

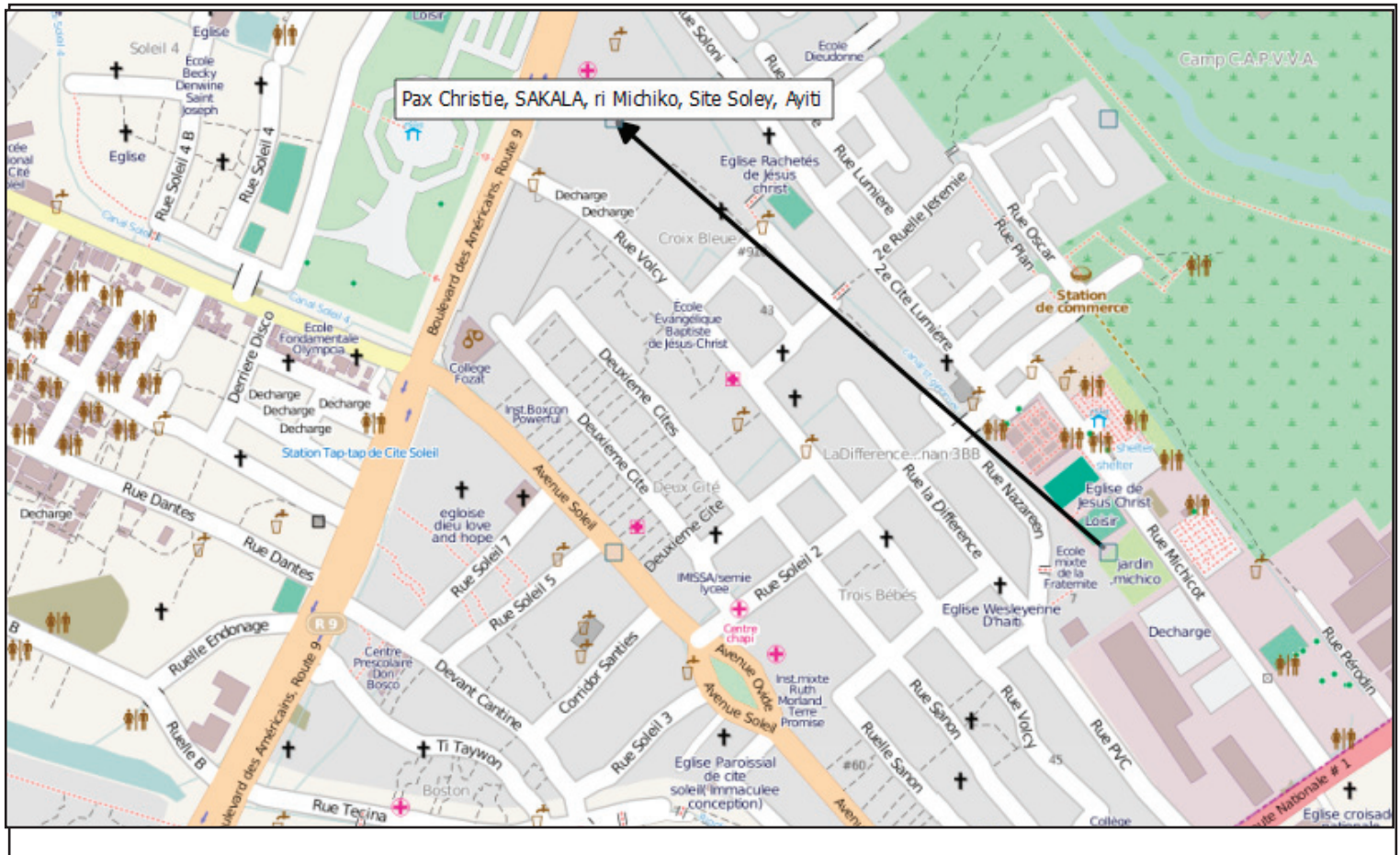


Pax Christi Haiti established a strong base in Cite Soleil, one of Port-au-Prince's most notorious slums, and transformed it into a youth-friendly peace education center called SAKALA (meaning "what can be").



What can other communities learn from SAKALA?

- ✦ Peace and active citizenship education for youth at risk



History of the organization:

Pax Christi is a global Catholic movement that was formed in 1945 after the Second World War to promote peace and reconciliation. As time went on, the vision expanded beyond Europe and Pax Christi began to make room for local groups to become affiliated chapters. These groups are autonomous and local, but they share Pax Christi's mission of peacebuilding. In Haiti, there was a group of young Haitian men and women who decided to form a Haitian chapter of Pax Christi in 2002, and by 2004 they had begun doing peacebuilding work with the youth of Cite Soleil as founding member Daniel Tillias was brought up there.

Summary of the work

Pax Christi Haiti established a strong base in the Michicot area of Cite Soleil, previously an abandoned factory ground, and transformed it into a youth-friendly peace education center called SAKALA (meaning "what can be"). The primary vision for building peace was through sports: the soccer coaching and games they provided gave young people from difficult neighborhoods an outlet for their energy, structure in their lives, a chance to get to know youth from other neighborhoods (because of the inter-community violence in Cite Soleil this was rare), a hot meal, and a lesson on how to be a good Haitian citizen every day. The coaches and members of SAKALA became mentors to these children, and some of their former students were so inspired by the impact that sports had on

their lives and their ability to choose a peaceful path that they are forming their own sports clubs in the streets (see Metanoia on wozoayiti.org).

But SAKALA didn't stop at sports: it realized that the youth of Cite Soleil lacked exposure to the environment in their lives and an understanding of nature. It established an urban garden, growing plants in used car tires, old computer monitor boxes, plastic containers, or whatever else could be salvaged to show the importance of recycling. It hosted a garden entrepreneurship program where youth from many neighborhoods learned not just how to grow food but how to make a living doing it. It partnered with an organization called SOIL to install eco-friendly composting toilets on site, and have launched a tree nursery and a campaign to promote the use of the moringa tree.

SAKALA also uses culture for peace: it holds a dance class, arts classes, and a number of other cultural events.





What can other communities learn from SAKALA?

Pax Christi has developed effective tools for peace education and active citizenship for youth in one of the most challenging environments in the country. Their model of using sports and culture to promote peace, a sense of civic responsibility, and tolerance is something that groups working with youth across Haiti can learn much from. They also have become experienced in urban gardening, compost toilets, and the many uses of the moringa tree.

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