

## School gardens create food, income, and hope.

### School and Family Gardens Help Parents Keep Kids Out of Slavery

Lagonav, Haiti —

**D**ieula Lormilus was stricken with the fear that she was about to lose her children.

Her 11-year-old daughter and two sons, ages 8 years and 5 months — were hungry.

The crops she planted — corn, beans and millet — were failing to thrive.

Dieula thought she was out of options save for one: sending her children away in the hopes that they would be fed, cared for, and even sent to school by those who took them in.

The practice is common. Roughly one in five children in Haiti live apart from their parents.

Some of these children do fall into good hands and are sent to school. But about half end up living in slavery or *restavèk* as it is known in Haitian Creole, where they are subjected to severe exploitation, neglect, physical and even sexual abuse.

Thankfully, Dieula was not out of options. With help from one of Beyond Borders' partner organizations in Haiti, she found a way to feed her children and keep them at home — sparing them from the fate of *restavèk*.

"I'm a parent in a school that gets support from the Matènwa Community Learning Center," Dieula explained.

With funding from Beyond Borders, the center runs a School and Family Garden program that supplies parents like Dieula with seed, tools, and training so they can grow the food they need to feed their families.

"I can't begin to tell you how much the family garden helped me," Dieula said.

For years Dieula — like many farmers in Haiti — planted large crops of corn, beans and grain — often at a loss because of conditions beyond her control like persistent drought and scorching heat.

But with coaching from Matènwa staff, last year Dieula planted a smaller vegetable garden. She learned techniques to increase



*Students on the island of Lagonav eating beets from their school garden.*

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yield and conserve rainwater for use in times of drought.

The more manageable, diversified vegetable garden cost Dieula less and produced more — even allowing her to sell vegetables in the local market.

She used the profits to pay tuition fees and buy notebooks for her two school-aged children.

"A vegetable garden is so much better," Dieula said. "You don't need a lot of land, you don't need a lot of money. You can plant a vegetable garden no matter who you are."

***"I believe that if every family had a little garden like mine, there'd be less misery, less hunger, and less malnutrition in our country."*** — Dieula Lormilus

"School gardens create food, income, and hope," said David Diggs, Beyond Borders' executive director.

"It's why we invested in the creation of 15 school gardens and more than 60 family gardens. And this fall we hope to raise the funds to more than double this number. We want to see gardens like these sprout up in more communities, helping parents feed their children and keep them at home," he said.

With her kids safely at home and well fed, Dieula couldn't agree more.

"I believe that if every family had a little garden like mine, there'd be less misery, less hunger, and less malnutrition in our country," she said. ✕

Watch a video about how school gardens work at [www.beyondborders.net/schoolgardens](http://www.beyondborders.net/schoolgardens)

**BEYOND BORDERS** helps people build movements to liberate themselves from oppression and isolation. In Haiti and the United States, we are bringing people together for just and lasting change. We support movements in Haiti to:

- ✕ End child slavery
- ✕ Guarantee universal access to education
- ✕ End violence against women and girls
- ✕ Replace systems that oppress the poor with systems that support dignified work and sustainable livelihoods

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