



ED STOCKER

Pastor Jean Enock Joseph (c.) visits one of his projects in Croix-des-Bouquets, just outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital.

Jean Enock Joseph stands up to Haiti's toughest problems. His message: People possess the ability to help themselves.

By Ed Stocker / Contributor

Jean Enock Joseph is a born storyteller. Seated behind a desk at his office in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, he energetically waves his hands as he explains his work. Mr. Joseph clearly has endless enthusiasm for his subject – powered by the raw energy of a reformer.

“With sheer willpower and hardly any means, we’ve built our projects on efficiency and vision,” he says, his singsong French rising and falling with each sentence. “We’ve focused on inclusion, fairness, excellence, and making a difference. Those are our values – and we’ve produced results.”

Focusing on the most needy

Pastor Enock (as he’s better known) is an evangelical preacher, which goes some way to explaining his rousing speaking style. But he’s also a passionate advocate of lay issues, such as access to education and housing, needs that continue to bypass large swaths of the population here.

His day-to-day social work focuses on helping some of Haiti’s most needy, in a country that remains the poorest in the Western Hemisphere.

Joseph was born and raised in Cité Soleil – the most notorious shantytown in Port-au-Prince – where many of his social projects are still focused. The area is renowned for gangs with various political allegiances and drug-related violence.

A bloody upturn in violence a decade ago was enough to convince the pastor that enough was enough.

“Our initiative was launched 10 years ago to respond to a problem that was ravaging Cité Soleil,” Joseph explains. “There was a murderous struggle between residents of [the] Boston and Soleil Neuf [neighborhoods], which, over the course of around 30 days, saw women raped, houses destroyed, and people killed. The population was powerless to stop the thugs from doing what they wanted.

“We realized that there were plenty of good, honest people able to do something

about this situation,” he continues, “which is why we launched CONOCS – the Collective of Noteworthy People in Cité Soleil. Our goal at the time was to struggle for peace, nonviolence, and sustainable development in the area.”

While Joseph concedes that Cité Soleil has a special place in his heart, his focus over the years has shifted to helping Haiti as a whole. His work now takes him to places such as Bon Repos and Croix-des-Bouquets, cities northeast of Port-au-Prince.

Putting Haitians in charge of recovery

CONOCS has also evolved into a large umbrella organization called MPE (Ministère Pasteur Enock) overseen by the pastor. To date it has helped set up five primary schools, two hospitals, one vocational college, one music school, two youth orchestras, and three Internet cafes.

In a country where the slow pace of reconstruction work since the January 2010 earthquake has received intense criticism –

▶ NEXT PAGE

and plenty of questions about the efficacy of aid distribution – Joseph’s projects show a transparent, intelligent use of limited resources. The hordes of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that operate in the country – with far greater means at their disposal – could do far worse than follow his lead.

In an ideal world, of course, MPE would be independent of international charities. But with the Haitian government unable to raise funds, Joseph is reliant on donations from overseas. The big difference between his organization and others, he argues, is that with his group, the foreign involvement ends with the donations: Haitians are the ones conceiving the ideas for their own communities and then staying the course to oversee their implementation.

“There’s a big debate in the international press at the moment about the effectiveness of NGOs,” Joseph says. “We can say that there are real doubts when several billion dollars are invested in a country, and you can’t see the results with the naked eye. You need a giant telescope to see them.

“But the projects from Food For The Poor and the Fondation Saint-Luc [which we work with] are visible.”

‘Pastor Enock is a fabulous individual’

For Delane Bailey-Herd, Haiti project manager at Food For The Poor, a Christian international relief and development organization based in Coconut Creek, Fla., Joseph is the ideal person to have on the ground in Port-au-Prince.

“Pastor Enock is a fabulous individual,” she says. “He understands the needs and the difficulties of Cité Soleil – the people, the gangs, where they’re at. Both he and his group have such great ideas for change. We’ve come alongside him to empower him in these transformative steps. But he understands the area best.”

A recent visitor to MPE’s Cité Soleil Non-Violence Vocational Center, set up in 2006, watched apprentices beaver away furiously. Outside in the courtyard, a group of young men wearing protective dark glasses forged strips of metal. Inside, women tore bits of paper and cardboard into small strips.

When Joseph temporarily halted work to

Learn more / get involved

UniversalGiving (www.universalgiving.org) helps people give to and volunteer with top-performing charitable organizations all over the world. The projects are vetted by UniversalGiving, and 100 percent of each donation goes directly to the cause.

To help Haiti, UniversalGiving recommends the following:

- The Lambi Fund of Haiti. For information, go to <http://tinyurl.com/bwv7vg6>. Project: Reforest Haiti with a Gift of Trees (<http://tinyurl.com/7upowks>)
- International Action works to provide clean water and education to children: <http://tinyurl.com/752gx8w>. Project: Support education in Haiti with Books for Schools (<http://tinyurl.com/7ve87x3>)
- Operation USA helps communities recover from disaster and poverty: <http://tinyurl.com/7pnfrra>. Project: Adopt a classroom in Haiti (<http://tinyurl.com/6p8bjq7>)
- God’s Children Ministries: <http://tinyurl.com/7z77nv9>. Project: Volunteer to help orphans and disadvantaged children in Haiti (<http://tinyurl.com/82ec7ut>)

make a motivational speech, the members of his flock craned their necks to listen.

Both the metal forging and the paper project are designed to generate funds. The latter is a clever way of turning scraps of rubbish into compressed fuel briquettes. The idea not only helps tidy the streets by recycling unwanted refuse but provides an alternative to wood-based charcoal in a country that already suffers from severe deforestation.

The job of the apprentices is to sell these ideas to domestic and industrial consumers. The hope is that the money they generate can be plowed back into other initiatives.

“We’d like the government to take charge of the population and provide a subsidy equal

to the one we receive from abroad – that’s our hope,” Joseph says. “But we’re also looking to put in place production workshops and other structures so that MPE can guarantee its own funds to finance projects. That’s our ultimate goal.”

Other microprojects that Joseph says can help bankroll MPE include a cabinetmaking workshop and a garden center.

Perhaps most important, the MPE workshops and training projects offer Haitians an “alternative path” in life, as Joseph puts it. Learning a skill or profession gives them a viable alternative to the lure of drug money and a gang culture that often affect young people living in the slums.

Haitians can do it for themselves

Yet despite MPE’s strong desire to help those in need, its ethos firmly focuses on helping Haitians control their own destinies.

“Many people we’ve helped have been waiting for a messiah or some important person to give them food and things like that,” Joseph explains. “But it’s no good for an individual to be like that. You have the responsibility to look after your own life, and you can’t wait for someone else to help you live.”

Despite the negative headlines that dominate coverage of Haiti, MPE’s progress reaffirms the idea that all is not lost for the impoverished Caribbean nation. And Joseph is keen to point out that the work his organization is doing is by no means the only positive story here: Haitians really *can* do it for themselves.

“Joseph has a vision, and we saw that,” Ms. Bailey-Herd says. “He wants to see big transformations in the next 20 years.”

A hands-on force for change in a country that has often been torn apart by racial, political, and social divisions, Joseph sees MPE as proof that another Haiti is possible.

“We see the human being,” he says. “Not his faith, his color, his outlook, or his level of education.

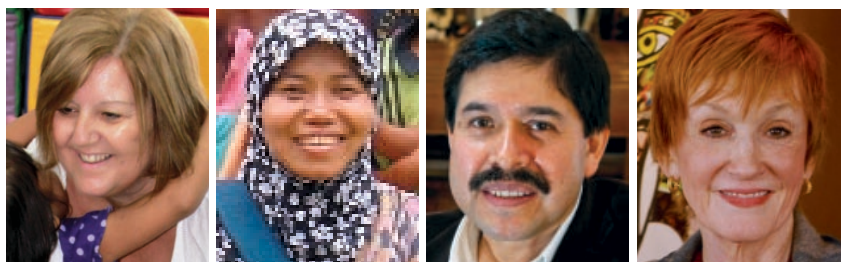
“Any man or woman is worthy of our help.”

■ *To learn more about the work of Jean Enock Joseph and his Ministère Pasteur Enock, visit www.mpehaiti.org.*

Next week’s difference-maker:

MAE AZANGO went undercover to expose a hidden practice in Liberia: female circumcision. Even death threats haven’t kept this journalist from her role as a national gadfly.

Know someone who is making a difference? Let us know at pmad@csmonitor.com.



Tracy Cosgrove has opened day-care centers in Thailand.

Tri Mumpuni builds microhydro plants in Indonesia.

Juan Castillo teaches English to New York City immigrants.

Kathy Eldon helps creative people achieve their visions.

GALLERY OF RECENT PROFILES