

# Nouvel **Fonkoze**

VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1

ABOVE & BEYOND

**MICROFINANCE**

**THE CYCLE**  
of poverty and how we're  
breaking it together

**FONKOZE**  
OUR VISION IS FOR A HAITI  
WHERE PEOPLE, STANDING  
TOGETHER, SHOULDER TO  
SHOULDER, HAVE PULLED  
THEMSELVES OUT  
OF POVERTY.

Over the last year, we have struggled with many challenges. I am sure we will not soon forget all the losses of 2020, but I also hope we will retain our sense of togetherness and the space a global pause gave us to reflect, reassess, and regroup. Out of the year of a pandemic, many taglines (i.e., hashtags) emerged: #buildbackbetter, #alonetogether, #bettertogether, #staysafe, to name a few. My favorite, and the one that will continue to speak to me long after Covid-19 is just a mere memory, is #WeAreInThisTogether.

This phrase, more than just a trendy hashtag, speaks to the commitment the Fonkoze community has to our mission of breaking the cycle of poverty. As you know, Fonkoze has prioritized not just poverty alleviation but its eradication. That audacious pledge has been the constant drum of this Haitian founded organization for over a quarter century. But poverty does not have an easy fix. The complex chains that tie people to a lifetime of poverty aren't easily remedied with a vaccine or a one-time gift. No, breaking the hold of poverty on a generation is a daily task that requires dedication, mission-driven thinking, and stamina.

We understand that this is not a battle that we will win alone, it is not a goal we will reach immediately, but we know that, together, it is possible to change the current landscape of Haiti from one of poverty to prosperity. Every day, our team strengthens the cornerstones of foundational needs like access to health and education, financial services, and community-driven development programs. Our empowered clients serve as leaders in their communities and voice their needs for better public services to local leaders. And as our supporter, you invest and believe that overcoming such a seemingly insurmountable problem is possible. This community is truly living out the #WeAreInThisTogether tagline. After all, it is only by standing shoulder to shoulder that we rise together.

I hope you will look at this issue through the lens of togetherness and with the satisfaction that, while much work is left to do, we have come so far already.

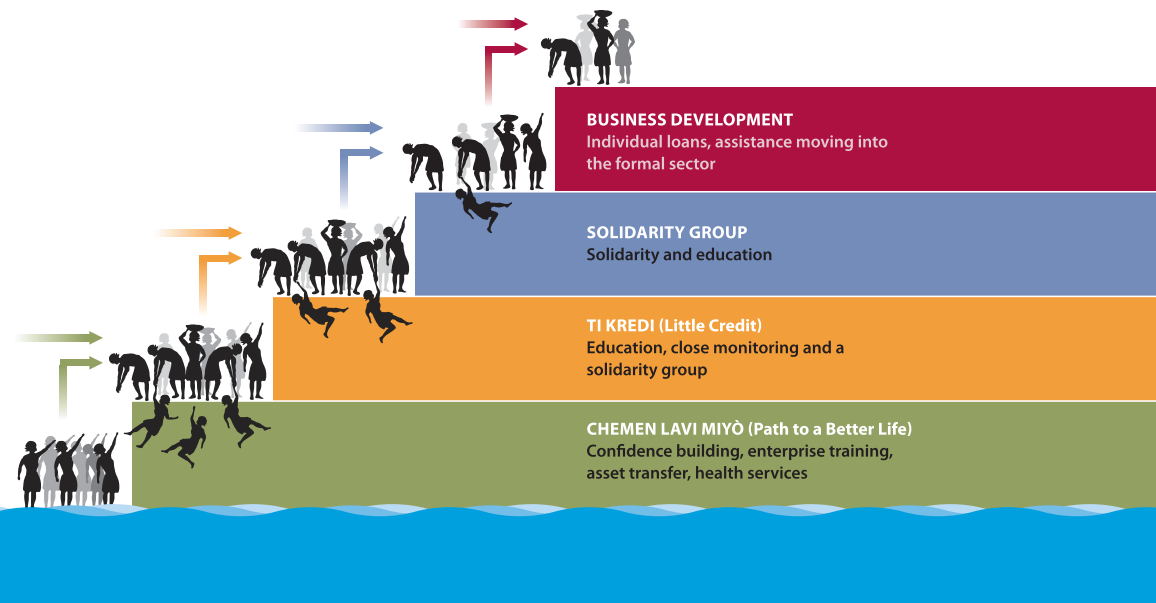
With gratitude,



Mabel Valdivia  
Executive Director  
Fonkoze USA



# WE'RE BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY VIA EMPOWERMENT



[1a]



When it rained, I used to wrap my baby in a plastic bag," says Saincia Eric Tranquille (pictured to the left and on the cover). "I slept where I could with my children, sometimes under a tree." This was Saincia's reality over ten years ago before entering Fonkoze's empowering program for ultra-poor families: Chemen Lavi Miyò (CLM or *Pathway to a Better Life*).

Since graduating from the program approximately eight years ago, Saincia's life has improved dramatically. Now a successful small business owner (sugarcane crop production), she not only overcame the most extreme form of poverty (ultra-poverty), but she also managed to "climb" her way to the top of Fonkoze's Staircase out of Poverty (see illustration 1a). Although this journey from the very bottom to the top is rare, Saincia is proof that it is possible. Like the majority of her peers who participate in one or more of Fonkoze's programs, Saincia's attitude was right from the very beginning. Less interested in short-term solutions, she has always wanted an opportunity to do the hard work necessary to change her own life. **"I don't need charity,"** she said to her CLM Case Manager while in the program. **"I need to work!"**

Hundreds of thousands of families throughout Haiti, who live either below the poverty line (on less than 2\$ per day), the extreme poverty line (on less than 1\$ per day), or the ultra-poverty line (well below the extreme poverty line) are seeking a viable pathway out of their situations. This is where Fonkoze comes in as a change agent, partner and uplifter. From its ultra-poverty support, health and education programs to the empowering microfinance services it offers, Fonkoze is providing the poor and disenfranchised access to the life skills tools, training and support needed to thrive. **This empowerment versus a handout approach, which has been at the core of Fonkoze's mission since its founding, enables those being helped to sustain the gains they make in Fonkoze's programs and, ultimately, break the cycle of poverty.**

"When you live in extreme poverty, you are a person who has fallen into a black hole. If you don't find someone to take your hand and help you out of this hole, that is where you will stay," says Saincia. "Fonkoze's programs have helped me to change my life from being useless to being a productive and respected member of my community."



One of Saincia's employees

A 2019 research study done by the University of Sussex's Institute of Development Studies found that **72% of Fonkoze CLM participants** had sustained improvements or made further progress five years after graduating from the program.

► [fonkoze.org](https://fonkoze.org)



*We're going the distance to bring*  
**Vulnerable Families**  
**Access to Health Services**

Fonkoze is tackling the strongest roots of poverty, including the lack of access to basic health services. Removing this crippling barrier gives the poorest households throughout Haiti an opportunity to live healthier lives and redirect their focus on improving their economic conditions.

With branches located in virtually every region in Haiti, Fonkoze leverages its vast network to administer essential health services and education to those living in some of the most remote parts of the country. Given Haiti's already fragile medical system and longstanding public health challenges, such as chronic malnutrition, water sanitation, child and maternal health – the need for access to reliable health services is great.

Fonkoze's capacity to quickly deliver health services to underserved communities is magnified in times of crisis. Before Haiti had its first confirmed case of COVID-19, for example, the organization had developed a strategic response plan to help hundreds

of thousands of the most vulnerable families protect themselves and prevent the spread of the disease. By June of 2020, Fonkoze had distributed masks, solar chargers, hygiene kits, hand sanitizers, and other support to thousands of its staff and client leaders through its 44 branches across the country.

To date, **more than 1,000,000 people in rural or remote regions have improved access** to life-saving health services, products and education, such as malnutrition screenings and treatments, disease prevention and sanitation training – via Fonkoze's health program, Boutik Sante. The program's impact is made possible by the ongoing generosity of Fonkoze's supporters and partners.



# OUR MISSION BEYOND MICROFINANCE

Having access to reliable financial services, such as savings, checking and business loans, enables the poor to increase incomes, build assets and reduce their vulnerability to external shocks (e.g., natural disasters, economic crises, and socio-political unrest). Microfinance allows poor households to move from everyday survival to the following, for example: planning for the future, investing in better nutrition, improving living conditions, as well as their children's health and education.

Fonkoze was founded over 26 years ago to give the poor an opportunity to organize themselves

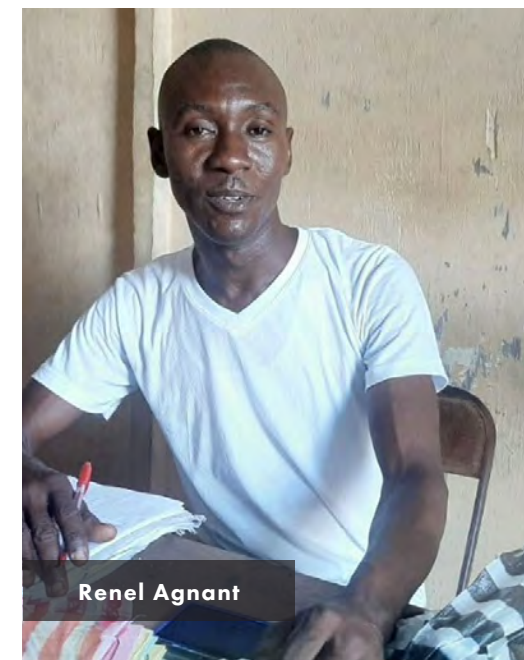
economically – as they were denied access to banks because they had no collateral, and many could not read or write.

Although economic empowerment has been at the core of Fonkoze's mission since the beginning, it is the breadth of accompanying **non-financial** services it offers its clients – "Handrails" – such as health services, life skills, literacy, numeracy, and disaster preparedness training, that set Fonkoze apart from traditional microfinance institutions around the world. Handrails are designed to help clients succeed as they do the hard work required to break the cycle of poverty.



**Business Development** is at the top of Fonkoze's Staircase Out of Poverty. 12-month loans are offered at this level, enabling clients to generate essential economic activity in their communities.

► [fonkoze.org](https://fonkoze.org)



Renel Agnant

Renel Agnant has been a Business Development client for four years and credits the success of his small business and family's improved living conditions to the loans and services he has had access to over the years: "It was thanks to Fonkoze that I bought my first small car. I am now building my own house and hope to have the concrete roof put on soon because the walls are already standing," he says proudly.

Renel's company, located inside the public market of the commune of Cabaret in Haiti's West Department, offers money

transfers services on telephones, recharging of batteries for cash, and telephone minutes wholesale. He says that his business was doing well until the country went on lockdown in response to the ongoing socio-political unrest (and COVID-19 for a period). During this time, he lost a lot of business and had to let one of his employees go.

Renel and his wife hope to recover from this setback and rebuild their lives as quickly as possible. Their dream is to one day build a hardware store that serves the Cabaret community and surrounding area.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Fonkoze has 44 branches located throughout Haiti. **The organization's unprecedented reach** provides many Haitians (especially in rural areas) their only access to financial and development services. The branch pictured above is located in Pomago.

# A mother's *pathway* to a promising future



Often chronic and intergenerational, **ultra-poverty** creates a trap that is incredibly difficult for women and their families to escape. **CLM** provides a viable pathway out.

► [fonkoze.org](https://fonkoze.org)

Before joining Fonkoze's empowering program for ultra-poor families, Chemen Lavi Miyò (CLM or *Pathway to a Better Life*), Jacquecilia Saintilien and her four children (ages 2-16) struggled to get by. "Oftentimes, I would wake up in the morning and not have anything to feed my children - not a single thing," she reflects. "Since entering the program, though, we are able to eat every day. I am so thankful for CLM and their team."

Traditional microfinance institutions do not reach out to the ultra-poor (people who live in the direst form of poverty, well below the extreme poverty line) due to the very high level of accompaniment required to help them ascend from ultra-poverty. Fonkoze, on the other hand, took on this challenge in 2007, when it first piloted its CLM program. The organization has been committed to serving this population ever since. As a result, thousands of families now have a new set of life skills, tools and knowledge needed to rise above their situations.

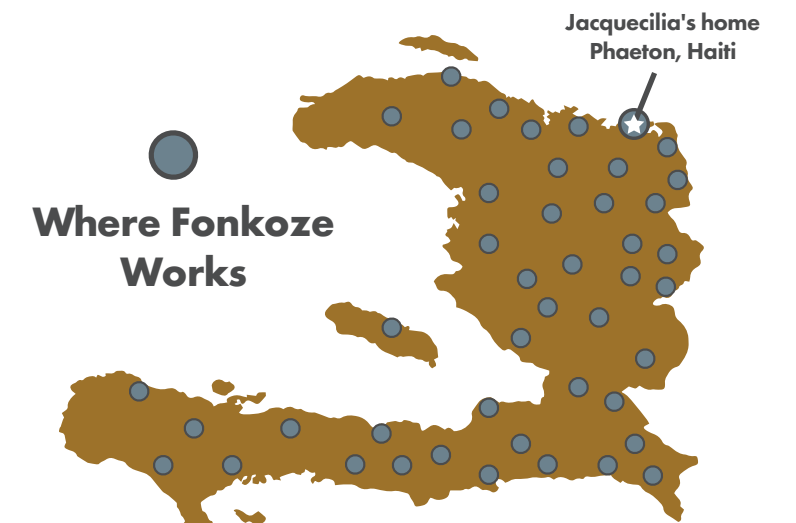
The vast majority of ultra-poor households are headed by women who tend to be the victims of social exclusion. They lack self-confidence and opportunities to build the skills necessary to plan their own futures. CLM's team of dedicated Case Managers work with each participant every week over 18 months to help them overcome these obstacles and more.



Jacquecilia Saintilien with her two sons on the left and her CLM Case Manager on the right in front of her home in Phaeton, Haiti

“  
LOOK CLOSELY  
AT THE PRESENT YOU  
ARE CONSTRUCTING: IT  
SHOULD LOOK LIKE  
THE FUTURE YOU ARE  
DREAMING.”

- Alice Walker, Novelist, Poet & Activist





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[give.fonkoze.org](http://give.fonkoze.org)

The cycle of poverty  
can be broken, but only if we  
work *together*. - Fonkoze



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