

University-Level Lesson CLM: Voices of Resilience Haitian Women and the Path to Empowerment

From Survival to Agency:

Objective:

Students will analyze the structural barriers faced by Haitian women living in ultra-poverty and explore how empowerment through the CLM program promotes agency, dignity, and systemic change in their families and communities.

Materials Needed:

- CLM participant stories. See: [Steve Werlin's Blog](#)
- MFOH Program summary and images provided at the end
- Whiteboard or collaborative online document
- Student journals or laptops

Lesson Plan (45 min)

1. Opening Discussion (5 min)

Prompt: “What does *empowerment* look like when someone has virtually no material resources?”

Students briefly discuss in pairs or small groups. Instructor captures key phrases: agency, dignity, access, control, self-determination.

2. Context Brief: CLM and Structural Inequality (10 min)

Instructor presents a brief overview:

- Haiti's social, economic, and gender context (post-colonial legacies, natural disasters, poverty)
- Introduction to Fonkoze and the **Chemen Lavi Miyò (Pathway to a Better Life)** program and their partnership with Mercy Focus on Haiti
- Key features: vocational training, asset transfers, health care, mentoring, housing, literacy

Optional: Show a short video (e.g., Fonkoze's YouTube channel) or infographic.

3. Narrative Analysis: Haitian Mothers' Stories (15 min)

Break students into small groups. Each group reads one story of a Haitian woman in the CLM program. They discuss:

- What structural barriers did she face?
- What internal (personal) and external (programmatic) supports enabled her transformation?
- How did this transformation ripple out to her family and community?
- What leadership qualities emerged?

Groups present their story analysis to the class (2 min each).

4. Critical Reflection: Empowerment vs. Aid (10 min)

Whole-group discussion:

- How is CLM's model different from charity or foreign aid?
- How do agency and dignity appear in the stories?
- What does this tell us about Mercy's call to **stand with** (not "rescue") women?

5. Exit Reflection (5 min)

Prompt: "How do the CLM stories challenge or affirm your understanding of development, equity, and women's leadership?"

Students write in journals or submit a brief digital response.

MFOH's CLM Program Summary & Images of Graduates

Chemen Lavi Miyò (CLM), also known as Pathway to a Better Life, is a comprehensive approach to eliminating acute poverty. CLM reaches out to those on the margins of society. Throughout the 18-month program implemented by Fonkoze and funded by Mercy Focus on Haiti, case managers support clients as they learn to run a small business, repair their homes, and access health care and education services. Participants develop both their capacity and their confidence until they have their own functioning microenterprises.

Mercy Focus on Haiti was introduced to CLM in 2015. In 2017 the first group of 200 women we sponsored began its journey along a pathway to a better life. Caseworkers and the regional leaders identify ultra-poor families, interviewed the women, and prepared them to participate in the program.

Throughout the program, participants learn how to run a small business, repair their homes, access health care, and send their children to school.

The women are given the tools listed below and guidance in how to use them:

- assets to establish two income-generating activities, e.g., goats, chickens, merchandise to sell
- materials to build a modest home with a sturdy roof and floor, and a latrine

- a small cash stipend that allows them to purchase food for the first six months
- access to free healthcare and training on how to use it
- Confidence-building, enterprise management, and life skills training

The requirements for graduation are:

- The family is “food secure”
- There are two income-generating activities
- The participant has an active savings account
- The participant’s children are able to attend school
- The participant has confidence in her abilities and a plan for her future.





