partners in Fredericton.



### Visit to Cobocol

We first tried to visit the Cobocol Area Development Project (ADP), the community we partner with through FreddyLink, in January 2010. However, we arrived in Port-au-Prince just before the earthquake, and so never did make it to Cobocol.

Now, more than a year later, we finally made it

to Cobocol. We arrived to the most amazing welcome! We were greeted by a welcome banner, music by the community band, short speeches of introduction, even the playing of our Canadian national anthem! Amazing! I have never before received a welcome like this.

The Cobocol ADP staff described with great pride their roles and accomplishments. It was so great to hear how much has been done to bring a community structure to the area, and to hear about advances in education, health and agriculture, topics we would see in more detail later. Until now, we had only an idea of the Cobocol ADP – through these discussions, we came to put a face to the community and to know the ADP staff as people, and to really appreciate what they have accomplished. As I got to know the staff over the course of the visit, I was impressed by their dedication.



*The FreddyLink team is welcomed at the Cobocol ADP*



## Connecting with mothers in Cobocol

Recently, we travelled to Cobocol to meet our sponsored children and to see first-hand just how effective these development programs are. I was struck with just how involved the community members themselves were in creating their own future. It is one thing to see the plan on paper, but an entirely different thing to see men and women gathered together actively and passionately engaged in changing the future for their children.

A special moment for me was meeting with the Women's Association. 45-50 women had gathered together and wholeheartedly welcomed us. It was at THAT moment that I really realized that I was helping THESE MOTHERS give the best to their children through better health and education. I felt a sisterhood that I hadn't expected. We all wanted the same thing, a better future and tomorrow for our children.

~Heidi Billington

## Education - a key to success

Education is critical to the success of any community. Thanks to the World Vision community development programs, children get the access to education they need. Education is not free in Haiti, and World Vision helps subsidize the cost of education. However, not all education costs, so that parents keep a sense of responsibility for their children's education.

I was impressed by how happy and healthy the school children looked, and how they always seemed to be clean and well dressed.



## Economic opportunities for youth

Like most places, it is difficult to keep young people in the community if they do not have economic opportunities. In Cobocol, youth are trained in a range of occupations. Young women are trained in sewing, and once trained, they can purchase a sewing machine at a subsidized cost to start their own business.

Young men are trained in woodworking. Their training is done by producing items for people in the community.

A new initiative is training youth to produce fruit products such as jams. Their goal is to produce a marketable product that can be sold in Haiti, and hopefully someday exported.

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## Goat project

Goats are important animal in Haiti. Their milk is important as a source of protein for children, and raising goats is an important source of income. However, the native breed of goats are small and do not produce much milk.

The goat program is introducing a new breed of goat that is literally twice the size, and produces much more milk, than the native breed. This is done in two ways.

First, families can bring their goat to be breed for a small fee. This will result in better offspring. The fees for breeding the goats provides the funding necessary to sustain the operation.

Second, goats are distributed to families in the community. It started with 80 goats, where one goat was given to each family at no cost. Once the goat had its first kids, the family returns one young goat back to the project. These goats then get passed on to other families, and the cycle continues. In this way, the new breed can be distributed throughout the



community at low cost.

We met families that had benefited from the goat program, and heard what a difference it made to them. It is simple but effective programs like these that make World Vision community development so successful.

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## Tree nursery project

We visited tree nursery projects in two different ADPs. In both cases, I was impressed by how well

the work was done.

Many of the trees are fruit trees including mangos. These trees are provided to families in the community to diversify their diet. They can also be used to produce fruit to sell as a source of income.

Trees are also provided to families at no cost for reforestation. Deforestation is a major issue in Haiti, where many trees have been cut down to produce charcoal, the cheapest and most common energy source for cooking. Harvesting trees to produce charcoal has left much of the mountainous landscape of Haiti exposed and severe soil erosion occurs from hurricanes and tropical storms.



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## The highlight of the trip - Meeting my sponsored child !

Today we meet our sponsored children. When we first arrive we are overwhelmed with the number of children, youth, staff and parents on the grounds. Quickly we organize the gifts for approximately 90 children.

Finally the children come. They are shy and adorable. They don't know quite what to think of us as we give them the envelope from their sponsor family, but we pray that they will feel the love represented in each gift and that it continues to give them hope for tomorrow.

We have saved our own sponsored children until the end. I am anxious to see my sponsored child, Micheala. I was sure I had seen her walking up the road earlier that morning with her mother, my heart had skipped a beat to see her in person. She is first to walk through the door and I see a spark in her eye, she is spirited and I know that she must be connected to the Billington girls-we're all a spirited bunch! Immediately I go over to her and introduce myself. I can't believe the connection I feel with her. I have prayed for her, hoped for her, talked about her, wrote to her over the past year and the connection is greater than I think. Having been so close to meeting her last year and then having to go home without, makes the connection seem stronger to me too. I feel like we share something together now, a shared experience.

She is shy with me, but I can see that she too has made the connection. She clutches her gift and I ask her if she wants to open it. I want to see her face as she opens her things, I want her to understand the love it represents. She peeks in her envelope and takes out the first miniature doll in the doll family. I can tell that she likes it and she reaches her hand into the envelope to feel the others. She doesn't want to take her things out of the envelope because she wants to keep it safe. I notice many children on the grounds have left their gifts inside of the envelopes for safe keeping with their parents, they are so careful with them.

The ADP has prepared a presentation for us with music and dancing. They say they have nothing to give us but prayers and appreciation. How little they understand about the gift that they offer us. A gift of joy and hope and believing, a gift of relationship and brotherhood.

~Heidi Billington



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**Confirmed number of  
children sponsored  
through FreddyLink**

**58 !**



### Contact us

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