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**ESL/LITERACY PROJECT IN SOMERVILLE, MA.
HAITIAN COALITION/CLARENDON HILLS ACTIVITY
CENTER, SOMERVILLE, MA.**

February 2001 – April 2003

INSTRUCTOR: WOULLARD LETT

B. Abstract

The project is about ESL/Literacy in the Haitian community that live in Somerville. About 3,500 Haitians need ESL/Literacy (Kreyol) to improve their communication skills, and their quality of Life. The project has three objectives such as: attend classes twice a week, train teachers, tutors, volunteers, and graduate one hundred twenty students. These objectives will be implemented during a two-year term. The project is located in Somerville, Ma. The Haitian Coalition, the Board Members, Somerville Tenant Association, Churches, and Haitians providers are the major institutions that involved in the project. The Adult Basic Education, and Cambridge Learning Center are two institutions that have a long history of helping immigrants learn English. Based on their experiences in the area, the project will benefit from their support. The project focuses on low-income immigrants that live in Somerville Public Housing. The implementation of the project will motivate them to go to school to learn English, earn good wages, and communicate better in English.

Summary

The entire Somerville's population estimated at about 77, 478. In the nineties, many Haitian immigrated to Massachusetts. A vast majority of Haitians lived in Dorchester.

They immigrate in US to better themselves. They are looking for jobs, good education, and a place to live. To reach these goals they needed to go to school to speak English. They also need to understand the American system. In Somerville, the Haitian population is estimated at 3,500. The city of Somerville does not provide an adequate count of the Haitian population. The recent 2000 census did not also provide a specific percentage of Haitian living in the State. The Hispanics population estimated at 6,786, and White population is 59,635. Their income level is between \$ 10,000 – 20000.

Like any other minority group the Haitian population does not have a political voice in Somerville. They do not have a Haitian Representative in the municipal elections compare to other minority ethnics group like the Hispanics, the Portuguese that have more city elected officials into office. The Haitian population will face the issue again and again if the Haitian providers do not provide ESL classes. The Lack of ESL/Literacy diminishes their abilities to Speak English fluently. The lack of information about ESL/Literacy in their native language contributed to these problems. About 45% of Haitian living in Somerville has serious literacy issues. Most of the Basic Adult literacy Education has a waiting list for those interested in learning English. At the ABE/Somerville about 30% of Haitian students are in a yearlong list. About 10% hare in the same situation at the Cambridge Learning Center.

The Somerville Haitian Coalition is working very hard to meet these needs. The agency has limited resources. Besides ESL classes, the agency provides assistance in housing search, job training, Education/Participation, and a Youth Program.

The project ESL/Literacy will help the agency become more visible in the community.

The project is focusing on helping adults learn how to read, write in their native language, and communicate in English fluently. The project plans to educate about 120 Haitians in ESL/Literacy. The project coordinator will work with Haitian Coalition staffs, stakeholders, Haitian providers, Tenant Association, and churches to reach these goals.

About 1, 500 Haitians live in Somerville, and need ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly. The problem will still exist if no solution is provided by the Haitian Agency located in Somerville. The project has two goals and three objectives to achieve for the project to sustain:

- Help Haitian in Somerville improve their quality of life
- Provide access to ESL/Literacy classes to all Haitians.

Objectives

- Within the year 2002, the Haitian Immigrants in Somerville will have ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly
- Within the year 2002, training in ESL/Literacy will be available to three teachers, four tutors, and three volunteers.
- By April 2003, the project will help one hundred twenty Haitians in Somerville to develop their communication skills in English, and graduate from the project.

For the twenty years Haitians immigrants' families have been living in Somerville, and the surroundings areas. Most of them worked outside the city. They earned minimum wages in restaurants, hotels, nursing homes, and hospitals. About 60 % of the population lived below the poverty line even though they worked so hard to help their families. The lack of basic ESL/Literacy skills undermined the opportunities for them to move up from the economic hardship. In addition to all stereotypes they have been facing daily, they had to deal with: Welfare Reform Laws, anti-immigrants sentiments especially after September 11, Homeland Security, Patriot Act, and the elimination of Bilingual Education. These issues kept them isolated from mainstream society. These current conditions created a big challenge for those Haitians immigrants that felt alienated. Therefore it is very difficult to be interested in adult basic learning.

Haitian immigrants come to America for a better economic life. They hope to go to school to learn English, to earn a degree, and to find a good job to improve their families lives. Their desired conditions are to save enough money, to get reunite with their families, then to buy their dream house. My project's goals can help do the followings: 10% of the population will communicate better in English. It means that by attending ESL/Literacy program their learning potential will significantly. 8 – 10% will get better job or get promoted form their previous one, or find a job that pays more money. The project's objectives will demonstrate the staffs' commitment to run the program.

Objective 1

Within the year 2002, the Haitian immigrants in Somerville will have ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly.

To accomplish this objective, the project coordinator meet with the Stakeholders, Somerville Housing Tenant Association, Somerville Housing Board, Churches, Community Groups, and Haitian Coalition Board Members. The Tenant Association and Housing board agree to sign a building permit request for the next two years. They have confidence that the project will help most of tenants understand housing regulations. Outreach and open houses were done in different neighborhoods to make people aware of the ESL/Literacy project. To do outreach we distribute about 500 flyers in the area. During the open house the staffs registered about 200 students. The project continues to register people as walk-ins too.

Objective 2

Within the year 2002, training in ESL/Literacy will be available to three teachers, four tutors, and three volunteers.

The project staffs works with the Adult Basic Education in Somerville that provide ESL/Literacy training. The project coordinator registers all volunteers, tutors, and teachers to take the training. They spend about 20 hours learning how to teach ESL/Literacy to adults. They complete the training cycle that last one-week successfully.

Objective 3

By April 2003, the project will help 120 Haitians in Somerville develop their communication skills in English, and graduate from the project.

The project coordinator must make sure that all students attend classes regularly. Attendance is very important to the project, and to the Haitian Coalition. Attendance is recorded twice before class and after class. The liaison monitor all classes to make the curriculum is followed as recommended. The Students uses the Journal (Blue Book) to communicate in writing with their teachers. The teachers are responsible to record all grades. To graduate the students must completed about 40% of quizzes, 10% attendance, 30% class participation, and 20% final exam. If a student fails, he/she has make up exam to be able to graduate.

These two objectives have been fully achieved.

Objective 1: *within the year 2002, the Haitian immigrant in Somerville will have ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly twice a week.*

Objective 2: *within the year 2002, training in ESL/ will be available to three teachers, four tutors, and three volunteers.*

Objective 3: help 120 students develop their communication skills in English, and graduate from the project. This objective was partially implemented. The staffs need to work constantly with students to arrive on time. Returning all completed homework was an issue. Childcare was the biggest issue to prove tardiness. The remaining tasks are: work on student portfolio, registration, and find money to run the project next fiscal year.

The project three objectives have been initiated. The project needs to work on other tasks such as: fundraising, bigger space, and outreach in all Somerville neighborhoods.

The project goals have not been changed because the stakeholders would like it to stay in Somerville. This project is unique in the area. By being there the project increases the Haitian Coalition visibility. The project is become a “Landmark” in Somerville Housing Apartments.

The project needs a better space to grow. If the project can secure two rooms on the first floor, that will be the ideal place. The second floor gives more exposure than the basement. The project’s staffs think about the space on the second floor that might be available for the next term.

Money: even though this term is a trial basis, and next term will be very different. The first people have plenty of energy to work hard and accomplish things. I hate to see them run out of energy to continue their volunteerism that is so valuable to the entire community.

Two things I will suggest if someone is doing a similar project:

Community needs assessments; the person will conduct a survey to know people needs and culture. The person must be very patient and involved in the community’s life.

Develop healthy collaboration with major institutions located in the area. Knowing the gatekeepers in the area. The person needs them for the first contact with the community.

D. Definition of the Problem

Problem Statement

About 1,500 Haitians live in Somerville, and need ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly. The problem will still exist if no solution provided by the Haitian Agencies located in Somerville.

Identify the target Community

The Haitian immigrant that live in Somerville Housing Apartments/Clarendon Hills will benefit from the project. My ESL/Literacy project is designed to educate the Haitian Somerville Housing Tenants to learn how to read, write in English, and their native language. The Haitian tenants are low-income. They work hard even though they are undocumented, meaning no legal paper/employment authorization card or green card/permanent resident to work in Ma. My project is focusing on young adults, especially those who are between the age of twenty and over. The ESL/Literacy will help them develops heir communication, writing, and reading skills.

1. Identify the major assumptions

The Haitian community does not take time to get involved in the neighborhoods activities. The population does not go to school to learn English. The majority is on Welfare and public benefits recipients. This population is never on time for their schedule appointments.

According to my own observation, and interviews with other ethnic groups they mention the same thing. I interview different agencies that provide human services to

Haitian immigrants they all agree that 60 % of the population is collecting welfare and Food Stamps. These are the sources of the community's problems.

E. Project Goals

1. Goal Statement

- **Help Haitian in Somerville improve their quality of life**
- **Provide access to ESL/Literacy classes to all Haitians**

With these goals, I hope to educate a large percentage of Haitian living in Somerville. The goals are not only to learn English but the Haitian will have an opportunity to be literate in their native language (Kreyol). That means they will be literate in both languages: English, and Kreyol. Upon graduation from the project, I hope some of the participants will develop their communication skills. They will be ready for the job market. They will reach about 70% of their full potential to communicate in English. These skills will help them build the road to their integration into mainstream America.

2. Describe the current conditions for the Target Community

For the past twenty Haitian immigrants families lived in Somerville, and surrounding areas. Most of them worked outside the city of Somerville. They earned minimum wages in restaurants, Hotels, Nursing Homes, and Hospitals. About 60% of the Haitian populations live below the poverty line even though they work so hard to survive. The lack of basic ESL/Literacy skills undermines their opportunities to move up the economic ladder. In addition to all the stereotypes that immigrants face every such

as: INS/welfare Reform Laws, anti-immigrants sentiments after 911 Homeland Security, the elimination of Bilingual Education, again high rate of HIV/AIDS isolate them with mainstream America. These current conditions create a big challenge for the Haitian Immigrant living in Somerville to empower themselves through learning.

3. Describe the desired conditions for the Target Community

Haitian immigrants come to America for a better economic life. They hope to go school to learn English, earn a degree, and find a good job to improve their family life. Their desired conditions are to save enough money: first to get reunited with their families, second to buy their dream house. My project's goals are:

- 10% of the population will communicate better in English. It means that by attending my ESL/Literacy program their learning potential will increase significantly (50%).
- Help the Haitian get off the unemployment line for example 8% - 10% of the population will go to job training program.

F. Project Objectives

2. List and describe the objectives that would be achieved if your project were successfully completed.

Objective 1

- **Within the year 2002, the Haitian Immigrants in Somerville will have ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly twice a week**

Objective 2

- **Within the year 2002, training in ESL/Literacy will be available to three teachers, four tutors, and three volunteers.**

Objective 3

- **By April 2003, the project will help one hundred twenty Haitians in Somerville to develop their communication skills in English, and graduate from the project.**

Objective 1

HOLD CLASSES TWICE WEEKLY

1. OUPUT: Start weekly classes

INPUTS

1. Meet with Stakeholders

- Welcome stakeholders
- Project's presentation: I explain to the stakeholders the goals of the project.
The goals are to teach ESL/Literacy to Haitian, to help them improve their quality of life
- Feedback from Stakeholders: they agree to help with all the logistics such materials, and volunteer to monitor the project
- Support for the project 100 % and add we need this project in the neighborhood

2. Meet with Somerville Housing Tenant Association (SHTA)

- Project presentation: my first meeting with SHTA was very successful. The members stated that the Haitian Coalition is the first ethnic group that start this ESL program
- Participation: SHTA wanted to participate in the project meetings

- Help with recruitment: the manager wanted to keep flyers in his office to tell tenants.

3. Meet with Housing Boards

- Request building permit: I explain to the board the project. I would like to request a permit for about two years to run the project. The board members assured to me that my request would be granted.
- Feedback: The Housing Board and Tenant Association give full support to use the center.

4. Meet with area Churches

- Project's presentation
- Help with recruitment
- Ask for volunteer

5. Meet with community groups

- Project's presentation
- Help with recruitment

6. Identify sites

- Visit Public Schools in the area
- Visit churches to request spaces
- Neighborhood Community's rooms

7. Outreach

- Public Service Announcements in Radio and Television
- Put Advertisements in local newspapers, and community Bulletin
- Distribute flyers in the area

8. Open House

- Walk - ins registration in Somerville Housing Community Room
- Phone in registration
- Waiting list

OBJECTIVE 2

TRAIN 3 TEACHERS/4 TUTORS/3 VOLUNTEERS

OUPUT: *Train project staffs*

INPUTS

1. Identify staff for training

- Recruit staff from Haitian Coalition
- Recruit volunteer from Universities
- Recruit volunteer from Churches, and the Community

2. Identify training sites

- Cambridge Learning Center
- Somerville Adult Basic Education
- Request information about training dates, time, and place

- Referred volunteer, tutors, and teachers
- Teachers, tutors, and volunteers attend training

3. Identify training materials

- Request ESL/Literacy from Adult Basic Education Program
- Talk to ESL/Literacy teachers
- Feedback from staff about training materials

OBJECTIVE 3

120 STUDENTS ATTEND CLASSES

OUTPUT: Recruit 200 students Year 2001

INPUTS

- Attendance is recorded weekly before classes. Students sign the Center's visitors' log sheet, and the class attendance
- Curriculum has lessons plans that teachers, tutors, and volunteers use to teach the students. Each topic is illustrated with appropriated pictures for students to learn better.
- Students' Journal uses by students to do writing, composition and special projects.
- Final Exam is a compilation of the entire topic covered in class. Students must pass 40% of quizzes, 10 % attendance, 30% class participation, and 20% final exam. If a student fails, he/she has make up exam to be able to graduate.

- Graduation's date is June 27, 2003. The project is planning a small ceremony for all students, and the Tenant Association. The stakeholders, Board Members, Churches, and Haitian Coalition staff will be invited.

BACKGROUND

A. How did you and or your organization get involved with this project?

I am the Haitian Services Coordinator for the City of Cambridge. As a case manager I observe a lack of English communication skills in the Haitian population. I know also that 80% of this population cannot read and write in their native language. I say to myself something must be done to help the population improves their quality of life.

I share my concerns with the Somerville Haitian Coalition Executive Director. He invites me to a Board Members meeting. I explain the situation, and the Board says we must act on it quickly. With the coalition staffs support I plan a meeting with the community. I set up a team of four volunteer staffs to help plan the first meeting. Next, we organize a meeting with the Somerville Tenant Association. Finally we meet with the stakeholders.

We had 10 meetings. About six of them responded positively to the invitations. As a project coordinator, I say let us go forward. Finally the project was born. This project will be a two-year project in Community Economic Development/Southern New Hampshire University.

B. Identify the other major players, community groups, institutions, or individuals associated with this project. Briefly describe the roles, concerns and expectations of these other players, groups, institutions, or individuals.

The major players are: the Haitian Coalition, Haitian Coalition Board Members, Somerville Housing Tenant Association, Somerville Adult Basic Education, Cambridge Learning Center, the Collaborative of Haitian Providers, Somerville Bilingual Program, Somerville Haitian Churches, The Haitian Media, and Tufts University.

Describe the roles

The Somerville Haitian Coalition is the first agency that provides the technical support for the project to start. The Coalition provides staff to help me run the project from 2001 until April 2003.

The Somerville Basic Education trains three teachers, four tutors and volunteer to teach the ESL/Literacy project. The training was about ESL/Literacy techniques to teach new immigrants. The training lasted a week, and they completed about 20 hours of good teaching skills. ABE referred to the project the students that have been in a waiting list for almost a year.

The Cambridge Learning Center identifies with us the books that are appropriated to each the new immigrants. The CLC referred students to the ESL/Literacy that placed in a waiting list for almost a year or two.

The Somerville Tenant Association facilitates the permit request with the Housing Board. We obtained the permit to use the Clarendon Hill Activity room. The Somerville Tenant Housing Association helps us recruit students (tenants) that live in the area to come to class.

The Somerville Housing Board told the maintenance crew to clean the Activity Center, and make sure the Center is clean, safe for the project to be able to start.

The Churches helps us recruit students from their Parish, and also organize and open house to recruit students.

The Haitian media helps with outreach in Television/ radio. The Media prepares all the press releases, and the advertisements to place in local newspapers.

Tufts University provides tutors to help the students learn better. The University installs about twenty computers in the Center. The University provides also a technical person to train Haitian Coalition staff.

C. Other interesting information.

This project, ESL/Literacy in Somerville creates the strongest network of providers that never existed for a long time. The project becomes very successful in selecting major institutions in the area to work together on one issue ESL/Literacy. The testimonies come from all other ethnic groups. These groups are asking: Are we next? The community's feedback is so strong the Haitian Coalition is planning to open the Center all day during the summer, and year around probably for the next fiscal year.

The interesting information that happen since the creation of this project is that, the Youth Group is saying: How they can help? Finally, the Adult Basic Education would like to see our team does a presentation about our teaching styles. The project coordinator has been selected to present the project at Harvard University/Haitian Studies.

G. Results

Objective 1

- *Within the year 2002, the Haitian Immigrants in Somerville will have ESL/Literacy classes to attend regularly.*

1. OUPUT: *Start weekly classes*

INPUTS

2. Meet with Stakeholders

- Welcome Stakeholders
- Project's presentation: I explain to the Stakeholders the goals of the project. The goals, and objectives can guide us to teach ESL/Literacy to Haitian, and to help them improve their quality of life.
- Feedback from Stakeholders: they agree to help with all the logistics such as materials, and volunteer to monitor the project.
- Support the project 100%, and they add that we want this project to stay in the neighborhood.

3. Meet with Somerville Housing Tenant Association (SHTA)

- Project presentation: my first meeting with SHTA was very successful. The members stated that the Haitian Coalition is the first ethnic group that starts this ESL project.
- Participation: SHTA wanted to participate in all project meetings.
- Help with recruitment: the manager wanted to keep flyers in his office to give to tenants.

4. Meet with Housing Board Members

- Request Building Permit: explain the project to the Board Members by highlighting the major goals, and the strategies I will be use to get there. I request a two-year permit to be able to run the project. The Board members assure me that my request will be granted as soon as possible.
- Feedback: the Housing Board and the Tenant Association give full support to use the Clarendon Hill Activity Center.

5. Meet with area Churches

- Project's presentation
- Help with recruitment
- Ask for volunteers

6. Meet with the community groups

- Project's presentation
- Help with recruitment

7. Identify Sites

- Visit Public Schools in the area
- Visit Churches
- Visit Community's rooms

8. Outreach

- Public Service Announcements (PSA) in Radio/Television: I am a radio host because of my relationship in media my PSA aired regularly. I use also my media network to put ADS in local newspapers.
- Distribute Flyers in the community: Health Centers, Laundromat, Community Bulletin Boards Supermarkets, and local convenient stores.

9. Open House

- Walk in registration in Somerville Housing Community room
- Phone in registration recorded daily
- Waiting list for the next term.

Objective 2

- *Within the year 2002, training in ESL/Literacy will be available to three teachers, four tutors, and three volunteers.*

OUPUT: *Train project staffs*

INPUTS

Identify staffs for training

- Recruit staffs from Haitian Coalition to be trained and work on the project
- Recruit volunteer tutors, teachers from Universities
- Recruit volunteer from Haitian Agencies

Identify Training Sites

- Somerville Adult Basic Education Programs have ESL training every three months for teachers and tutors
- Cambridge Learning Center provides training for all ESL level: Beginners, Intermediate, and Advanced.
- Request information about training dates, time, and place
- Referred volunteer, tutors, teachers to Adult Basic Education programs
- All volunteers must attend the training

Identify training materials

- Request ESL/Literacy materials from ABE programs.
- Talk to other ethnic groups that provide ESL/Literacy to their constituents.
- Feedback from staffs about training, and training materials.

Objective 3

- *By April 2003, the project will help one hundred twenty Haitians in Somerville to develop their communication skills in English, and graduate from the project.*

OUPUT: *Recruit 120 students*

INPUTS

Attendance

- Record attendance daily for the Center, and for classes

Curriculum

- Teachers, tutors, and volunteer will follow lessons plan to teach students. Each topic is illustrated with pictures for students to understand the lessons.
- Students' Journal
- Students use Journal to do writing, reading and composition. The Journal is another to communicate with teachers.

Graduation.

- Final Exam is a compilation of all topic covered in class. Students. Must pass 40% of quizzes, 10% attendance, 30% class participation, and 20% final exam. If a student fails, he/she has a make up exam to be able to graduate.

- Graduation's date is June 27, 2003. The project is planning a small ceremony for all students, Tenant Association, Stakeholders, Board members, staffs, Churches, and the community.

2. Identify objectives that have fully achieved

Objective 1: Start weekly classes. I was able to meet with all stakeholders; I secure the Clarendon Activity room to do all classes.

Objective 2: train 3 teachers, four tutors, and 3 volunteers. I was able to find training centers for all volunteers. They completed the training successfully. I was able to keep 3 teachers work for free.

3. Identify those objectives that have been partially achieved. Describe the remaining tasks that are required to fully achieve these objectives.

Objective 3: help 120 students develop their communication skills in English, and graduate from the program. The project staffs needs to wok constantly with students to arrive on time. The staffs need to encourage them to come class, and do not drop out because they find a new job. The staffs are working in a Childcare center for next year.

Objective 2: train staffs. Every three months staffs must encourage volunteer to go to ESL training.

4. Identify objectives for which no tasks have been initiated.

The ESL/Literacy project three objectives have three objectives. Objective 1 and 2 have been fully achieved, and objective 3 partially implemented. Objective 3 has small tasks that need a monitor to make it achievable.

Recommendations/Conclusions

My project goals have not been changed since I began the project. I say no, because the Somerville Haitian Coalition staffs, the Board Members, the Tenant Association, and the community want the project to last as long as there is Haitian living in Somerville. The Agency Coalition needs the project to identify itself to a sustainable program that brings changes to the immigrants' population. Yes, if the project was there people we still have goals to accomplish. The difference is when the goals are linked to an Agency they can be met according to staffs, institutions, and providers beliefs. For the project to be successful I must take in consideration all factors that will have an impact on the programs.

The first factor is space. For example if the Somerville Housing did not give the Activity' room to the project I am not sure the Agency could afford a market rate office space to rent. Maybe we might be able to use a church basement. Churches have their own members' activities every night. We can use a school building to do the project. The school buildings are close after 6:00 PM.

The second factor is money. The team project, the liaison, the coordinator did a great job by keeping on staffs three certified ESL teachers on board. In term of teachers' salaries it cost about \$9,000 to keep the teachers part-time. I do not even mention: utilities, copies, phone bills etc. The grant manager can write a project's proposal from the Philanthropic organizations to ask for money. The project is small, and the foundation might ask us to have a matching fund. According to the Coalition mission statement it is not allowed to solicit funds from constituents. Maybe individuals' donation can help out. I do not think the population makes enough money to contribute to the project's economic downfall.

We are not perfect; things happen that we do not have control of. One unexpected thing could be if we get evicted from the premises without notice. It very devastating for all students, those are the Somerville Housing tenants and they participate in the project by attending classes regularly. Now, they will have to go to a different place to learn English. Most of them are single mother and they not other mean of transportation besides public transit.

A similar project like this one is not easy to do. The two things I will recommend are:

Community needs assessments. The project's coordinator must conduct a survey to familiar with the members needs. The person is committed to learn the other group culture. The findings must explain to the community. If focus group were done, the final document would be available to all residents, to read, and comments. During the fist project's initiation to the community an interpreter could be available to help during the contact. With the immigrant someone who would like to start an ESL/Literacy must be

very patient. Some immigrants are visual learners, and listeners. Reading and writing are not their driving force to learn.

Develop healthy collaboration with major institutions located in the area, for example: agencies that serve immigrants, Churches, Tenant Association, and community based organizations. This partnership is the key to reach the project's goals, and objectives. The major players are the best gatekeepers that could help the project sustains in term of outreach, motivation, and volunteerism. These intuitions have a lot of human resources available, materials, and money to help alleviate costs. The person has to explain the project in full details to all stakeholders. This collaboration makes the project visible in the community.