



TI KREDI

MARIE DENISE AUGUSTE is 43 years old. She and her husband live in Kalgal, a very small village located in the mountains of Kabare over one hour walking distance from where you must leave your vehicle. They teach in a one-room school when there are students for classes. Both Marie and her husband have

MARIE DENISE AUGUSTE TI KREDI CLIENT IN KALGAL, KABARE

attended school and can read and write, rare skills in their remote village. Unfortunately, teaching is not nearly sufficient

to support a family. “You can’t make a stable living from teaching because people have many other priorities,” she says. “Sometimes finding food to eat is the priority in our village.”

Like many, Marie Denise has borrowed money many times throughout her life, but never from a formal institution. Instead, she has had to turn to informal money lenders, “loan sharks”

who charge enormous interest rates, levy grave punishments for non-payment, and have terms that can bury families in debt. “When you borrow from loan sharks, you have no idea how you will ever finish paying the loan because the interest is due every day,” she notes. “The terms of the loan are that the principal is never paid down unless you can pay it in full.”

She and her husband live with their six children whose ages range from 6 to 17. Since beginning Fonkoze’s *Ti Kredi* program five months ago, her family’s life has changed dramatically. All six children will be starting school this year for the first time in their lives. They are able to eat much more regularly. “Fonkoze is bringing us to a life with some feeling of security, that is something we have never known before,” she said.

Since joining Fonkoze five months ago, Marie says her village has become much more active because many of the woman began the *Ti Kredi* program. “Now I sell rice, spaghetti, fruits, and drinks right from my home,” she beams. “I seldom have to go to the open market.” Since the market is several

WHAT IS TI KREDI?

Ti Kredi, or Little Credit, reaches out to women who might otherwise qualify for *Chemen Lavi Miyò*, but have the motivation to start a new business and an idea of how they might get started. Yet they have little or no business experience, the family has no micro-entreprise at the moment, and they aren't yet ready for a \$75 loan, the first loan in Fonkoze's solidarity-group credit program. The smaller loan size comes with a shorter repayment period and close accompaniment from a Fonkoze credit agent — including capacity building and life skills training essential to bringing *Ti Kredi* clients out of near-extreme poverty. These training sessions include hard skills like micro-entreprise management and literacy, as well as topics such as sexual and reproductive health, children's rights, and environmental protection.

The six month program begins with a one-month loan of just \$25. After successfully repaying this loan, the client takes two successive loans of two and three months each, stepping up to a larger loan each time. Clients grow their business and learn the skills they need to be successful in microfinance. They also save a small amount of money each week so that they can get in the habit of safely keeping money in a deposit account.

As with the next step on the staircase, Solidarity, women work together in groups of five for support and self-encouragement. At the end of the program, *Ti Kredi* clients are ready to become true microfinance clients and grow their businesses even more.



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hours from her home, she can spend more time teaching. Being able to conduct business close to home is less expensive and physically demands far less from her.

She says that Fonkoze is moving them forward in ways they couldn't have imagined. Before starting *Ti Kredi*, “we had nothing at all to eat except some leaves and vegetables we could gather to boil and feed our children.” Now, when they wake up in the morning, they have a purpose and so much energy to get to work.

Marie has even taken a leadership position in *Ti Kredi*. She serves as the Fonkoze center chief for all of the *Ti Kredi* groups in her area, which is a big responsibility that she takes very seriously. She's sure that she always motivates her fellow *Ti Kredi* members. “We have become like a family, always looking out for each other,” she says. “We've made so much progress together already.” In another month, Marie Densie, her center, and her entire village will take another step forward as they graduate to Fonkoze's Solidarity program.