

# Organization of Fishermen of Cite Soleil (OPECS)



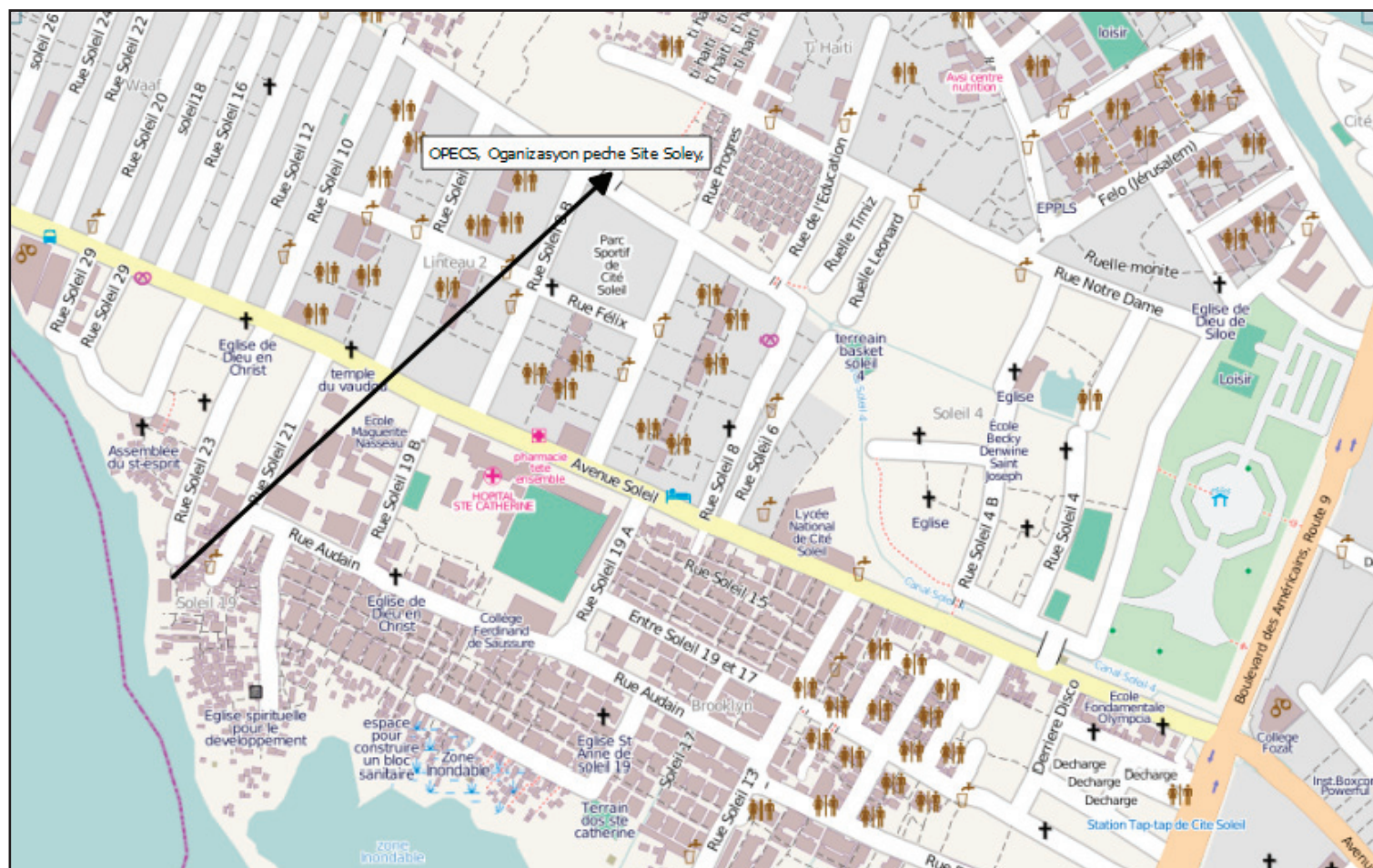
Department: West

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**What can other communities learn from OPECS?**

- \* Fishing cooperative management
- \* Community toilet management



## History of the organization:

Cite Soleil is an area situated by the sea, with several neighborhoods sitting along the coast. Norway is one of those neighborhoods. Early on it was a dumping site for old bottles from a local factory and other trash, but eventually a neighborhood was established, and there was little other economic opportunity besides the sea. So the livelihoods of a great percentage of the people in Norway depend on the ocean: men go out in hand-made sailboats to fish, and women take the catch and sell it in the local markets.

## Summary of the work

OPECS (the Organization of the Fishermen of Cite Soleil) was founded in 1996 to help the fishermen and market women of Cite Soleil make the most of their access to the sea. The objective was to pool resources to help all of the fishermen in Cite Soleil be able to advance. Members of OPECS work together to build boats and other essential equipment such as nets and lobster traps and then offer them to members who are heading out to sea. They have a common space that the fishermen share, equipped with a washing station, space to weave nets, and a cold room (which has not been functional since the earthquake), which was built with the help of PADEF.



When the fishermen return from sea, they keep half of their proceeds for themselves and give half to OPECS. The part given to OPECS is divided into 3 parts: one is used to maintain the common equipment that OPECS members use (boats, nets, etc), one is used for a social fund (buying material to clean up the community, participating in a community project), and one is kept in a reserve in case one of the members of OPECS has a problem (sickness, a funeral, etc). OPECS is run by a 9 member committee, and has 1025 members across every fishing neighborhood in the commune of Cite Soleil.

OPECS also participates in social projects: members work with a group of children in the area, offering them weekend educational activities. They also were motivated to resolve the sanitation problem in their community and partnered with the Red Cross to build a large community toilet. OPECS runs the toilet and asks for 5 gourdes per usage, and this money goes to keeping the toilet clean and buying toilet paper and cleaning materials.





## What can other communities learn from OPECS?

OPECS can teach other cooperatives, particularly fishing cooperatives, about how it has managed to keep this fishing network together and strong over the past 16 years. They have developed experience in how to deal with common goods, how to manage member participation, and how to motivate a livelihood-based group to branch out into social activities. They have experience in maintaining a community toilet and trying to work for cleaner shores. And of course they have expertise in open-ocean fishing, the building of sailboats, and the weaving of nets and baskets.



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