

Developing Entrepreneurship in Haiti

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St Martin is a community located in Port au Prince, Haiti's capital city. St Martin has a population of approximately 77,000 people with the majority of them living in poverty. The total workforce in St Martin is roughly 15,000 people. These are people that are available and willing to work yet St Martin alone has an unemployment rate of 98%.

Thierry Pierre is a self employed tailor in St Martin. He could not read or write when he inherited the business from his father. Thierry operates from a small workshop with three foot pedalled sewing machines and no electricity. He specialises in the manufacturing of sportswear and school uniforms and all garments are hand made. Thierry has always been aware of the importance of the education of the youth in St Martin. Because of this he has taken on 3 young apprentices whom he will train in this trade and who, Thierry hopes, will go on to establish businesses of their own in Port au Prince.

When the Soul of Haiti Foundation and Mercy Corps established a presence in St Martin offering training and advice to small businesses in the area Thierry decided to enrol. He has since learned to read and write, he has undertaken workshops in finance, retail, promotion, premises maintenance and learned the skills necessary to grow his business. Thierry receives weekly visits from the training team who offer assistance and guidance to help Thierry with any issues he encounters. He has recently secured new contracts and is beginning to seek investment and funding to develop and expand his business.

The Soul of Haiti Foundation and Mercy Corps have completed training programmes with 70 small businesses in St Martin. Many of these small businesses such as bakers, tailors and cobblers are generating employment in the community and are working together to assist each other. The generation of employment and promotion of entrepreneurship in Haiti is vital to its development over the coming years and is a key focus of the Soul of Haiti Foundation.