

Christian Operation for
Health, Education, & Development
(COFHED)

Proposal Narrative to the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation

July 25, 2005

Introduction

This proposal addresses Weyerhaeuser's General Program's Education area for International projects. A grant of \$ [REDACTED] can help support the Lougou Education Fund, which will provide for the education costs of a year's tuition, books, uniforms, and breakfasts for over 350 children of the rural Haitian village of Lougou for the 2005-6 school year.

Mission

To engage in long-term community development in southern Haiti

Goals

COFHED has central three goals:

1. Develop lasting relationships with communities and their leaders
2. Assist community-led planning groups to assess and prioritize their needs for collective action
3. Promote sustainable development through active community participation

COFHED Organizational Information

Background

Haitian-born field directors, Nicaise and Madeleine Avignon, founded COFHED in 2001 to meet southern Haiti's community development needs. During the '90's, the Avignons witnessed these needs firsthand while leading a successful series of health clinics for villages near their hometown of Les Cayes, about 15 miles south of Lougou. Villagers asked for help to engage in long-term development, such as gaining more access to schooling and greater economic opportunities to increase their self-sufficiency. COFHED is the Avignons' response. COFHED has never before received a grant from the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation.

Structure

COFHED is an IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit. COFHED engages in four basic activities: health education, schooling, community organizing, and long-term development. The Avignons are supported by 10 board members based in the United States (Minnesota), who provide administrative governance, operational guidance, and financial capacity. All board members (100%) contribute to COFHED on a monthly basis.

Staffing

COFHED's field directors, the Avignons, are Americans who were born and raised in Haiti, although they married and attended college in America. They have extensive training in third-world community development and maintain ongoing relationships with representatives from the US AID, the European Union, Organization for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (ORE), and other local relief organizations. Nicaise has a B.S. in business administration with 10-years' experience in American banking and community development. Madeleine has a B.S. in nursing and several years' experience in health education, case management, and community outreach. They have worked in Lougou for two years.

Board member Gary Petersen has served as COFHED's president/executive director since 2003. He has participated in COFHED since 2001 and has been on the board since 2002.

Recent COFHED Highlights

- Provided scholarships and a breakfast feeding program for all 271 Lougou primary school-aged children in 2004-5
- Conducted 13 health education sessions in nine villages, serving over 650 Haitians in 2004
- Planned and conducted over 78 community development training and awareness meetings since 2002

Board Member Listing

Gary Petersen, *President*
John Simon, *Vice President*
Mike Tacheny, *Treasurer*
Wendy Simon, *Secretary*
Nancy McNeil

Tim McNeil
Gaby Morris
Dawn Pauls
Linda Petersen
Patricia Skundberg

Project: The Lougou Education Fund

COFHED and villagers established the Lougou Education Fund in 2004 to support Lougou children's education for the 2004-5 and 2005-6 school years.

Need

The Southern Haitian Village of Lougou

COFHED's current work is focused on Lougou, a village with a population of 1,000 people in southwest Haiti. Haiti is ranked 153rd of the 177 countries listed on the United Nations Development Program's human development index. Eight of 10 people in rural Haiti live below the international poverty level of \$142/year. Three hours are needed to walk the rugged footpath that leads through mountains to the nearest town, Camp Perrin, six miles to the south. When the rains come, the path floods and becomes impassable.

Need for Greater Access to Education

Lougou also has no school. Before COFHED's involvement, six of every 10 children did not attend school. Often siblings rotate attendance such that if a child attends one year, he or she does not return to school for one-two years so that other siblings can attend. The walk is two-four hours each way.

Participatory Rural Appraisal and Planning (PRAP) Assessment

COFHED's field directors collaborated with Lougou residents to conduct a PRAP assessment that began in July 2004 and ended in December 2004. PRAP was conceived by Partners for Development, a Washington-based international relief and development organization, as an assessment method that ensures people from third-world countries participate in and lead development activities for their communities.

PRAP Assessment Process

COFHED's field directors, development committees composed entirely of Lougou community members, and local community experts coordinated the process by leading focus groups on topics such as health, education, and agriculture. At the end of the process, villagers summarized and ranked development challenges. Response strategies were designed for each of the top seven challenges. The completed PRAP assessment is functioning as the long-term strategic plan for the collaboration between COFHED and Lougou. This proposal requests support only for the Lougou Education Fund.

Top 7 Challenges	Response Strategies
1. Restricted access to primary education	Continue student sponsorships (Lougou Education Fund) Build a primary school
2. Lack of drinking water	Construct a cistern and channel it through pipes to Lougou
3. No sanitation facilities	Build 100 latrines for 100 households (the entire village)
4. Village inaccessibility	Build a paved road from Lougou to Marceline
5. No electricity	Work with national power company (EDH) to build power infrastructure and provide electricity
6. Lack of health care	Establish a health center for Lougou and surrounding villages Conduct health seminars
7. Need for community center	Build a multi-purpose center

Lougou Education Fund

Foremost in the PRAP assessment was the village's desire to gain better access to education for its children. Villagers developed a two-step process to provide better education options. The first of which was to develop an education fund to ensure all village children could receive an education. Village leaders who participate on the Women's Committee and the Youth Committee help manage the fund. COFHED began the fund with an award of approximately \$ [REDACTED] in 2004 and has provided about \$ [REDACTED] of additional funding. Fund monies cover tuition and other costs associated with books, uniforms, and food for primary school-aged children. In 2004-5 families contributed some support as determined by income level. In 2005-6 the fund will 100% support and also include high school-aged children. Approximately 350 children will attend because of the fund. Expenses will amount to approximately \$ [REDACTED].

"I am so bored now because I can't find any kids to sit around and play cards with. They're all gone to school!"—Pesil Glesil, alias "Tibwa," Lougou Village Elder

2004-5 School Year Success

All 271 Lougou primary school-aged children attended school in 2004-5 because of the fund—the first time in Lougou's history that all children have attended school. Every child also passed to the next grade level. The Avignons held a year-end celebration in July 2005 that recognized each student's accomplishment and provided additional school supplies for the 2005-6 school year.

Feeding Center

Included in the fund is support for the Feeding Center, a structure that provides breakfast for school children, who often did not have breakfast before school. Several adult and youth volunteers coordinate food donations and prepare and serve food to school children before they walk to school each morning. COFHED donated \$ [REDACTED] for food and building materials. Lougou provided the labor.

Building a Primary School

As a more permanent response to educational needs, Lougou plans to build a primary school before the beginning of the 2006-7 school year. Lougou's resident-led committees have obtained an agreement from the community to donate land on which to build the school and provide free unskilled labor. The school is to be staffed by certified teachers and offer education to children of surrounding villages, as well as those of Lougou. COFHED is in the process of gaining commitments from potential funders and is holding a fundraising event for the school in September.

Objectives

Lougou and COFHED have three primary objectives for their education collaboration in 2005-6:

Objectives	Evaluation Measure
1. Secure funding and begin construction of a school structure (also to be used for a community center) by the end of 2005	COFHED Lougou Education Task Force
2. Ensure that all 350 Lougou school children receive breakfast before school	COFHED tracking Lougou Education Task Force
3. Ensure that all 350 Lougou children attending school through the Lougou Education Fund complete their 2005-6 school year courses and advance to the next grade level in 2006-7	COFHED tracking Lougou Education Task Force

Evaluation/Measurement

Accomplishment of the three 2005-2006 objectives can be measured concretely. COFHED's field staff has coordinated task forces of Lougou community members to track the progress of each objective and ensure receipt of breakfast each morning. The task force also collects quarterly progress reports that measure GPA, attendance, parental involvement, and financial need. Task force members meet frequently to respond to student and program performance data and make adjustments when needed.

Lougou Education Fund 2005-6 Project Budget

Income

Item	Amount
Corporation/Charitable Foundation Grants	
COFHED Individual Contributors	
Lougou Community (cash)	
TOTAL	\$

Expenses

Item	Amount
Food (breakfasts, packed lunches)	
Tuition	
Books	
Uniforms	
TOTAL	\$

Connection to the Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation

Educating children who lack access to school or the resources to attend should be of great relevance to Weyerhaeuser, which has an education funding interest and whose mission statement affirms support for international organizations that promote "the welfare of human and natural resources." Although the villagers of Lougou live in great poverty and earn less than two dollars per day, they simply cannot envision a more important resource than their children. Educated children bring skills and other resources that affirm the success of long-term development of villages such as Lougou. Weyerhaeuser can be sure a grant for the fund will help educate children and support Lougou's ultimate self-sufficiency.

Specific Weyerhaeuser Questions

1. COFHED's only staff members are field directors Nicaise and Madeleine Avignon, who are not paid a salary. However, COFHED does cover all the costs of their living expenses, including those of their four children who live with them. All other participants are volunteers, including board members and villagers.
2. The Avignons are Americans who were born and raised in Haiti, although they married and attended school in America. They have lived in Camp-Perrin, Haiti for over two years collaborating with Lougou.
3. COFHED is the only community development organization that is located in the Lougou area or provides long-term assistance. Few local or international NGOs or nonprofits have any operations in the Lougou area. COFHED has contacted and established working relationships with most of them, including Providence Ministries, a US-based nonprofit that provides scholarships for southern Haitians.
4. COFHED and Haitian villagers are working to construct the new school. Agreements to donate land and labor have already been obtained. COFHED is raising further support through fundraisers and grantmaking institutions.
5. The new school will charge tuition (all Haitian schools charge tuition), but will do so on a sliding scale so that all families can afford to send their kids. No child will be turned away.
6. All children in Lougou, and many from the surrounding area, can attend the school.
7. Village elders as well as committees of women, youth, and other concerned residents helped generate the education fund and the school development project. COFHED has guided and supported them.
8. COFHED's field directors, the Avignons, learned of Lougou's needs while conducting health clinics and development seminars in the area. COFHED became involved when villagers requested long-term development support. The need for education became evident through the PRAP assessment process.

Longer-Term Support

COFHED supported the fund's entire cost in 2004-5, but is seeking assistance from Providence Ministries, the Sundance Foundation, Weyerhaeuser, and others to support the budget for the 2005-6 school year. The school is an ambitious undertaking. However, Lougou has obtained agreements to donate land on which to build the school. Lougou families are providing free unskilled labor. Engineers from the University of Quebec, PRECI (Programme de Regroupement Etudiant pour la Cooperation Internationale), may donate services to lead school construction and provide some or all of the costs. Whether or not PRECI supports the project, Lougou and COFHED will cover the remaining costs through outside support and grants, including proceeds from a fundraiser being held in Minnesota in September. The European Union, Citibank, and the Kellogg Foundation are among interested supporters. If the project is delayed, Lougou can use the feeding center—which is solidly constructed—as a temporary structure.

Request and Conclusion

This proposal seeks a grant of \$ [REDACTED] from Weyerhaeuser towards the \$ [REDACTED] budget of the Lougou Education Fund for the 2005-6 school year. The fund is intended to continue until the 2006-7 school year begins, by which time Lougou plans to complete a new school. The grant can help ensure all 350 children receive an education this school year. Just as importantly, the families of 1,000 Lougou villagers will have a reason for optimism about their future and their dreams of a better, self-sufficient life for their children.