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## CLM Participants Begin New Lives

Chemen Lavi Miyò, or the Road to a Better Life, reaches out to those on the margins of society. Throughout the 18-month program, case managers support clients as they learn to run a small business, repair their homes and access health care and education services. Participants develop both their capacity and their confidence until they have their own functioning microenterprises.



Text and photos by Ben Depp

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, 120 women gather in a small cinderblock church in Boukan Kare. The mood is animated and expectant as they sing songs and are officially introduced to the case managers that will be training and encouraging them for the next 18 months. Most of the new program participants have not yet learned to write their names, so they sign their CLM contracts with an ink thumbprint. By promising to follow program rules and not sell the assets given to them by Fonkoze, they officially enter the Chemen Lavi Miyò program.

Disenfranchised by extreme poverty, most of these mothers have never given birth in a clinic or been able to take sick children to a doctor, much less see a doctor themselves. Today, each woman receives an ID card that will provide them and their families with access to free healthcare through Partners in Health, the healthcare system established by Paul Farmer in Haiti's Central Plateau.

After the Asset Transfer ceremony, Manise Oxena is excited as she and the other CLM women who have each received three goats tie them in baskets on the backs of borrowed

donkeys and horses. For many of the women, this is the first time they have owned anything as valuable as a goat.

Each has already chosen two of the three income-generating activities: goat rearing, chicken rearing, or small commerce. Manise originally chose goat rearing and small commerce as her CLM enterprises. When she realized that she is pregnant with her third child, though, she switched to goats and chickens. Pregnant, she won't be able to cross the river and walk to the market to buy and sell merchandise. In six months, after her baby is born, she intends to buy and sell chickens in the market with the profit from her goat rearing. Manise will receive her chickens as soon as the cages are built to house them.



Left, Manise Oxena in the shelter she built for her goats. Right, Manise with her children.

A week later Manise says, "I'm happy with my goats. I built a shelter to keep them out of the rain. When the goats have enough babies, the first thing I'll do is sell a couple to have money to send my children to school. When they reproduce enough, I'll be able to buy a cow and start raising cows. The small stipend I'm receiving from CLM is also really helping me. I'm able to feed my children twice a day."

For the next six months, each CLM participant will receive a weekly stipend of 300 gourdes (\$7 US) from her case manager. This money will allow the women to stop begging so that they can take care of their goats. In six months, these small businesses should be generating enough income for participants to feed their families on their own.



With the help of this small stipend, Oddette Jevain's family is eating every day for the first time. Oddette is a mother of six, but can only afford to send two of her children to school. Her husband works as a day laborer and Oddette buys and resells charcoal in the market twice a week. She earns a very small profit, the equivalent of 60 cents US, because she doesn't have the capital to buy in large quantities.

Like Manise, Oddette chose goats as one of her enterprises. She believes that with the profit from raising goats, she'll have a chance to send the rest of her children to school. After that, she intends to buy a horse: "With a horse I will be able to carry larger amounts of charcoal to the market and will be able to travel to markets further away to increase my business."



Above, Louanna Etienne, age 14, receives her ID card. Her mother, who passed away before the program started, had been on the list to join CLM so Louanna took her mother's place. Louanna chose chickens and goats for her enterprises because she doesn't have time to run a vending business. She attends school and cares for her two sisters, one of whom is mentally ill.



Left, Rosalie Fleurimond after the Asset Transfer with two of her three new goats. Rosalie, a single mother with five children, still lives with her own mother. After raising and selling these goats, she plans to buy land of her own and send her children to school. Soon she will begin vending in the market, her second CLM enterprise.