



## SUCCESS STORY

### Entrepreneurs Shaping the Future of Haiti

**“My hope is that this movement to promote entrepreneurship increases and spreads through all of the universities as well as technical and vocational schools across the country to promote the emergence of the companies the country needs to create wealth and to improve living standards for Haitians,”** says *Minister of Finance of Haiti, M. Baudin.*



Photo credit — HIFIVE

Greg Van Koughnett (from left), Legal and Regulatory Advisor, DIGICEL (official sponsor of MEMA providing 50% of the prize money [\$50,000]), Dr. Carleene Dei, Director, USAID Haiti, and M. Ronald Baudin, Minister of Finance, Haiti present a check to MEMA winner Diderot Musset.



Photo credit — HIFIVE

MEMA winners display the \$10,000 checks they received to develop their proposed business projects.

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“One thing done and a million more to do!” said Diderot Musset, on December 6, smiling, as he was named one of the 10 winners at the awards ceremony of “Mon Entreprise, Mon Avenir” (My Business, My Future) or MEMA, the business plan competition launched by the USAID-financed HIFIVE<sup>1</sup> project in partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank. Diderot and his nine co-winners had been chosen after the final round of MEMA’s competition just a few days earlier.

It had been a long journey for the competitors, starting in November 2009 when MEMA was first launched. The program was put on hold temporarily after Haiti’s January 12th earthquake. MEMA was re-launched in May to a receptive market of Haitian entrepreneurs with creative ideas and projects, and 377 competitors submitted on-line concept papers.

In July, 80 first-round winners were chosen, representing the most creative and promising proposals addressing MEMA target sectors: agro industrial products, cultural goods<sup>2</sup> and innovative technologies. These entrepreneurs received training and coaching on business plan preparation and finalized and submitted their plans in October. Judges selected 20 finalists who presented their plans before a jury of business experts on December 3, 2010. The 10 winners represent diversity, both geographically and by type of project. Their plans promote activities as diverse as a mobile dental clinic, a boutique to sell agricultural inputs to farmers in rural Limbe, a jatroph<sup>3</sup> nursery, and Diderot’s project “YAMM YAMM,” a food service enterprise targeting schools.

While excited about the training they received, the recognition of their success, and the potential to win \$10,000 in seed money to develop their projects, all of the MEMA participants are motivated by the opportunity to create successful enterprises and to improve life in Haiti. To help them launch their projects, USAID/HIFIVE and the Haitian Bank Association will help the 80 first-round winners find potential investors and financial support at an “Opportunity Fair” in January 2011.

The MEMA awards ceremony was a moment of great hope for Haiti, showcasing the commitment and capacity of Haitian entrepreneurs to contribute to the economic recovery and development of their country. Their determination, creativity, energy and enthusiasm will shape the future of Haiti. Through MEMA and other initiatives targeting Haiti’s entrepreneurs, USAID will help entrepreneurs shape that future by helping them achieve success.

<sup>1</sup> HIFIVE is a USAID-funded project implemented by World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU) and AED. It empowers Haitians by providing access to innovative financial products and services with a focus on rural areas, value chains, remittances, and use of technology to expand financial inclusion. TechnoServe (TNS) is a subcontractor to HIFIVE and the lead implementer for MEMA.

<sup>2</sup> Cultural goods include tourism, handicrafts, and others.

<sup>3</sup> Jatropha, a genus of about 175 species of plants, shrubs and trees, can be used as a component for biofuel.