



KONBIT BIBLIYOTEK SITE SOLEY

OBJECTIVE

To build a modern library in the heart of Cite Soleil as a way to promote community cohesion, community-driven development, literacy, culture, and a new image of Cite Soleil.

THE LATEST STATS

In 24 weeks of this campaign, **3,111** individual donors have contributed **1,073,781** gourdes and **3,547** books.

BACKGROUND ON CITE SOLEIL

Cite Soleil is a municipality that lies on the northwestern edge of Port au Prince, Haiti's capital city. It is known as Haiti's largest ghetto. Cite Soleil has experienced a vicious cycle of political and gang violence, which leads to economic and social marginalization, which in turn creates the conditions for more violence. The stigma associated with Cite Soleil is significant, which not only reinforces the social isolation of the community, but has been internalized by many of its young people who see that society only expects them to grow up to be criminals.

However, the vast majority of people living in Cite Soleil are ordinary people trying to make an honest life for themselves and their families. Cite Soleil is full of young people with talent, potential, and dreams of a better future. Over the past six years, a social movement named Konbit Soley Leve has dedicated itself to identifying, strengthening, and highlighting all that is positive about Cite Soleil, and working to change the image that the world as of this community. In the past year and a half, there has actually been a truce between the major gangs of Cite Soleil, leading to an unprecedented period of peace that the community would like to build on.

THE LIBRARY STORY

In early 2017, a group of young artists and intellectuals in Cite Soleil decided that it was important to build a library in Cite Soleil. Over the past decade, there had been a lot of investment in youth spaces, but these spaces were mostly for sports. They brought the idea to Konbit Soley Leve, who advised them that instead of writing a proposal to a donor, they should first look for support in their own community. They should give ordinary people in Cite Soleil the opportunity to participate in making this





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dream a reality, that they should be the first donors. So Konbit Soley Leve and the youth group began to go door to door with a cardboard box, asking for contributions.

For the sake of transparency, each time someone contributes, the donor would take a selfie and post it on Facebook with the hashtag #KonbitBibliyotek. The funds are counted every Sunday at the local radio station, where everyone was welcome to observe. At the end of the weekly count, a progress statement would be circulated on social media.

The campaign went viral. People across Cite Soleil began to donate, then across Port au Prince, then Haiti, then the world. Schoolchildren gave up their lunch money, strangers who overheard about the project on public transport asked to contribute. A volunteer once drove all the way from Port au Prince to Les Cayes (an eight-hour round trip) just to pick up a single gourde that a little boy wanted to contribute. The idea was to change the perception of who is a donor and who is a beneficiary, and give people a chance to participate in a community vision.



PROGRESS TO DATE

After 22 weeks of fundraising, over 3,000 individual donors have contributed over 1 million gourdes and nearly 3,500 books.

An architect from Cite Soleil has designed the plan of the library, which is a grand vision. It is important that the library be an impressive building because people in Cite Soleil are tired of being treated as second-class citizens – they believe they deserve a first-class library. The library may cost as much as 10 times as much as has been raised so far – but given the





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remarkable success to date and how much the community believes in this vision, there is confidence that the library will be built.

Help has come in many forms. The local authorities in Cite Soleil have already dedicated a space for the library in Place Fierce – the public park in the heart of Cite Soleil. Young Haitians have volunteered to provide graphic design and marketing services, to produce promotional songs and videos. A company performed the land survey for free (which would have otherwise cost \$7000), and a construction company has volunteered to build the library without payment. There are already commitments for, once the library is built, furniture, free internet, and language classes. There are groups that have volunteered to train young librarians for free.

This project is called Konbit Bibliyotek for a reason, because it leverages the principles behind the traditional Haitian practice of Konbit: if everyone contributes what they can, we can collectively achieve what no one could achieve alone. The community has already done so much and gone so far – and it is now looking for more friends and allies to join in, and help turn this dream into a reality.



THE IMPACT

If this dream is realized, it will mean many things. First, it will provide an accessible space to promote learning, research, and debate in the heart of Cite Soleil; this will become a new center to provide community services. Second, it will help to change the image of Cite Soleil, both to young people in the community and to the rest of the world. Third, it will provide a new model of community-driven development and a statement of how Haitians can lead the way to a different future.





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HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Share the story. It's important for people to know that this is happening, as it will help to change the image of Cite Soleil
- If you are in Haiti, contact Robillard.louino@gmail.com to arrange a visit to the library site, or to arrange dropping off books or making a donation.
- If you are outside of Haiti, you can contribute through our Global Giving site:
<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/konbitbibliyotek/#menu>
- If you have any expertise, connections, or services to offer in support of this vision, contact Robillard.louino@gmail.com





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*Un projet de la Population de
Cité Soleil et de ses amis (es)*

Étude et Conception Architectural : Nancy Jennifer Andou

Dessin : Architect N. J. Andou, & Architect Sonia H. Evraus

**Étude Géotechnique
&
Topographique**



**Construction
&
Supervision**



Terrain

