

## **BASIC EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

Given the evidence that teaching children to first read in the language spoken at home leads to improved literacy outcomes, a Rotary club in Les Cayes, Haiti, decided to support an early grade literacy program for school age children in the first cycle (grade 1- 3) of primary school. The program will work with the Haitian Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP) to revise the textbooks and workbooks for those grade levels to be in Haitian Creole and to be more culturally relevant to the Haitian context. The grade 1 -3 textbooks had previously been in French. Grade 1 – 3 teachers in 65 public schools will be trained during the summer months on the newly revised curriculum, and the early grade literacy approach. The Rotary-supported program will provide five in-service training days throughout the schoolyear to support the trained teachers. In addition, the program will support 9 (1 per month of the school year) meetings with parents/caretakers of students in grade 1 - 3 and their teachers. Parents expect their children to read and speak French at school, not Creole, so they are skeptical of this new approach to teach reaching in Creole first. The meetings will give the teachers an opportunity to (a) share the reasoning why Creole is taught first and share the students' progress; and (b) provide ideas of how parents/caretakers/older siblings can reinforce reading at home. Rotary is partnering with a community-based organization that specializes in literacy – this organization will support the curriculum development as well as teacher trainings. The program will run for three years. Over that time, Rotary clubs expect to see primary students' literacy scores improve using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool.

Rotary members will use their influence in Les Cayes to (a) promote the idea of teaching children in Haitian Creole first, and (b) support an external evaluation, and if the results are positive – use the results from this program to advocate to MENFP to expand this program beyond Les Cayes to other departments in Haiti.