

The Haitian Project, Inc.
Community Update: It's the Economy
June 4, 2014



Top: Philo (U.S. Senior +1) students learn about the exportation of Barbancourt rum; tour the factory where Itala pasta is made; and listen to a presentation on coffee production at the REBO headquarters. Bottom: Philo students tour the Topco warehouse, which stores garlic, bouillon cubes and herring; speak with former THP board member Patrick Brun at his company, Durabloc; and pose with Volunteer Kristin Soukup, who taught the Philo Economics class this year.

If improvement in the quality of life of its citizens is what a country is after, it's the economy that matters most. Having the experience of growing up in the world's largest economy and working for nearly two decades in one of the world's poorest has burned that principle into my brain. My experience also tells me that it is far better to describe Haiti's economy as "severely undersized" than simply as "poor".

The inadequate size of Haiti's economy is implied by its low GDP per capita. However, I fear that until one really thinks in terms of "undersized" or "too small" when contemplating Haiti's current difficult economic circumstance, it is easy to miss the solution--a much bigger economy.

Economies expand when businesses expand. That is why we have put efforts in helping LCS grads learn about business. At LCS, as I have written about in the past, we have added an Economics course based on Mankiw's introductory text. A number of years ago, we launched a sister non-profit, EGI for Haiti. EGI helps graduates who have finished university and been working for a few years learn how to start formal sector businesses.

Below you can read about the field trips we made this year from their economics teacher, Volunteer Kristin Soukup, in addition to comments from the students themselves.

As a part of the Philo economics course, each student had the opportunity to go on one of five different field trips to a local factory or company. They visited Barbancourt, a rum factory; Itala, a pasta factory; Topco, a business that imports, stores, and sells products such as garlic and herring; REBO, which sells coffee, peanut butter and sugar produced in Haiti; and Chabuma – focusing on the production part of the company, Durabloc, which produces concrete blocks for construction.

In each visit, various topics were discussed, including importation and exportation, rate of production, costs of production (such as electricity and water), technology and taxes. Through the field trips, students explored the relationship between business and economics, seeing these economic concepts used in real business situations and asking questions to the owners and managers. The field trips offer a very valuable opportunity for the students to apply the concepts they learn in the classroom while learning about how businesses function.

-- Kristin Soukup, Volunteer and Economics teacher

Being able to visit Barbancourt made me prouder to be a Haitian. It's a national company so it employs a lot of people and it exports its products, so it is helping the economy of Haiti and has the opportunity to expand on that.

-- Djim Geurrier, Philo student

At Topco, I was very impressed by the technology. They need technology and electricity to keep their products at the right temperature. If they didn't have modern technology, they would lose their products. They told us about how they pay taxes as a company. A company like this is interested in both the country and their buyers.

-- Lovely Joseph, Philo student

I had the privilege of visiting REBO. Through this visit, I was able to realize the importance of what we were learning in economics class. Since Haiti's economy is struggling, it is important for us to become acquainted with businesses in order to improve the overall situation.

-- Lithza Joseph, Philo student

Peace, Patrick

To make a donation or to read recently posted community updates go to www.haitianproject.org

The Haitian Project, Inc.
Office of Community Development
(401) 351-3624
P.O. Box 6891
Providence, RI 02940

“What you receive for free, you must give for free.”

“Se gratis nou resevwa, Se gratis tou pou nou bay.”

--Matthew 10:8