



SUCCESS STORY

Konbit: Haitian Organizations Facedown their Challenges and Unlock the “Lockdown”

Konbit’s goal is to increase the number of local development partners influencing and achieving significant and sustainable development results in Haiti, who are accountable to their constituents and who are able to effectively compete for and manage resources.



Participants



Margarett Lubin – JPHRO, Alice Nkunzimana – Papyrus S.A., Marlène Gay - CFET, Carine Roenen – FONKOZE

Haiti went through a ten-day period of unrest this February resulting in an acute paralysis of the Haitian private and public sectors: schools, government offices and businesses were shut down. “Peyi lòk” (country lockdown) was the name protestors used to label their actions and intentions. Following “Peyi lòk”, many businesses were left in ruins or were forced to permanently close their doors, leaving many business owners and employees in despair.

In March, Konbit launched its first revamped USAID Awardee Roundtable concept to prioritize the sharing of best-practices in business continuity during periods of instability. The objective of the activity was to strengthen local organizations’ ability to adequately plan, prepare for and deal with the outcome of inevitable periods of strife, leading to resilient, autonomous and stronger institutions.

In attendance at this roundtable were 21 representatives from for-profit and non-profit organizations, such as FONHDAD, SHAA, FPDI, Group Croissance, Zanmi La Santé, CEDEL and many others.

The roundtable included a panel discussion featuring Margaret Lubin, JPHRO Country Director; Ulrick Jean-Claude, IFOS Executive Director; Alice Nkunzimana, Papyrus CEO; Marlène Gay, CFET Executive Director; and Carine Roenen, FONKOZE Executive Director. These individuals shared their organization’s internal policies and procedures relating to succession planning and emergency preparedness as well as the evolution of these systems.

“We do not pretend to know more than you do, our goal is to share what we have learned and learn from you and your unique experiences.”

— Alice Nkunzimana, Papyrus CEO.

As an NGO involved in disaster relief and mitigation, JPHRO’s primary concern is continuity. Ms. Lubin described the different systems the organization has in place to minimize any disruption of their services.



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Ulrick Jean-Claude – IFOS’s Executive Director.

“JPHRO will not stop working if I am incapacitated. We are equipped with an emergency response system that defines all steps to follow as well as provides important information. In addition, my assistant is involved in all program planning and can brief anyone if necessary.”

— Margaret Lubin, JPHRO Country Director.

FONKOZE also put in place procedures to mitigate disruptions and will work with Konbit on improving their systems through a Capacity Development grant. FONKOZE’s Executive Director stressed the importance of better understanding and protecting the staff’s state of mind.

“Haiti is not a lake [with calm waters] where everything runs smoothly. We have to keep our employees’ mental health high so work can continue.”

— Carine Roenen, FONKOZE Executive Director.

CFET, IFOS and Papyrus are for-profit entities, but have strategies similar to the NGOs. Whether due to natural causes or conditions resulting from socio/political strife, the panelists agreed that ultimately, the survival of the organization and its growth will only be assured if it can function without them.

“We always invest back into IFOS. This has allowed us to create a safety net during periods of difficulty and reinforce our staffing.”

— Ulrick Jean-Claude, IFOS Executive Director.