

Success After Graduation

May 2024

THE CHALLENGE: UNDERSTANDING THE CLM PROGRAM'S LONG-TERM RESULTS

Studies of Fonkoze's CLM program over the years have shown similar results. When groups of members are evaluated years after they complete the program, two things are generally clear:

1. They fall roughly into three groups: those who continue to progress, those who maintain the progress they made during the program, and those who lose ground relative to where they were at the end of the program.
2. Those three groups have been similar in size.

In other words, roughly two-thirds of members either maintain their progress or build on it. Table 1 summarizes findings from three studies.

Table 1. Evaluations to date

Study and year	Further Progress	Sustained Progress	Loss of Progress
Concern Worldwide and Fonkoze — 2014	31%	39%	30%
Shoaf and Simanowitz — 2019	31%	41%	29%
MFOH 1 — 2021	27%	31%	43%
Average	30%	37%	34%

Knowing that roughly two-thirds of members have sustained or built upon their progress four or more years after graduation is encouraging to a degree, but the remaining one-third raises at least two important questions:

1. What about the women who do not sustain their progress? How significant is the decline they experience after they graduate?
2. Are there factors that correlate to members' ability to sustain their success? Can identifying these factors help improve Fonkoze's approach and, with it, the results that program members achieve?

MERCY FOCUS ON HAITI: LOOKING AT THOSE WHO LOST GROUND

In 2017, Fonkoze entered into a partnership with Mercy Focus on Haiti to provide the CLM program to 200 families in Gwomòn, in Haiti's Northern Artibonit. The families graduated in January 2019. By then, three of the families were no longer part of the program. Of the 197 who were evaluated for graduation, 196 met graduation criteria, or more than 99%.

In 2021, the Mercy Focus on Haiti team supported Fonkoze to collect new data concerning these families. The data was initially studied by Fonkoze's own

SUMMARY

Background: Multiple evaluations of Fonkoze's CLM program over the years have shown similar results. In the years after graduation, members fall into three groups: those who make further progress, those who maintain the progress they've made, and those who fall back.

Two Key Questions:

1. How far back do those who fall backward really fall?
2. What factors correlate to long-term success?

The Answers:

1. Members do not appear to fall back very far. In one study, they lost just one-third of the wealth they had accumulated and still had more than twice what they needed to graduate from the program.
2. The only factor that showed an independent correlation to members' continued economic success was whether they had a business plan.

Next Steps: Further studies should use more questions that can be answered on a scale instead of yes/no dichotomies. This will facilitate discovering correlations that might be meaningful.

monitoring and evaluation unit, but faculty members from Gwynedd Mercy University both validated Fonkoze's analyses and added their own. The GMercyU analyses provide an opportunity to address the two important questions.

One of the survey questions that Fonkoze uses became central to the GMercyU analysis. Fonkoze asks members to imagine their community as a staircase, with each of four steps representing a level of relative wealth or poverty. Members are asked to place themselves on the staircase relative to the other members of their community, with the lowest step representing the poorest families and the highest one the wealthiest. Members' answers thus provide insight into the way they themselves view their situation.

FINDINGS: STILL TWICE GRADUATION THRESHOLD; IMPORTANCE OF BUSINESS PLAN

The first question concerns the degree to which the members who lost ground after graduation lost ground. Were their losses significant compared to the progress they had made?

Fonkoze was able to collect all four sets of data from 182 of the 200 families who had originally been part of the cohort. Of these, 69 reported to evaluators that they felt less advanced in their communities than they had felt when they graduated. We consider data from these 69 families, looking at the average value of their business assets (see Table 2), their savings, and their scores on the staircase question..

Table 2: Families who lost ground

For 69 Families	Value Required for Graduation	Value at Graduation	Value Post-Graduation
Staircase Score	No minimum score	3.30	1.87
Assets	HTG 13,650	HTG 44,970	HTG 28,885
Savings	HTG 450	HTG 6,689	HTG 2,940

The average decrease in asset value of about HTG 16,000 parallels members' perception that they had lost ground. They lost about one-third of the wealth they had accumulated. But they still had over twice as much as they needed to qualify for graduation.

The decrease in average savings is proportionally larger, but even members who perceived themselves as having lost ground still had some savings they could fall back on. One should consider that, at baseline, only eleven members reported any savings at all and that the average for those eleven was just HTG 1,690.

The second question concerns whether there are individual factors that Fonkoze evaluates which appear correlated with progress post-graduation. Identifying critical factors might help the team target its coaching more on the factors that matter most.

The GMercyU team used statistical tools to analyze the impact of a range of factors on members' answer to the staircase question, the one that reflects their perception of their relative wealth. Of the factors that the team tested, the only one to show a significant correlation to strong continued results at 48 months was whether the member had a business plan.

DISCUSSION: VALUE IN COACHING, HOME PROJECT, AND IDENTIFYING KEY FACTORS

A few key points merit further discussion.

- ▶ Whether members have a plan for their businesses is the single factor with a demonstrated correlation to members' success after graduation. The program thus has a strong interest in coaching field staff to work with members on developing a plan.
- ▶ The qualitative analyses that were undertaken by GMercyU faculty in parallel with the statistical ones pointed to the possibility that a key tool the program is using to teach planning is the home repair/construction process. The program should continue to give families themselves the central role in planning their home project and overseeing its completion.
- ▶ Further evaluations of members after they complete the program should continue trying to identify the key factors that predict continued progress. Doing so might help the team improve its coaching. Right now, Fonkoze's evaluation tools use a lot of yes/no questions. Statistical analyses might yield more if there were more questions that are answered on a less-to-more scale.