



The University of
the West Indies
Centre for Gender and
Development Studies



Issue 2 – 2008

Participation, More Than Add Women and Stir? A Comparative Case Analysis in Post-Coup Haiti

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Abstract

Women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have become targets for increasing development funding in recent years, a bigger slice in a bigger overall pie. In addition to being a consequence of gradual shifts within development orthodoxy regarding gender, this targeting of women's NGOs results from two recent trends, gender "mainstreaming" and the scale-up of funding to combat HIV/AIDS. Both are given a place in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by all member states within the United Nations.¹ Some feminists welcome this affirmation of women's importance and increase in funding for women's NGOs (Zaoudé and Sandler 2001; Porter and Judd 1999), while others are skeptical of "institutional feminism" (Bessis 2001) and the "NGOization of feminism" (Lind 2000; Alvarez 1999).

¹ These goals, specifically, are "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015," and "Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS" and "Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it."

Introduction

This divergence in feminist understandings of women's NGOs has encouraged several classificatory schema in understanding the vast array of women's NGOs and the gender paradigm structuring their practice and funding. Esther Boserup triggered a sustained critical discourse on gender following a popular critique of mainstream development (1970). A second wave of feminism in the North successfully brought about Women in Development (WID), specifically targeting women for development programs and demanding gender-disaggregated data. Transnational feminists and networks, including Caribbean leaders such as Peggy Antrobus, critiqued WID as representing just an "add women and stir" approach (Antrobus 2004; Moghadam 2005; Mohanty 2003). Molyneux and others argued women's "strategic gender interests" needed to be addressed, in addition to "practical" interests (1985). These feminist organizations argued that development interventions should specifically address gender as a category of analysis, as a system of inequality, leading to a Gender and Development (GAD) approach.

There have been several attempts to classify NGOs, reflecting the priorities of the taxonomy's author. For example, donors and political scientists tend to categorize NGOs in terms of size and organizational capacity (Desai and Preston 2000; Morton 1997, i-iv). Transnational feminists Sen and Grown propose a six-part model based on roles played in women's empowerment (1987, 90). Models for Haitian NGOs are similar to those in the general NGO literature. In 1989, the Groupe de Recherche et d'Appui au Milieu Rural (GRAMIR, a Haitian-Swiss NGO) published a study of Haitian NGOs outlining four types of NGOs based on ideologies of development (Mathurin, Mathurin, and Zaugg 1989). Keeping GRAMIR's first two types, Étienne (1997) added ideologies of underdevelopment to the classification. Regarding women's NGOs, Fonds Kore Fanm, a Canadian funding institution targeting feminist organizations, commissioned a study of training programs (Clermont, Mangonès, and Métellus 2003). In the study, again, a four-part typology was used to classify women's organizations based on how they define women's rights.

However useful these typologies are, they reproduce a conceptual assumption that NGOs are monolithic entities. As this paper highlights, confronted ethnographically, NGOs lose conceptual unity, as the many different "stakeholder groups" within them assign different meanings and identities to their actions (Hilhorst 2003, 146). All of the classifications roughly distinguish NGOs based on their relationship with their aid recipients: are they "clients" that primarily or only receive services, or are they "members" that in some real way define the process? I have argued earlier (Schuller 2007) that focusing on participation is a fruitful approach, particularly for studying women's NGOs that have had a history of politicizing women's participation (Thayer 2001) and self-conscious debate about NGO-ization (Nagar 2006; Lang 2000).

This paper offers an ethnographic examination of the two development paradigms, arguing that a top-down WID approach that does not address local gendered realities undercuts generalized feminist goals of local women's empowerment through limiting

local participation. In so doing, NGOs that promote this vision are less effective in promoting other goals such as stemming the feminization of HIV/AIDS. Comparing the relationships between two Haitian women's NGOs and aid recipients and communities, this paper argues that given similar (but not identical) constraints, especially Haiti's extreme social inequalities, women's NGOs can choose to structure their relationships with recipient communities differently. Despite this, even a Gender and Development (GAD)-oriented NGO with a long history of promoting women's empowerment can reproduce top-down approaches that erode recipient participation.

This paper is based on twenty months (October 2003-May 2005) of participant observation in Haiti with two women's NGOs, complemented by four months of archival and interview research with governmental and international organization representatives in Pòtoprens,² Brussels, Geneva, and Washington. In all, I formally interviewed twenty-one staff and eight clients at one NGO, twenty-two staff and eleven clients at the other, nine Haitian government staff, eight international NGO representatives, twelve donor representatives in Haiti, and twenty-one donor representatives at their international headquarters. I asked people to define concepts such as "participation" and "autonomy" and then assess their (and their NGO's) participation and autonomy, outline development priorities, their relationships with other stakeholder groups, and the roles of foreign institutions in Haiti's "contemporary situation."

Background: Two women's NGOs

Fanm Tèt Ansanm³

Fanm Tèt Ansanm was founded in 1985, during the last months of the Duvalier regime, by a small branch of the US government to train women factory workers in basic human development and health. Over time, because of the women's advocacy, Fanm Tèt Ansanm's training programs—following a feminist/Freirian pedagogy of consciousness-raising—grew to include basic and advanced literacy, worker's rights, and HIV/AIDS. In addition to the training, the women demanded a clinic, operating in two locations since 2006, with specialties in ob/gyn and dermatology, and offering free HIV/AIDS screening since 2007. Also because of worker advocacy, Fanm Tèt Ansanm organized a Women's Committee to Defend Workers' Rights. While not using the language of intersectionality as formulated by Collins (2000) or Crenshaw (2001), and while even bristling at the label of "feminist,"⁴ their work targeting women and their gender-equality ideology are typical of the GAD paradigm.

² In this paper I refer to place names in the Haitian Kreyòl, the only language of 90 percent of Haiti's population and the first language of all Haitians. Despite this, and despite its status as an official language, it remains marginalized.

³ Names of groups and individuals in this paper are pseudonyms. "Fanm Tèt Ansanm" is Kreyòl for "Women United"—literally, "heads together."

⁴ Some staff defined "feminism" as "militant," whereas others defined it as a professional class activity. Both explanations were used as critiques of the concept. Only two staff identified themselves as feminists, and none defined the organization's work as feminist.

Fanm Tèt Ansanm has an array of donors—mostly private, European NGOs, most of whom have funded them for over a decade. According to criteria established by donors, Fanm Tèt Ansanm is performing beyond numerical expectations. For example, they promised to distribute 84,400 condoms in 2003, whereas they distributed 103,956. Some 485 instead of 420 people completed voluntary AIDS testing. Instead of 5,950 people attending educational seminars on HIV/AIDS, almost double that number attended, that is, 10,129. In the clinic, 1,992 people were counseled on family planning methods between October 1, 2003, and September 30, 2004, a period covering one of their donors' fiscal years. Of these people, 239 accepted condom usage, 59 accepted the contraceptive injection Depo-Provera, and 65 accepted some form of a pill. In addition to family planning, 3,977 people had a consultation with one of Fanm Tèt Ansanm's doctors during the same period. Because of this, and because of their longevity and connection to a large population, it became one of the sub-recipients for a large grant from the Global Fund (to Fight AIDS, Malaria, and Tuberculosis) in 2003.

*Sove Lavi*⁵

Sove Lavi began as a program within a UN branch in the late 1980s, during Haiti's tumultuous *dechoukaj* period following Duvalier's ouster and before the first democratic elections. Sove Lavi's first and longest-standing program was also based on one of Freire's suggestions (1985), Community Action Councils (CAC's). Sove Lavi assembled community leaders, mostly from peasant organizations but also some rural women's organizations, and trained them to *simaye* (disseminate) public health messages, the first being hygiene. According to Haitian NGO researchers, the Duvalier regime politicized CACs, using them to reward constituents, particularly those who also served as informants (Mathurin, Mathurin, and Zaugg 1989: 47; Gabaud 2000). Typical of a WID approach, Sove Lavi practices a form of *discrimination positive* (French-language interpretation of "affirmative action") in which the majority of CAC members need to be women.

Because of their long-standing work in training community public health leaders, Sove Lavi became one of the largest recipients of HIV/AIDS prevention funding, including from the Global Fund. Almost overnight, Sove Lavi "scaled up"—increased its services (Thomas-Slayter 1992; Uvin 1996)—following this influx of donor funding that also included funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). From a single office with five staff, Sove Lavi grew to a four-center operation employing over 30 people within less than eighteen months. Its goals also exponentially grew. For example, they planned a Caravan traveling to remote communities with a self-contained sound system to attract crowds to learn about HIV/AIDS. Sove Lavi envisioned two to three thousand people attending each tour of the Caravan, and forty-eight tours per year, attracting 96,000 to 144,000 people per year. The results of Sove Lavi interventions have been mixed. Some goals of Sove Lavi were met, such as that participants in training programs would be able to correctly identify the major means of contraction and prevention of HIV. Others, including those for the Caravan, Sove Lavi was far from attaining.

⁵ Kreyòl for "Saving Lives"

Institutional differences

Women in both groups were involved in their communities, and were often sought out and called into positions of leadership. The relationships that the two NGOs' aid recipients have with their communities were similar; however there were a few institutional differences in the NGOs that engendered some distinctions between the relationships. Also owing to institutional differences, the two populations of aid recipients differed in social layers (*kouch*)—if not exactly classes in the Marxist sense (Jean 2002,19).⁶

First contact

People become involved with the two NGOs by different processes. Sove Lavi had an elaborate process for selecting CAC members. First, Sove Lavi staff organized a pre-screening mission to identify local health and educational institutions, who referred to them names of local leaders and groups. During the first meeting, local organizations were told about the process. They selected nine candidates to form a “cellule,” and Sove Lavi staff screened these nine candidates at a public meeting. The candidates were given tests, such as knowledge about HIV/AIDS and other community health concerns, their French reading ability, their comfort with public speaking, and “respectability” in the community. After a two-and-a-half hour process of examination, Sove Lavi staff from Pòtoprens consulted one another and selected the five people to invite as CAC members.

By contrast, anyone was welcome to frequent the Fanm Tèt Ansanm center, attend the special events, visit the clinic, take classes, or become a member of one of the two committees (the Women's Committee and the AIDS motivators). To join a committee, the only requisite was to complete all necessary training programs. For example, to conduct HIV/AIDS education requires a basic understanding of health. To be an effective problem-solver and advocate, people need to know their rights and be aware of community resources. There were two primary modes of contact with Fanm Tèt Ansanm: referral by a current member-volunteer or by “motivation” in the factories. Most of the women I had interviewed said that a friend or coworker referred them to Fanm Tèt Ansanm. Several people in turn told me that they had referred others to the NGO. At the public celebrations, such as International Women's Day, World Health Day, Labor Day, World Literacy Day, International Day Against Violence Against Women, and World AIDS Day, attendees are invited to sign up for training sessions and eventually become Women's Committee members or motivators for the AIDS prevention program. Another means of “motivation” is for staff to enter the industrial park. Workers are usually given no more than a half-hour break from the factory assembly line, so the pace was frenetic, with thousands of women and men descending upon a row of a dozen *timachann* (street

⁶ The word “class” was often used to distinguish between “haves” and “have nots.” A local perspective distinguishes many types of “have-nots” — divided into *couches sociales*, not classes. Most people used the word *kouch* (Kreyòl spelling) to refer to differences in specific terms, whereas a few people used the word *klas* to refer generally to class struggle.

merchants) serving food. Yolette was efficient, usually giving the entire stack of journals, brochures, or other Fanm Tèt Ansanm materials she and others brought with them within minutes. Yolette shouted above the crowd noise, repeating phrases about visiting the clinic or attending the first day of a new class, until an individual sought her out. At this point, she stopped what she was doing, called out, “*cheri*,” and attempted a personal conversation under the circumstances.

Orientation: Setting apart or tying together

This difference in selection also structures a difference in orientation. People who visited Fanm Tèt Ansanm and became committee members were peers with their co-workers and neighbors. While they sometimes played specified roles at events, they received no other special treatment, and the only meetings to which they were the only ones invited were those of the two committees. Ritually reinforcing this unity as community, most public events ended in one of four songs, each with a different message. *Rasanble* (Kreyòl for “assemble”) calls upon women to organize and put their heads together in unity. *Fanm yo, si n pa rele* (“Women, if we do not speak up...”) talks about the importance of women speaking up to defend their rights. *Òganizasyon* (“Organization”) declares that, while women’s burdens are enormous, they can advance if organized. Finally, the message of *Piti, piti* (“Bit by bit”) is that bit by bit, we are advancing: we are gaining ground in our struggles for equality and justice, as women and as workers. After large public celebrations, staff handed out a plate of food and a cup of Couronne—a popular, bright orange, syrupy-sweet Haitian soft drink—to all present. Staff viewed this as an important gesture, reversing class/status group roles, whereby NGO professionals are serving factory workers. Over and again, the message reinforced was that the solution to Haiti’s problems is *tèt ansanm*: unity, dialogue, and working together.

By contrast, Sove Lavi CAC members were treated differently from community members. Most of Sove Lavi’s activities were with CAC members, ritually reinforced as “representatives” of the community. They were intermediaries, communicating back and forth between the community and Sove Lavi. Part of the reason for this was geographical. Unlike Fanm Tèt Ansanm—situated in the middle of the export-processing zone where their aid recipients work—but *like* most NGOs in Haiti, Sove Lavi’s central office was in Pòtoprens, but the vast majority of their service was in the provinces.⁷ In addition, Sove Lavi daily practice and organizational culture exacerbated this inequality. Instead of a horizontal, community relationship that Fanm Tèt Ansanm rituals reinforced, Sove Lavi ritual practice emphasized the distinction between their recipients and communities.

To commemorate World AIDS Day, Sove Lavi prepared a skit with youth at a provincial drop-in center, written and choreographed by a university artist, to “motivate” surrounding communities. Following a suggestion from USAID health contractor CDS (Bernard and Desormeaux 1996), Sove Lavi made strategic use of local knowledge, including local slang for terms describing sexuality and cultural metaphors such as

⁷ A total of 258 out of 291 officially-registered NGOs who gave this information are headquartered in Pòtoprens and its suburbs, whereas only 45 of the NGOs said they provide services in the capital.

Bawòn Samdi (the spirit of death, guardian of the cemetery) to represent AIDS.⁸ The skit was quite frank, emphasizing condom usage. Actors were mostly high school students, which in Haiti means that they were in the top tenth socioeconomic bracket.⁹ After they finished putting on their outfits and makeup, the group nervously waited for longer than an hour for the market to close. Finally, fed up and hungry, the Pòtoprens staff person in charge decided to go ahead during the market. The youth volunteers performed their skit well, attracting a small crowd of curious market women and a few old men who had stopped playing dominoes. As a sequel to the skit, Sove Lavi had prepared an education forum for the community, complete with two HIV-positive people to testify, a public health nurse, and a DJ with a very loud sound system.

No one came. The Pòtoprens staff left to fetch boxed lunches for the youth volunteers, who were growing more irritable. The community liaison and the nurse retreated to the liaison's house for lunch. I walked around town with Gabrielle, one of the HIV-positive people. She was upset, telling me that she felt used, complaining about the lack of motivation provided to bring people to the session. After what seemed like an awkward eternity to everyone, the Pòtoprens staff returned with lunch for middle-class staff and center volunteers. I was given one but local youth and the would-be presenters like Gabrielle were not, as they were given a "per diem" that was supposed to include food.¹⁰ I gave my lunch to the presenters to share, but hungry local youth had only chicken bones and whatever else was thrown away as the group dumped their trash in the schoolyard and left in their rented bus.

The message to recipient communities from these and other practices is that direct beneficiaries of Sove Lavi are set apart from the local community, straining local relationships, as Marie Ange explained:

[They say] "you're making money off of us! When you talk to us about these things, you will make money." I explain to them, I don't take the training for money and I don't give it for money. When we have them sign, they don't want to sign. They always say, "But yes! You will make money and when you make us write [our names], we won't get anything."

Marie Ange is referring to a practice of having people sign their names on an attendance sheet that Sove Lavi requires of participants after every event. This ritual act reinforced the differences between the well-paid staff and CAC members who receive stipends and the local community-at-large. While CAC members were also neighbors, friends, relatives, members of local churches or other organizations, this act marked CAC members as the chosen elect, with the Pòtoprens staff. Especially painful to CAC members was that these pre-existing relationships were central reasons Sove Lavi chose

⁸ This follows Daniel Miller's argument about local cultural meanings to capitalism and consumption proliferating, providing space for local expression while integrating the local into the transnational process (1997).

⁹ In the provinces even fewer people attend high school.

¹⁰ Sove Lavi's paid staff also received a per diem, yet ate.

them in the first place.

Using the more fine-grained status category of *kouch* as opposed to an “objective” notion of class,¹¹ patterns can be seen in the two NGOs’ service populations. As noted above, one of Sove Lavi’s requirements for CAC members is mastery of French, the language of the elite. To speak French requires an education, which in turn requires a considerable portion of families’ income. (A cheap Pòtoprens school¹² costs 550 goud per month per child, more than a third of a minimum-wage-earner’s income.) In addition, all but one of Sove Lavi’s CAC members I met¹³ owned her/his house or other land somewhere.

Comparing the socioeconomic differences in the two populations, as well as the human resources invested in the membership, it can be said that while members of both are community leaders, Fanm Tèt Ansanm “grows” leaders while Sove Lavi “imports” them. Georges of Sove Lavi illustrated this point: “Sove Lavi does not create organizations. I mean, we find them in the field, we help them and we work with them.” By contrast, Fanm Tèt Ansanm invested as much as two years of educational training in factory workers who may or may not be literate in Kreyòl before visiting Fanm Tèt Ansanm. After this investment, a staff person at Fanm Tèt Ansanm invited them to become Women’s Committee or AIDS motivator members. Sove Lavi found people with high levels of educational, linguistic, and symbolic capital, including experience with organizations.

Relationships between NGO and recipients

Sove Lavi: Clients

Relationships between Sove Lavi and its service population were typical of client/patron. Sove Lavi organized a three-day national conference bringing together the dual themes of violence against women and the feminization of AIDS. This was a major undertaking, as they coordinated more than 30 partner organizations who brought people from all over the country. There were over 40 speakers in two concurrent break-out sessions. Speakers included leaders within the Haitian government, the NGO sector, and several international organizations. The conference was well attended; the official count was 350 people. In addition, the conference was well discussed; fifteen media outlets—print, radio and television—covered the event. At an exposition hall, NGOs, community groups, and artists displayed their pictures, pamphlets, T-shirts, and items for sale.

The conference was held at the Hotel Montana, posh by even US standards. Sessions started late, because all but one of the government, donor, and NGO representatives went over their allotted times to speak. The end of the conference, designed for everyone to discuss problems and solutions, was therefore cut short. The finale, participants

¹¹ For example, while external or Marxist understandings lump 78 percent of Haiti’s people who earn \$2 per day as “in poverty,” local realities and hierarchies divide this population into several *kouch*.

¹² People call these schools “*tekòl bòlèt*”—literally, “lottery school,” in other words, take your chances.

¹³ Or their family, as most still lived in the traditional extended family *lakou* system.

presenting summaries of their break-out group conversations, was set aside to make room for the US Ambassador, who had shown up on time and could not wait until his time in the rotation would have come up. While the people were reporting on their discussions and recommendations, Sove Lavi held a reception for VIPs. The serving tables were extravagantly filled with Haitian and foreign hors d'oeuvres, meats, cheeses, and the staple of beans and rice. Two Sove Lavi staff members assured me that people would have enough to eat, that they had learned from previous days' experience whereby aid recipients went without food. After the reception was over, the curtains were opened, revealing a large line of people trying to get food. No additional plates of food were set. The lesson learned was not to have a more equitable distribution of food, but to put up the boundaries and make that privilege invisible. Further, the VIPs were taken away from aid recipients precisely when they were presenting their findings.

As even casual observers note, Haiti is an incredibly inegalitarian society. It is second to Namibia in terms of economic inequality in the world (Jadotte 2006). This inequality cannot help but color the relationships between NGOs and aid recipients. In Haiti, there is a popular conception of a *klas ONG*, an "NGO class" (see Schuller forthcoming for further discussion). These differences between professional NGO staff people and their aid recipients color their perceptions about recipients' participation in the work of the NGOs, and undermine organizational effectiveness. In their interviews with me, Sove Lavi's CAC members were uniformly critical of these practices that reproduced exclusion: "What I see here, I don't want it. Why don't I want it? I don't like their strategy, [and] I don't like their mode of functioning. I don't need for them not to exist, no. But I would like them to change." Said another, "We feel far away from them." During missions to the provinces, Sove Lavi staff were nearly always late, the number one frustration of CAC members. A focus group evaluation for USAID, eight months after Sove Lavi had last visited CAC members, began with a litany of their complaints about Sove Lavi.¹⁴ Tellingly, we showed up two hours after the meeting was to have begun. Answering a question, "What training did you receive at Sove Lavi?", CAC members each responded with a single-phrase answer about the substance of the training, and then launched into specific complaints, such as a lack of communication, promises broken, a lack of follow-up, and the consequences to their relationships with the community.

The lines of communication between Sove Lavi and CAC members were strained. Staff usually called CAC members—most often they chose one to serve as the go-between—a few days in advance of a visit to the provinces. Several CAC members complained about this. Said one, "Sove Lavi should give us two or three days' advance warning to know what we need to do and what we're not doing...they should first propose a meeting, because we might not all have time." Danielle was more specific: "Yesterday afternoon I received a little note they sent for us for today. Truly, this isn't good."

CAC members were also concerned about what they understood as promises Sove Lavi

¹⁴ I attended two focus group evaluations. The other meeting was more cordial but CAC members still voiced concerns.

had made to the community. Said Maxime, “They proposed us a lot of stuff: they proposed a community school, a community toilet, things like that. But we wrote and gave them [a demand]; they never gave us a response.” Lack of follow-up was a major concern for even otherwise accommodating CAC members, including Marie-Ange: “What would I like Sove Lavi to do? I would like them, they should always have follow-through because when there isn’t follow-through, it’s as though you washed your hands very well, and you wiped them on the ground.”¹⁵

This lack of follow-through put a strain on CAC members’ relationship with their community, as outlined by a CAC member: “And there are schools that say, ‘You never come back anymore.’ We say, ‘Well. It’s not our fault. We don’t depend on ourselves. When they send us, we go.’” A relationship of dependence was reinforced, highlighted by the phrase, “We don’t depend on ourselves.” CAC members, representatives of Sove Lavi in the eyes of the community, were held accountable for its actions. Said one, “You understand: ‘Where is what you started? And after that you don’t do anything anymore.’” This creates tension in the community. Said one member, “We lose face as well, to stand in front of other groups we helped to train.”

Fanm Tèt Ansanm: Members?

In the context of Haitian NGOs, Fanm Tèt Ansanm stood out in its openness to its aid recipients who wrote individual articles in the journal and sometimes chose the issues to be selected in the journal. Fanm Tèt Ansanm attempted to “back up” its Committee leaders, supporting them in their initiatives. Fanm Tèt Ansanm provided space for women who were afraid to join unions. Frisline continued, “No matter how we speak with them, if you stand up for your rights, they fire you.” Thérèse argued that workers just knowing their rights is a source of empowerment, that it levels the relationship a little. “It’s not because the boss doesn’t know he doesn’t have the right to do things to you, no...it’s because he has the advantage over you.” In this context, simply providing workers’ rights training is helpful for workers who feel they cannot obtain justice as workers. Complementing this is a meeting space for workers to discuss the issues they have in common. During its heyday, the Women’s Committee met at least monthly to discuss problems in the factories, and they would strategize about the solutions and offer support to individual Committee members in applying them. Just offering this training and moral support helps the workers, as Frisline explains, “Fanm Tèt Ansanm does a lot for us. They give us knowledge and help us become unafraid, so we can demand our rights.”

While working at a factory in the industrial park, Women’s Committee leader Héléne fell ill. Knowing her rights to insurance (OFATMA), she visited the OFATMA office and asked to withdraw the funds taken out of her pay envelopes every payday. To her surprise, the government office did not even have a file for her. Héléne called a special meeting of the Women’s Committee to discuss this. The group decided to meet with OFATMA representatives to force Héléne’s employer to comply with the law. OFATMA staff opened an account for Héléne and her coworkers but did not require the company to pay five years’ back contributions. In response, Héléne and other Women’s Committee

¹⁵ The end of this sentence is a Kreyòl proverb, *lavi men, siye ate*.

members wrote an article simply explaining OFATMA's responsibilities in Fanm Tèt Ansanm's Kreyòl language journal. The journal has a circulation of 5,000–10,000 copies printed and distributed such as during the “feeding frenzy” mentioned above with Yolette in the industrial park, but also given to other NGOs and government agencies. This campaign generated many similar visits to the agency, as workers were empowered to defend their rights. Several individuals¹⁶ who used the information in the journal to plead their case were able to demand that their accounts be opened.

Some women apply their knowledge from training in neighborhood associations. The impact is difficult to measure in increasingly popular quantitative calculi, but the women themselves are grateful to Fanm Tèt Ansanm for their new abilities. Communities have leaders who read and write Kreyòl, know basic first aid, are aware of how to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission, and are aware of their rights and some community resources. As Luna said, “The work Fanm Tèt Ansanm does is solid. They trained us, and they help us to know. We have become points of hope where we live.” Fanm Tèt Ansanm trains and provides some materials for first aid agents. However, the women do appreciate the services they receive. But services could be improved, as Marcial explained:

They receive us very well, they speak to us well about women and about everything we need. In Kreyòl class, if they didn't train us we would never understand anything when someone speaks to you. In the clinic, it's totally good, but when they prescribe you a drug, it is expensive to buy elsewhere. So, if you have a problem, it's difficult to resolve it.

Especially in the context of other NGOs, Fanm Tèt Ansanm's having an open, “warm” greeting is important, one where recipients are “received well.” However, there are limits. While the political context and violence kept many services from fully functioning, the clinic's doors remained open most days. When I pointed this out in my initial findings, staff argued that a woman's health is a primary need, unlike training programs. This still did not explain the difference between the Women's Committee and the HIV/AIDS prevention program. At least twice during my observations, the Women's Committee meeting was pre-empted by a meeting of the HIV/AIDS prevention program. And the “promoters” of the prevention program received a monthly transportation stipend while Women's Committee members did not.

Participation

In general, donors agree that genuine space for participation makes projects more effective. But what counts as “participation,” and how is it defined? A peasant in Bamòn, Haiti, critiqued the rhetoric as masking inequalities in the process: “Participation just means that we get to carry a lot of heavy rocks on our heads” (Smith 2001, 34). Others have written extensively about the subject (e.g., Hickey and Mohan 2004; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Paley 2001), particularly from a feminist perspective (e.g. Parpart 1999;

¹⁶ Albeit as individuals, as OFATMA did not maintain a proactive stance past this initial period of embarrassment.

Cornwall 2004; Leve 2001; Mansbridge 1999). Giselle lamented, “I thought that they would ask us what programs we wanted...They only want us there to take pictures, but when we actually talk about our real issues, they send us outside.”

Building on Hickey and Mohan’s temporal dimensions of participation (both imminent and immanent), I argue that participation needs to be understood as a process. To assess this, in addition to the open-ended questions about people’s definitions of participation, I employed a snapshot—a chart outlining who is involved in eight stages of a development project (**Table 1**). I also observed actual practices. I asked people to mark with an X who completed a given step in a development project: NGO staff, donors, or aid recipients. Sometimes in the context of a larger interview, I filled in the chart. Based on a composite of responses from individual and focus group interviews, corroborated by observations, the difference in member participation in Sove Lavi and Fanm Tèt Ansanm can be represented graphically. While “conception” or “evaluation” may be differently defined and practiced, the terms used were my own interpretation and definition. There was therefore a standardized lexicon for research participants, which proved especially useful with populations that were not development professionals.

At Sove Lavi, CAC members and other aid recipients only participated in the execution of the project, and sometimes organization. They were rarely consulted in “planning” the project. To the best of their knowledge, the project arose from nowhere, as described above. Especially in remote rural areas, where there is little government or international organization presence, few resources and next to no jobs, few people would oppose this program that offers resources such as tapes, pens, other educational materials, food, money, and in some cases a youth center complete with satellite Internet and television. “We count on you; you are the only ones who have ever come to see us,” a community leader said at a planning meeting. While community members, especially young women, may individually actively support the idea of bringing educational resources, and many have personal stories testifying to the importance of HIV education, this consent needs to be understood as what Freire described as “participation under control” (quoted in Regan 2003, 10), or managed consent (Gramsci 1971). One mission to the South province I attended included a planning meeting for the following month. CAC members were given a choice of dates for hosting community education forums and had to sign the attendance roster in order to receive stipends. There was no space for member questions, and the words members spoke in public were “yes” or “no” or a date and time. As mentioned above, CAC members did not like this approach, seeing it as a lack of respect. Incidentally, this meeting that I attended was rendered moot, as USAID had pulled their funding for the project. Frontline staff who went on the mission did not know about this funding shift. Said Mme. Auguste, responsible for the Sove Lavi program in that province, “I didn’t know that it was our last day...I thought we had time to resume again.”

As noted above, many scholars have argued and this model shows that participation is more than execution. Communities should be able to define their own priorities and design programs according to local needs and realities. At one location in the provinces, all Sove Lavi participants had scored above 95% on a test of their knowledge of

HIV/AIDS. Staff returned to Pòtoprens in their SUV, but I stayed to talk with CAC members. As the dust settled, I asked people—community trainers themselves—what methods of HIV prevention they practiced. Immediately, the group burst into laughter. “My friend, we would very much like to practice HIV prevention,” Djoni began. “But they never give us condoms. With all the money they spend on gas and their staff, they could at least give us condoms, no?” Being naïve and an anthropologist, I retorted, “but you tell people to practice abstinence,” triggering another round of laughter. Speaking over others, Danielle was finally given the chance to finish her thought. “They tell us to not have sex. We tell other people not to have sex. We’re okay with not having sex. But for many women here, we don’t have the ability to refuse sex when a man wants to. Even if it’s just a couple pennies, we need to feed our families. They should focus on reinforcing our economic capacity.” Almost everyone chimed in, wanting to add to this analysis, adding specific suggestions. Maxime argued, “If we are thinking about giving someone knowledge, don’t forget that I already said that the knowledge can’t advance when the person is hungry. And hunger is the biggest illness there is.” Several CAC members pointed this out, citing the Kreyòl proverb, *sak vid pa kanpe* (the empty sack does not stand up). They had a plan to create small businesses with a revolving loan fund and open a revenue-generating youth activity center that would also bring cultural events to the area. They brought these suggestions to Sove Lavi staff. “Nothing happened. All these promises and nothing ever happens.” Reflecting on their experience, Maxime said, “There isn’t a real collaboration. Our interests are not their interests, they aren’t common?” Djoni was more direct: “That’s not participation, that’s ‘do [this] for me.’”

By contrast, members of Fanm Tèt Ansanm committees and other *medanm* participated in agenda setting. Most programs existed because of previous advocacy on the part of the *medanm*: the clinic, the course on legal rights, and the Women’s Committee. Members had input on the journal topics, such as the one during the campaign for OFATMA. There was another campaign, to ask publicly subsidized transport “Service Plus” to provide buses for workers. Like the OFATMA campaign, they used the journal. Héléne discusses yet another campaign in the journal: “In our journal published on March 8 (International Women’s Day), I called upon all the brave women, all conscientious women for them to protest the thirty-six goud minimum wage.” This simple chart (Table 1) was a useful tool to document differences in participation between Sove Lavi and Fanm Tèt Ansanm. Once documented, differences can be questioned and theorized.

Similarities

Despite Fanm Tèt Ansanm and Sove Lavi having different orientations to their aid recipients and their communities, different relationships with their recipients, and different levels of participation, there are important similarities. Recipients have a different understanding from that of staff about recipient participation.

Because this “snapshot” tool can be (and was, in my case) used by aid recipients to assess participation, it allows a polyvocality missing from most statistically oriented, often donor-funded, NGO research, where one voice (usually the director or designee) speaks for the entire organization. In addition to directors experiencing real-world or perceived pressures to cover up problems or provide positive spin—especially to donors—they

might not know what goes on in the field or after hours. While it may seem intuitive, it bears noting that differences in position or social location shape people's understanding, including that of a foreign anthropologist. As **Table 2** shows, donors and directors have different understandings of local participation from those held by the "participants" themselves. Table 2 shows that donors and NGO directors believe that the aid recipients (the "target population") participated in defining the problem, prioritizing, project conception, planning, and evaluation in addition to execution. By contrast, local community members felt that they participated only during the execution, in other words, when work needed to be done, not just at Sove Lavi but also at Fanm Tèt Ansanm.

Why did committee members at Fanm Tèt Ansanm, which I characterized with greater aid recipient participation, say that they only feel they participate like the peasant in Bamòn, to carry heavy rocks? First of all, it is worth pointing out that several current staff like Yolette began their contact with Fanm Tèt Ansanm as a volunteer, like Hélène or Frisline, who filled out the table. Yolette was among the group of people pushing for new directions. Why then do current aid recipients not feel the same as the donors? There are two potential explanations. First, as argued above, socioeconomic differences between staff and aid recipients color people's perceptions. Second, like all models, the current chart that I used has weaknesses, including that it presents information as if it were ahistorical. This is why I call it a "snapshot." It fixes an image, freezes it in time. Had I been there earlier, I could have given two such "snapshots," comparing Fanm Tèt Ansanm five years ago to today. A different story emerges because NGOs, like everything else, change over time. In a follow-up meeting at Fanm Tèt Ansanm in September 2006, aid recipients critiqued the lack of progress on their ideas and initiatives, such as staff support for obtaining legal documents, support for neighborhood associations, transport, a community cash box based on a *sòl* model for when the women need medical care, etc. They lamented their lack of real participation. In December 2006, the Women's Committee formally presented several demands to Fanm Tèt Ansanm, including that members receive a stipend similar to that offered on the AIDS prevention program. Said one, "Now we can speak of the Women's Committee. The meeting is set for the 30th. When [Fanm Tèt Ansanm] opens again, we will meet with [the staff] to know how, if the Committee is still happening this year, how things can improve." The lack of communication, and the frustration at not receiving answers to what Women's Committee members felt were simple demands, colored their experiences, causing some to question their relationship with Fanm Tèt Ansanm in ways similar to Sove Lavi's CAC members:

And the salary for all of this is 250G ... these things need to change. If we need to take a car...When we show up, they need to find a little bread and cola. If I give you my energy to help other people, I need to be able to help myself as well. You pay for the transport, but you need to pay for more than the transport. At times the children say, "my mom left." From the time I leave, everyone has hope!

As of March 2007, the Women's Committee was all but disbanded.¹⁷ Given this, and the increasing intensity of complaints of Committee members, it is clear that participation was eroding further. Committee members identified their activities with the HIV/AIDS prevention as *travay pou Fanm Tèt Ansan* —“work” that they do “for Fanm Tèt Ansanm” (notice the use of the word “salary” in the quotation above), a further clue to their disaffection as members and with Fanm Tèt Ansanm's priorities of HIV/AIDS prevention.

Why is this happening at an organization that follows feminist/Freirian empowerment models, that consistently prioritized women's rights, and even defended this mission to past donors who wanted to impose other priorities? Since its flowering in the mid-1980s, the women's movement in Haiti generally, as well as specific women's NGOs, have always been caught between the need to prioritize gender as well as political and economic structures (Benoit 1995; Charles 1995; N'Zengou-Tayo 1998; Racine 1999). Rose, who works at Fanm Tèt Ansanm, argues that radical economic changes are needed to begin to address women's conditions: “First, you need to begin to improve the people's conditions...When there is work, women can demand their rights...But today, she can't even do that because there isn't work.” Fanm Tèt Ansanm is thus grappling with typical dilemmas of what Lind terms “popular feminist organizations” (Lind 2000) under neoliberal structural adjustment. Like other women's NGOs with a broader agenda that implicitly acknowledges the intersectionality of inequality shaping Haitian women's conditions (Coomaraswamy 2002; Corcoran-Nantes 2000; Hrycak 2002), Fanm Tèt Ansanm had been able to prioritize women's needs.

Why would this disaffection and erosion of participation occur now, after nineteen years of its existence? It is possible that this is in part a methodological problem, as staff recount the “good old days” or it may be that volunteer leaders chosen to work for Fanm Tèt Ansanm have a stake in highlighting their capacity to act, their agency. However, as their director noted, priorities for their donors—even those offering long-standing support—have changed: “Now, suddenly, AIDS is the great craze. Everyone needs to finance AIDS. The day may come when there is too much money in AIDS, considering that all the rest, we are neglecting everything else, the human [development] element, the social element, and this is not good.” In addition to the Global Fund, Fanm Tèt Ansanm's other donors have joined the “great craze.” In the past, donors had sufficiently diverse priorities to be able to match the median. Nowadays, donors have become more quantitative in their management approaches, and are moving away from general operating support to project approaches. The rhythm and the logic of the project does not easily accommodate unplanned, unanticipated needs arising from the ground up. This situation has been made all the more difficult by donors' increasingly quantitative “results” management regimes (Pollock 2003), beginning with the Global Fund that promised to end “business as usual.”

¹⁷ A year later there was no evidence of its existence.

Summary

This paper has discussed two women's NGOs with different approaches to gender and different relationships with their community. I argue that the two are not unrelated. Sove Lavi, a WID organization, offers less space for member deliberation and participation than Fanm Tèt Ansanm, a GAD organization. Fanm Tèt Ansanm invests human capital in the aid recipients, all of whom are invited to participate, whereas Sove Lavi harvests this investment, what Georges called an "interest strategy" (*estrateji enterè*). This in turn shapes the NGOs' relationships with the community. Fanm Tèt Ansanm ritual practices attempt to forge a horizontal, egalitarian model, whereas Sove Lavi ritual practices heighten local inequality. The differences are most clearly articulated when examining levels of participation. At Sove Lavi, aid recipients just "carry heavy rocks" while Fanm Tèt Ansanm volunteers participate in defining priorities and planning. However, the clear shift towards AIDS at the expense of other priorities is arguably at the root of Fanm Tèt Ansanm's mission drift and erosion of member participation.

I have argued in this paper that clientelistic approaches are ineffective. While in the aggregate, Haiti is showing signs of progress in stemming the tide of HIV/AIDS (Cohen 2006), approaches like Sove Lavi's imposition of donors' priorities that do not meaningfully involve communities and their practices end up wasting scarce resources. CAC members, abandoned for a hit-and-run caravan approach, have the local knowledge, experience, and reputation to be effective tools in the combat against the disease. Specific practices reinforcing inequalities inherent in Haiti's lopsided economy, coupled with a top-down imposition of a single approach (abstinence) to the exclusion of supporting local initiatives, are cutting off the potential of local participation to respond effectively and appropriately to this pandemic.

Table 1: Comparison of Participation

	<i>SOVE LAVI</i>			<i>FANM TÈT ANSANM</i>		
	Donor	NGO staff	Target Population	Donor	NGO staff	Target population
Discussion – What problems exist in our area?						
Prioritization – Make decisions – what are the most pressing concerns?						
Conception – What solutions exist for these problems?						
Planning – Make a plan, assessing resources available.						
Organization – Tasks and timeline finalized; who does what, when?						
Execution – Put our hands together to work, on the ground working.						
Follow-through – Supervise work, ensure that it is being done properly						
EVALUATION – ASSESS HOW THE WORK WAS DONE. WHAT WORKED WELL? WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT? ETC.						

Table 2: Difference in perspectives

	<i>DONOR/DIRECTOR PERCEPTIONS</i>			<i>AID RECIPIENT PERCEPTIONS</i>		
	Donor	NGO staff	Target Population	Donor	NGO staff	Target population
Discussion – What problems exist in our area?						
Prioritization – Make decisions – what are the most pressing concerns?						
Conception – What solutions exist for these problems?						
Planning – Make a plan, assessing resources available.						
Organization – Tasks and timeline finalized; who does what, when?						
Execution – Put our hands together to work, on the ground working						
Follow-through – Supervise work, ensure that it is being done properly						
EVALUATION – ASSESS HOW THE WORK WAS DONE. WHAT WORKED WELL? WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT? ETC.						

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