



SUCCESS STORY

Vocational training helps out-of-school youth

Haitian youth benefit from intensive education program.



Jefferson St. Louis (right) assisting a customer at Universal Motors

“This program has really changed my life. It has allowed me to quickly gain skills that would have taken years to acquire. Now I feel like a brand new person.”

Jefferson St. Louis, IDEJEN Graduate

The poor quality of education and lack of financial ability to pay school fees have left an estimated 500,000 youths out of school in Haiti. USAID’s Initiative Pour le Développement des Jeunes en Dehors du Milieu Scolaire (IDEJEN) is an education and job training program that is focused on providing life skills to illiterate and unemployed youth ages 15-24. Most of the youth who participate in this program have never attended primary school or dropped out before grade three.

One such participant is 20-year old Jefferson St. Louis who lives in Carrefour-Feuilles, one of the largest slums in Port-au-Prince. Jefferson comes from a family of six and because of poverty, he was not able to continue going to school as a child.

Like most Haitian youths, Jefferson wanted and needed an opportunity to gain the valuable education that eluded him as a child. When he heard of IDEJEN he immediately realized that this was the opportunity he had been seeking. “This program has opened a door for me and for all Haitian youth seeking a better future and willing to be productive citizens in tomorrow’s world”, said Jefferson

Jefferson completed 18 months of training in the IDEJEN learning institute: 12 months of integrated basic training in reading, writing, mathematics, life and employability skills, vocational training as well as a six month internship.

Jefferson now has a certificate in auto mechanics and is employed by one of Haiti’s most prestigious car dealerships, Universal Motors, and he is enjoying the success made possible through IDEJEN. “This program has already started to change my life. It has allowed me to quickly gain skills that would have taken years to acquire. Now I feel like a brand new person”, added Jefferson.

IDEJEN is funded by USAID and implemented by the Education Development Center, a U.S. non-governmental organization. The program began with a pilot phase in 2003 with 50 students. Presently almost 2,500 students take part in the program. Total funding for the program is \$5.5 million over five years.