



## SUCCESS STORY

### A Voice Beyond the Violence

**Young woman rises above a dangerous slum to host her own show**



Photo: Internews/Louise Brunet

Through hard work and determination amid life in a dangerous neighborhood, Cité Soleil resident Fabienne Viltis has made a name for herself as a host for a show on a community radio station.

***"I have been helped. With more studies, I may become an ambassador that will give me the capacity to extend my hand to others in need," said radio host Fabienne Viltis.***

Telling Our Story  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Washington, DC 20523-1000  
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Imagine a childhood spent growing up among gangsters: a child obliged to take shelter under chairs in a classroom while waiting for the end of shootings, or a teenager confronted with other people's fear solely because he happens to live in a high-risk neighborhood. Such is the life for youth in Haiti's Cité Soleil, one of the largest slums of the capital, Port-au-Prince, where violence is the standard.

Twenty-two-year-old Fabienne Viltis could spend hours explaining her life in Cité Soleil. She said, "Frequently, violent rioting and street battles made going to school practically impossible a few years ago. Because of the constant conflicts and uninterrupted shootings, pupils spent most of their school time under their desks or chairs. At times, the gang leaders would tell the students to leave the area but often nonstop gunfire would force them to stay in classrooms for hours. If you had seen the walls of our college... perforated with bullets!"

This hellish atmosphere did not prevent Fabienne from making a success of her studies. Such determination caught the attention of a prominent neighborhood figure, Jeneste Jesner, the cultural affairs manager of Cité Soleil's most popular community radio, Radio Boukman. With USAID's support, Jeneste sent her to a broadcasting techniques seminar, the first in a long series of intensive trainings she pursued. The training is part of USAID's efforts to increase the relevance, quality, and outreach of both community radio stations, programs and regional journalists' networks.

Today, Fabienne hosts her own cultural show on Radio Boukman, "Morning Sun", which offers news, music, weather and coverage of celebrities. But she does not forget her objectives of pursuing her studies and becoming a real example for Cité Soleil's youth. She said, "My life was not normal. But I was determined to leave this black hole. I have been helped. With more studies, I may become an ambassador that will give me the capacity to extend my hand to others in need."