

Creating a Pathway out of Poverty

Haiti



Eileen Spencer



SUGGESTED INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES:



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Organization type:

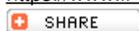
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Budget:

\$250,000 - \$500,000

Website:

<https://www.if-foundation.org>



- [Employment](#)
- [Economic development](#)
- [Poverty alleviation](#)
- [Rural development](#)
- [Sustainable development](#)
- [Sustainable agriculture](#)

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Empower people to evolve from operating out of daily survival into working with a focus on sustainability, growth & planning for the future

Our process

- iF receives an invitation to come to a country
- iF visits & listens to the people's needs
- iF works to meet the needs, forming a relationship with the community
- iF hires local leaders
- iF Leaders meet with local groups to explore partnerships
- Groups develop business plans assisted by iF Country Directors & NY team
- Each business plan is reviewed
- Once a loan is granted a new business is born
- the no interest loan is repaid in minor installments
- A community fund is established & receives 10% of the profit for needs identified by the community
- Once repaid the money loaned is recycled to start another new business

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Our current work is focused on improving livelihoods in Haiti and Ghana. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Before the effects of the January 12th earthquake, nearly 80% of Haiti's 9.7 million people lived on less than \$2.00 per day and about half of the country's population lacked clean drinking water. Extreme poverty combined with environmental degradation leaves Haiti and her people vulnerable to devastating tropical storms. Two thirds of all Haitians depend on the agricultural sector, mainly small-scale subsistence farming. Today, the literacy rate in Haiti is approximately 45%. Only 1/3 of the population is estimated to be formally employed. Although we have been focused on economic development for 2 years, The iF Foundation has been working in Haiti since 2002. We have a solid relationship with the Roman Catholic church in northern Haiti, Sisters of the Holy Cross and others. In addition we have two local Haitians employed by the Foundation as our Country Directors. They are well respected by our community partners in Haiti and We realized that what Haitians need most is job opportunity. Haiti has a long history of receiving charitable donations and one-time financial support. We believe that through job creation we can help develop a sustainable economy. Ghana, is located on the Gulf of Guinea in western Africa and is bordered by Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Burkina Faso. In Ghana, The iF Foundation is currently focusing efforts on economic development. Four of every ten Ghanaians still live in poverty. Those who are working, mostly find jobs in agriculture, usually as farmers. Others, if they are fortunate to find employment may find jobs with small businesses or survive day to day as casual labor. Many are extremely poor, particularly women. The government of Ghana realizes there are no alternatives to gainful employment for a livelihood. What people need to move out of poverty is decent employment. The iF Foundation has an excellent relationship with the President's Office in Ghana. Stephen Amoanor, the Minister of State, has helped us to establish relationships in some of the villages where we work. We have one Country Director on staff in Ghana coordinating and assisting our community partners.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Our model of creating job opportunity is very different from the organizations providing micro finance (KIVA, Fonkoze). The iF Foundation works with community groups as opposed to individuals. These groups are formed within the local communities where we work and may be comprised of several families. The businesses created are affecting many livelihoods and creating a sustainable economy too. Many times micro finance supports subsistence farming and one entrepreneur. The businesses are learning to support each other within the marketplace and also learning how to work together to make a business successful. They must assign a leader (CEO) and create a division of tasks to make the business work well. In addition, our loans are NO Interest. Instead of paying interest we ask our partner groups to put 10% of their business' profits into a community fund. The fund is used for critical needs identified by the groups. (clean water, education, healthcare, etc)

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

The iF Foundation's 2011 - 2012 project initiatives are divided into two campaigns: Haiti and Ghana. Under each campaign, our economic development projects fall into three categories; agriculture, commerce and animal husbandry. We currently have 20 economic development projects operating in Haiti and 8 in Ghana. In addition, The Foundation supports targeted community projects in the villages where we have partnerships. These community projects include the drilling of borehole wells, healthcare, education and other special initiatives.

About You

Organization:

The iF Foundation

About You

First Name

Eileen

Last Name

Spencer

Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com/Theiffoundation>

Facebook Profile

<http://www.facebook.com/if.foundation>

About Your Organization

Organization Name

The iF Foundation

Organization Country

, NY, Queens County

Country where this project is creating social impact

, ND

How long has your organization been operating?

More than 5 years

Is the project that you are entering related to this organization?

Yes

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen..

Innovation

What stage is your project in?

Operating for 15 years

Share the story of the founder and what inspired the founder to start this project

Tom Iovino, Founder and President of the iF Foundation has always had a passion and a desire to create sustainable economic opportunities for the disadvantaged in the developing countries of the world. Tom believes that charity alone is not the answer and that the disadvantaged seek dignity, not dependence. For Tom, the old adage "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" is more it's a calling. The reward in life, according to Tom, comes from improving others' lives. Through the iF Foundation, Tom's entrepreneurial approach to solving global poverty is giving philanthropists an opportunity to help create sustainable economic opportunities for the disadvantaged while transforming communities. Tom knows first hand that every business comes with risk. He also knows that empowering the disadvantaged to lift themselves out of poverty through their own hard work comes with a personal commitment to make a difference in the world. Knowing that you are providing people with the tools to change their own lives has personal impact. Tom started his own construction business in New York (Judlau Contracting) with just a shovel and a truck. The business is now a large infrastructure construction company. Judlau Contracting has been a leader in the heavy construction industry for over a quarter of a century. Recently, we had a wonderful article published in CEO Compass which gives you a great outline of Tom's personal vision.

www.if-foundation.org/pubs/articles/CEO-compass-article.pdf

Social Impact

Please describe how your project has been successful and how that success is measured

Overall, the economic development projects in both Haiti and Ghana have proven successful.

Almost all groups have repaid a percentage of their initial loan

In agriculture, farmers have been able to reduce the amount of time their fields are not cultivated and the number of harvests have been increased. The groups have improved in member participation, making day to day decisions and planning the future of the business

One of the greatest successes is increased co-hesion among the members of the groups. They have established a connection among each other and are supporting each others businesses. We have a restaurant in Robillard which is purchasing rabbit from the rabbit farm, plantains from the plantain farm, coffee from the coffee processing group, etc.

In May, there was a fair in Thibeau where 12 of the businesses were represented under tents. All of the businesses sold out of the products they brought. The community was very impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit of the vendors and that all of the products were grown or manufactured locally. There is improved standard of living for the groups. they are able to pay for education, acquire better healthcare and nutrition. There is improved economic conditions, food availability and democratic functioning. The groups elect a leader within their businesses and divide tasks.

How many people have been impacted by your project?

More than 10,000

How many people could be impacted by your project in the next three years?

More than 10,000

How will your project evolve over the next three years?

For current businesses our Country Directors are working with group members to provide further training in business acumen. In addition, if businesses need updated equipment, we would like to be able to provide that improvement for the business. An example is the candle factory in Grison Garde, where there is no electricity. 20 women produce candles on a manual wooden candle machine. They cannot keep up with market demand and could really use a stainless steel machine. Also, now that the businesses are manufacturing and growing products, we will need to focus on marketing strategies to get the word out about the locally produced products. Every day groups approach our Country Directors with proposals for new businesses. Our dream is to put as many people to work as possible.

Sustainability

What barriers might hinder the success of your project and how do you plan to overcome them?

Many of the groups we work with are comprised of members who are illiterate and have had no previous work experience. Also, it is a little difficult to teach planning for the future when you cannot provide food for your family today. We are working with the individual group members to support them in administration and management - if they are unable to perform in that capacity. Each group needs to have an effective, capable leader to be successful. The Foundation is working hard to secure sustainable sources of financial support for our economic development projects. The iF Foundation President has generously pledged to absorb all administrative overhead - salaries, insurance, office expenses, travel, etc. This is a great opportunity for philanthropists who want to support our work because 100% of their investments go directly to economic development projects of their choice.

Tell us about your partnerships

Currently we have a wonderful partnership with World Vets. Our animal husbandry projects in Haiti are in need of guidance and assistance. We have a local vet caring for the animals, but World Vets is helping us with further training for the group members and the local vet, providing nutritional and animal husbandry counseling and providing vaccinations for all of our animals.

There is a school in Oak Ridge Hills CA supporting our work. They have adopted the pig farm in Thibeau.

Cazenovia College in New York has partnered with us to develop an Internship Program for their international business development curriculum. We have two students from Cazenovia going to Haiti this summer to work with our projects.

We have a solid relationship with the Roman Catholic Diocese in northern Haiti, especially the St. Yves Parish. When we visit Haiti we are usually housed at their rectory and they provide meals for us and our teams.

Explain your selections

Our donor base is growing. The Foundation has approximately 200 individuals supporting our economic development projects.

Fund for the Poor recently granted us a \$10,000 investment for two of our projects in Ghana (batik tie dye and jewelry making)

World Vets is our most current NGO partner assisting with our work in Haiti

We have several businesses based in New York supporting our work. Redwood Contracting, Moretrench, Grassi, EBY Electro, Ferrara Brothers to name a few.

How do you plan to strengthen your project in the next three years?

Our plan is to hire additional on-the ground staff in the countries where we work. Our current leadership is very busy coordinating, assisting, training and advising the current groups. (We have 20 economic development projects in Haiti and 8 in Ghana). In addition, we will need to assist in the development of a marketing strategy to help the groups sell their products at a correct price. We would also like to offer some on-going training for group members. Our Country Directors work with the groups now on book keeping, inventory, etc but one goal is to provide further training in business acumen to help strengthen the businesses. We will be looking at collaborations with other on the ground organizations and also business partners. We are also considering implementing a full internship program which would involve graduate level students working along side our Country Directors. They could assist with an assessment of the businesses and make recommendations on ways to improve operations.

Challenges

**Which barriers to employment does your innovation address?
Please select up to three in order of relevancy to your project.**

PRIMARY

Underemployment

SECONDARY

Restricted access to new markets

TERTIARY

Lack of visibility and investment

Please describe how your innovation specifically tackles the barriers listed above.

The primary goal of the Foundation is to empower as many people as possible through economic development. In our host countries we are providing the initial capital and resources for groups to start businesses. To "create a pathway out of poverty" people need jobs. Underemployment is not only a problem of the developing world, but also in the developed world. The difference is that in the developing world opportunity for gainful employment or to secure resources to start your own business is almost non-existent.

Part of the problem in Haiti and Ghana is that many products sold within the countries are imported. Without a local market place, it is difficult to strengthen the economy. We are actively helping the groups market their locally grown and manufactured products.

Are you trying to scale your organization or initiative?

If yes, please check up to three potential pathways in order of relevancy to you.

PRIMARY

SECONDARY

Grown geographic reach: Multi-country

TERTIARY

Enhanced existing impact through addition of complementary services

Please describe which of your growth activities are current or planned for the immediate future.

Currently we are increasing geographic reach within our host countries. We began our development model in Haiti. Our projects are located in Milot, Thibeau, Lory, Larevoie, Campion, Dubre, Jean-Michel, Laplange, Riviere Sable, Grison Garde, Carre and Robillard. In Ghana, we began our work in western Ghana. We drilled 9 borehole wells reaching over 9,000 villagers. This established our relationship with the local people and we now have 7 economic projects in Ghana located in Dawhenya, Odumase, Akrusu Saisi and Tema. We are now assisting in the development of marketing strategies within our host countries and on-going training for our group members.

Do you collaborate with any of the following: (Check all that apply)

Government, NGOs/Nonprofits, For profit companies, Academia/universities.

If yes, how have these collaborations helped your innovation to succeed?

We could not exist in Ghana without the support of the government. The President's Office through the Minister of State accompanies our teams on occasion and helps us to maneuver through existing red tape.

Our partnership with World Vets is helping to provide education, advice and supplies to ensure the success of our 5 animal husbandry projects in Haiti.

The for profit companies are providing a necessary source of funding for our projects and also increased awareness about our work. Employees from these companies have become involved in our projects.

Our partnership program with local universities is new but we envision a long term partnership with students and professors. The Foundation will benefit from their expertise and also increase our visibility.