



# Haiti

## In the Heart of Memory

In Haiti, Gaëlle Bien-Aimé uses the theater stage as a space for sharing and listening, helping teenagers express their feelings about violence and empowering them to become agents of peace.

### COUNTRY

Haiti

### LOCALISATION

Port-au-Prince

### DATES OF THE PROJECT

September 2021 – June 2022

### ARTISTS INVOLVED

Gaëlle Bien-Aimé, Amos César, David Duverseau, Kenny Laguerre, Emmanuela N. Bazile

### PARTICIPANTS

100 children and teenagers aged 12 to 15

### FUNDING

Metis Fonds 14,000 €

### PARTNERS

Acte School of Dramatic Arts, Edmé School, Saint-Martial College, Marie-Jeanne High School, French Institute in Haiti

### SECTOR AND SDG'S



## HAITI, CHILDREN FACING VIOLENCE

In Haiti, the escalation of violence amid political and institutional instability leads to a climate of widespread insecurity, which hinders all forms of development. The daily lives of Haitians, especially those living in Port-au-Prince, are deeply affected. Among them, young people are particularly vulnerable, with their fragility worsened by the lack of family support and mentoring structures. The absence of economic opportunities provides fertile ground for their recruitment by armed groups, trapping them in a vicious cycle of instability and violence. Violence hampers young people's individuality, but it also affects their collective life, depriving them of essential social interactions necessary for their personal development.

## FREEING SPEECH: THEATER AS AN OUTLET

Born in 1987 in Port-au-Prince, Gaëlle Bien-Aimé is an actress, director, comedian, and political activist. Trained in Canada and Europe, where she participated in several writing residencies, her work focuses particularly on gender-based violence.

With Metis, and in partnership with three schools in Port-au-Prince, Gaëlle Bien-Aimé wrote and directed a theater play in collaboration with a group of children and teenagers from Port-au-Prince. *"This project can shed light on how young people feel. I don't think anyone asks how the youth of this country are doing."*

Writing and theater workshops are led by actors and drama teachers, enabling the collective creation of the original play *At the Heart of Memory*. About a hundred students participate in the project, using theater as a means of expression, *"a space to say and learn things."* During the project, they also learn about Haiti's history—a reflection on the past that helps them better understand current and future issues.

Based on their testimonies, the play highlights the security challenges young people face daily. It portrays their fears and anxieties, but also their hopes for a more peaceful future.

Some of them perform alongside professional actors. Nearly 200 people attend the performances, held at the schools where the children study and at the French Institute of Port-au-Prince. The recording of the play was shown at AFD's headquarters in Paris and is available online.

## THEY SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE

*"After the performance, I was able to talk to my father. There were things I couldn't say to him before, but I said them."*

SANTERRE CLYD WIDMAR, STUDENT

*"This project can shed light on how young people feel. I don't think anyone asks how the youth of this country are doing."*

GAËLLE BIEN-AIMÉ, DIRECTOR

*"This play offers an outlet for children and a resource for policymakers and development actors. In a fragile context like Haiti, discussions cannot be purely technical. Words are powerful. It is our responsibility to listen to them."*

GAËLLE LETILLY, DIRECTOR OF AFD HAITI

# 4,700

HOMICIDE VICTIMS REPORTED IN HAITI IN 2023

# 100

STUDENTS FROM 3 SCHOOLS COLLECTIVELY CREATED A THEATER PLAY

# 180

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

INSTAGRAM #fonds\_metis  
YOUTUBE @fondsmetis