

The Haitian Project, Inc.
Community Update: When It's More Than Just Stuff
November 14, 2012



"Timoun" girls wearing handmade pillowcase dresses, printer & much needed donated printer ink in the LCS office, students using economics textbooks and catechisms, and a glimpse of our storage closet at the office in Providence, R.I.

While in Providence on my last trip, where our U.S. staff are headquartered, I had a scintillating conversation about – wait for it – STORAGE.

We are finally going to use our decades of experience to pre-determine what we store in our storage closet in Providence. We arrived at the brilliant idea of proportionally assigning space based on two factors: 1) what the school really needs and 2) what packs most efficiently in a 50 lb suitcase (which is how we transport donated supplies from the U.S. to the school). In a sense, we decided to move to a "just-in-time" inventory control system and embrace the reality of what fits in a suitcase.

You might ask why we hadn't come to this idea already. Well, it takes courage to ignore the fact that beggars can't be choosers and tell well-intended people "no thank you". But the reality is that we need what we need and we need it in the proportion that we need it.

I am happy to report that the response has been great. Here are some prime examples:

1) Professor Gregory Mankiw gave us 60 copies of his economics textbook – the amount we need – not more, not less.

2) Archbishop Guire Poulard gave us 60 Kreyol Catechisms by Bishop Guy Sansaricq and Fr. Peter Finney of St. Clement of Rome Parish in Louisiana provided 60 more.

3) A group of women initially wanted to make A LOT of dresses, but they were kind enough to make and send us the amount that we could put to use.

Sometimes people just want to give what they like to give. Sometimes people want to give what they don't want to keep. Unfortunately, because of this places like Haiti become dumping grounds. Stuff arrives feast-and-famine. This creates a lot of help that is not actually help.

In reference to number three above, when organizations are faced with donations they feel obligated to use, they go looking for people to give it to. THP believes that having a *relationship* with those you are attempting to help is as important as the help you give. Can an organization actually have a relationship with 3,000 people?! What makes the moment recorded above exceptional is that the beautiful dress is not the first thing the little girls in the picture received from THP/LCS--the first gift was being known!

Looking deeper into this issue of giving the right gift in the right proportions, you may enjoy reading an article I wrote on this last year after the Superbowl about what happens with the t-shirts that inaccurately display the losing team as winners. Here's the link: [T-shirt Mistakes](#)

Peace, Patrick

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

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“What you receive as gift, you must give as gift.”
“Se gratis nou resevwa, Se gratis tou pou nou bay.”

---Matthew 10:8