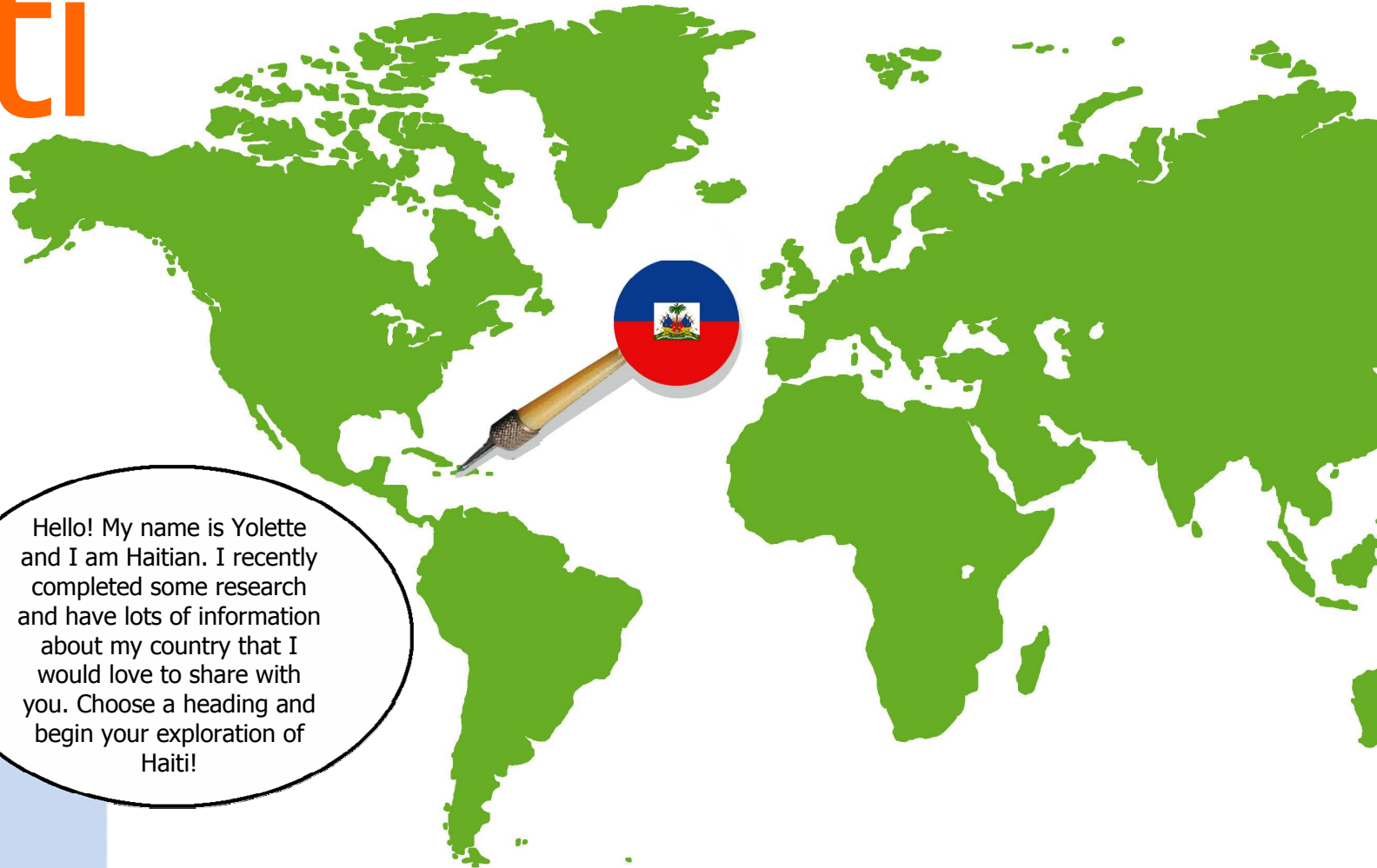


Haiti



Hello! My name is Yolette and I am Haitian. I recently completed some research and have lots of information about my country that I would love to share with you. Choose a heading and begin your exploration of Haiti!



The **Country Fact Sheets** series is presented to you by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif and produced with the support of the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
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COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

First of all you must know that the word "Haiti" comes from an aboriginal word that meant "mountainous land."

My country is located on the west side of Haiti Island (or Hispaniola Island) that is shared with the Dominican Republic to the east.

Haiti is bordered on the other sides by the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico. The country occupies 36% of the island's surface, or 27,750 km². Haiti also consists of two peninsulas separated by the Gonave Gulf.

The geography of my country is very diverse. From north to south one can find alternating mountain chains, plateaus, and plains. It is hot all year long. The rainy season lasts from April to June and from October to November. The country regularly suffers from heavy rain and cyclones.

The capital, Port-Au-Prince, is home to close to two million people, where extreme poverty exists as well as extreme wealth. It is often said that the city has one of the most beautiful bays in the world.






However, the thing that grabs my attention is the fact that my country is the poorest in the Americas. Of all the population, 80% live in poverty and more than half are unemployed.



Did you know that?

Once upon a time, Haiti's mountains were covered by forests, fruit trees, and vegetables. Systematic deforestation practiced in Haiti in the last few decades has stripped these mountains causing the loss of arable soil with every storm. The loss of **arable** land and forests means erosion, flooding, landslides, droughts, and greater misery for Haitians.



	Surface Area	27 750 km ² (Canada : 9 984 670 km ²).
	Climate	Tropical.
	Temperature	An average of 27°C.
	Relief	Mostly rough and mountainous.
	Natural Resources	Mango, cocoa, coffee, sugar, wood, beef, pork, etc.

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

Population

In 2005 my country has an estimated population of 8.5 million. The majority of these people live in rural areas. However, many people **migrate** to cities where they hope to find work and a better life. The principal cities are Les Cayes, Jacmel, Port-de-Paix, Jeremie, and the capital Port-Au-Prince.

Agriculture remains the most important economic activity of Haiti. Many Haitians work in large coffee, cotton, and **sisal** plantations that usually belong to foreign companies.

Many Haitians have left the island because of misery, **dictatorship**, or violence, and many have left to work or study. Our country loses many qualified people.

These people are part of what we call the Haitian **diaspora**. An estimated two million Haitians live overseas. They have found refuge mainly in the United States, the rest of the Antilles, in Europe, and in Canada. They have carried a bit of their culture with them to throughout the world.

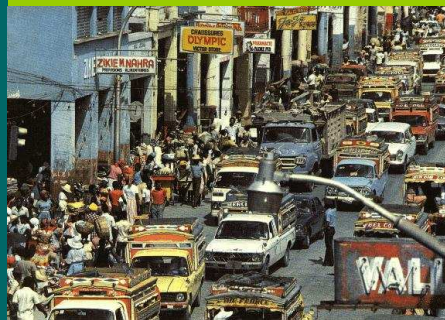
Personally, we have family in Montreal, Canada. They help us a lot and send us money. Many of my friends also tell me that their families receive money from a relative living overseas.

Half of the Haitian population is less than 21 years old and more than half of the households in the country are managed by a women.

Finally, despite poverty the Haitians form a proud, courageous, and perseverant population.

Did you know that?

According to UNICEF, the average life expectancy in Haiti was 52 years in 2005. This statistic is quite low when compared to other countries. What is the average life expectancy where you live?



Facts at a Glance



Number of Inhabitants 8,5 million (2005)



Density (number of people per Km²) 304 inhabitants /km² (2005)



Life Expectancy 52 years (2005)



Purchasing Power¹ US\$ 1680 (2004)



People Without a job 80% (2003)



People who can read and write 34% (2004)



Mortality rate under 5 years of age 117 deaths per 1000 children (2004)



Human Development Index (HDI)² 153th out of 177 countries (2003)



Ecological Footprint³ 0,5 (2001)

Population

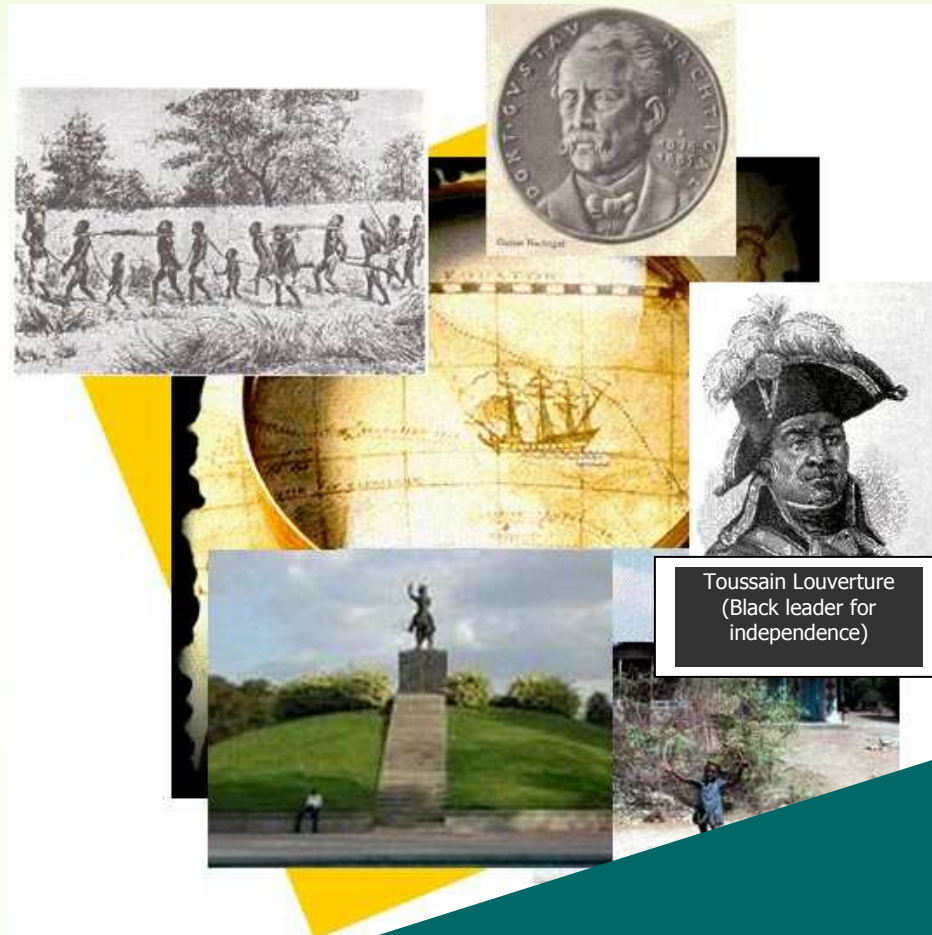
History

The explorer Christopher Columbus discovered Haiti during his first voyage to America in 1492. He named it Hispaniola, which means "The small Spain" [no it doesn't...it comes from Espanola...Spanish woman]. The island was populated by about 100 000 aboriginals, the Arawaks. They called their island "Haiti", which means mountainous land. Hungry for precious metals, the Spanish colonists began their domination over the Arawaks and subjected them to forced labour. In less than 50 years, the aboriginal population was decimated by poor treatment and sickness. The Arawaks were soon replaced by black slaves purchased in Africa. This explains why the current Haitian population is black.

After a Spanish loss against France the island was divided in 2 parts. Haiti, renamed Saint-Dominic, then belonged to France and the current Dominican Republic belonged to Spain.

The black slaves revolted and proclaimed the world's first black republic on the 1st of January, 1804. The previous French colony returned to its Arawak name: Haiti.

However, a series of **military coups**, rural revolts, and popular uprisings coloured the history of my country since its independence. Large foreign powers such as France and the United States profited from this instability in the country through economic exploitation.



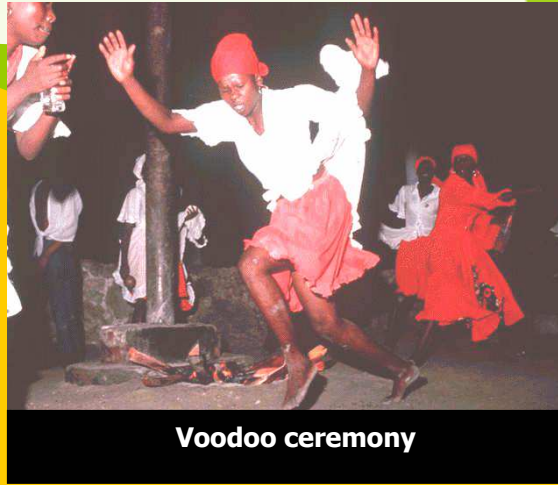
Toussaint Louverture
(Black leader for independence)

From 1957 to 1986, a terrible dictatorship was cemented by Francois Duvalier, nicknamed "Papa Doc", and succeeded by his son Jean-Claude. The enemies of the state were hunted and pursued.

In 1986, the population finally rid themselves of the **dictator** Duvalier and elected, in 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who was considered the hope of the poor. Aristide had to escape to the United States but later returned to the head of the country while suppressing all opposition. This made some say that a new **dictatorship** had been born under Aristide.

Presently, Rene Preval is the president of my country and soldiers from the United Nations have been deployed to help re-establish peace and security.

History



Voodoo ceremony

Did you know that ?

We have two official languages in Haiti: Haitian Creole, and French. Practically the whole Haitian population speaks Creole as their mother tongue. Today French is spoken by less than 10% of the population.

Here are a few Creole words that you would use to communicate with Haitians:

Hello:	<i>BONJOU</i>
Good Evening:	<i>BONSOUA</i>
How's it going?:	<i>KI JAN OUO YE</i>
It's going well:	<i>MOUIN BYIN</i>
Thank you:	<i>MESI</i>

Culture

Haitian culture is a mix of French, Spanish, and African cultures.

The most commonly practiced religions are Catholicism, Protestantism, and Voodoo. Voodoo is a religion originally from Benin in West Africa that was spread in the Antilles by slaves.

Music is very important and diverse in Haiti. Many people say that they could not live without music. Have you ever heard Haitian music? It accompanies every moment of the day. The musical style most often heard is called "**compa**".

Perhaps you know the artists Wycleff Jean or Luck Merville? Both were born in my country. The *Compagnie Créole* is also a famous musical group from Haiti. If you visit my country some day maybe I would have the chance to teach you my favorite dance. It is called Hip-Hop! I love to dance!

The most common foods in Haiti are rice, beans, peas, and local fruits. The national food, consisting of rice and red beans, is called "Di ri ak poua".

If you wish to ear the national anthem of Haiti, check out the following link : www.david.national-anthems.net/ht.htm

Culture

Challenges

You must wonder if foreign countries send aide to Honduras. Many Canadian organizations, often in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), set up projects that benefit my country. Here is an interesting example!

The Canadian organization SUCO (Solidarity, Unity, and Co-operation) has been working in Honduras since 2004. SUCO's presence and work in Honduras aims primarily to improve the living conditions of rural populations. SUCO works to help rural populations improve their farming and ranching practices, while protecting, conserving, and improving the natural environment.

For this project, SUCO works in partnership with the Organization of Honduran Peasants (Organización Campesina Hondureña), a peasant organization in my country. Together, they are working to disseminate a small educational manual called El Machete Verde (The Green Machete). This educational tool aims to teach peasants about different farming techniques in order to improve agricultural productivity.

The educational tool "*El Machete Verde*" is like a comic book made out of different coloured sheets of paper with over 400 pictures accompanied by text. Twenty-one themes are covered, including the environment, trees, seeds, tree nurseries, the conservation of soils, horticulture, organic fertilizer, raising livestock and barnyard animals, etc. The *Machete Verde* contributes to the training programs on these topics that already exist in the country.

Another objective of the project is to create human resources in the country by training people, so that they in turn can train other people to use the teaching tool. Recently, my uncle received this training course and now he is the resource person in the neighbouring villages. Right now, the *Machete Verde* is used primarily by agronomists, technicians, rural training centres, and schools.

Do you know the expression that talks about giving someone a fish, or teaching them to fish instead? This expression says that if you give a fish to a person, they will eat for a day. If you teach them how to fish, they will always have food. I believe that the *Machete Verde* project is a great example of local populations taking development into their own hands.



Challenges



Solutions

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) finances numerous cooperation projects in Haiti. Let me present you with one of these projects that carries hope, especially for the women of my country.

The Comité de Solidarité/Trois-Rivières is a Quebec organization focused on international co-operation. For many years it has helped a women's rights organization in my country called Kay Fanm. This name, Kay Fanm, is a creole expression that means *women's house*.

Kay Fanm is a Haitian women's association founded in 1986 during a wave of large popular mobilizations following the defeat of Duvalier's dictatorship. It is a feminist organization that fights for social justice and women's rights.

Kay Fanm activities are focused around four key programs: rehabilitation of women who are victims of violence, women and democracy, training, and self-financing of small projects.

The Association brings together women of diverse sectors, and operates as a network. In the heart of the association there are groups of rural women, merchants and small business owners, homemakers, and professionals.

Numerous projects have been set in motion by Kay Fanm. For example, one sewing workshop entitled *Thread on the Needle* gives Haitian women a chance to expand their skills and develop a micro-enterprise that would provide for some of their needs. A rehabilitation and training centre allows women who are victims of violence to benefit from legal, medical, and psychological assistance.

Kay Fanm also leads political activities to promote democracy and to allow women to claim their rights.

Solutions

Glossary

Arable : Usually referring to soil or land that can be cultivated and used to grow food.

Compa : Musical style inspired by Brazilian Salsa but with a slower rhythm.

Military Coup: An illegal take-over of the government by people within the military.

Diaspora : The dispersion of a population or ethnic group around the world.

Dictatorship: A political regime where all the power is in the hands of one person, one class of people, or one party, and without democratic control.

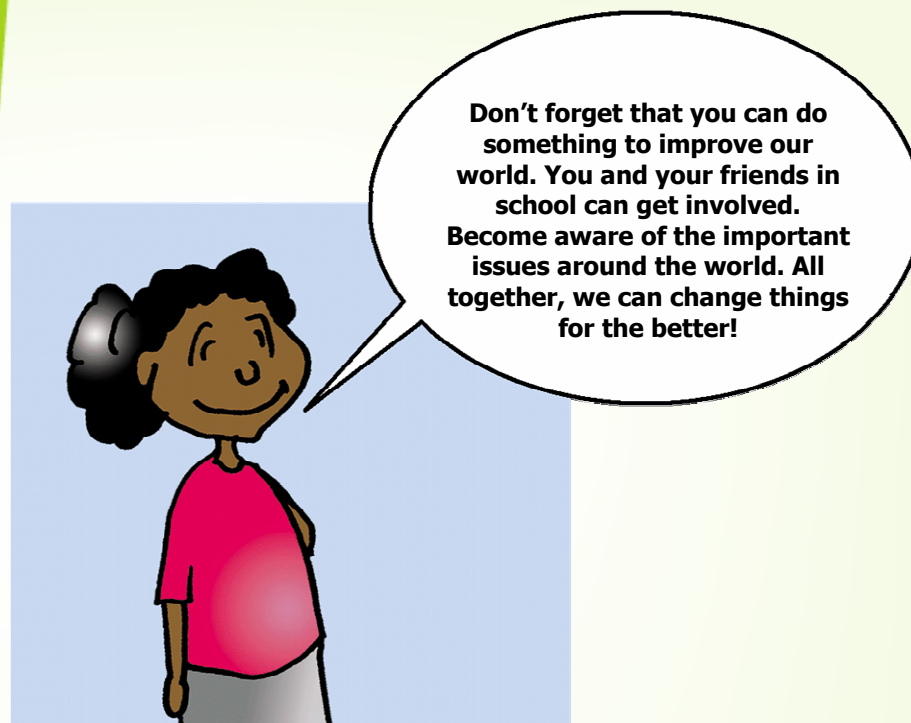
Migrate : To leave one place to live and work in another.

Sisal : A plant native to Mexico. Sisal is also the word used for the fibre derived from the plant. The fibre is used for cords, fabric, and carpets.

Purchasing Power¹: Purchasing power is the capacity to buy goods and services with a given income.

Human Development Index ² : The Human Development Report issued by the UN, which classifies 177 countries according to life-expectancy, education, literacy, and income.

Glossary



To learn more about Cameroun, consult the following sources:

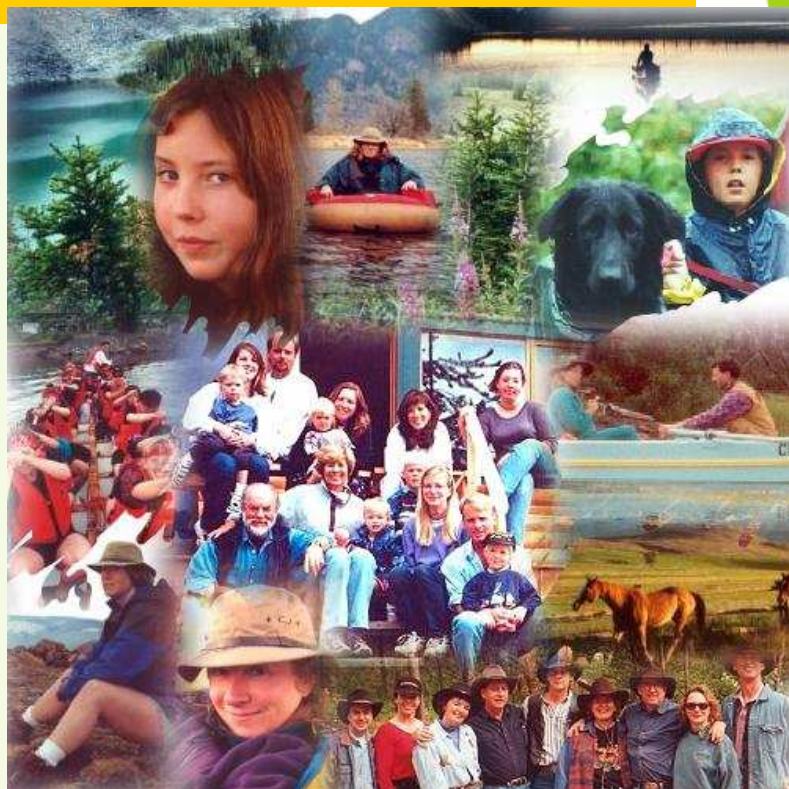
- ✓ www.in-terre-actif.com/english
- ✓ www.ethiquette.ca
- ✓ www.equiterre.org/
- ✓ www.amnesty.org
- ✓ www.acdi-cida.gc.ca

Ecological Footprint³ :

It measures how much land and water area is necessary to provide one person's sustenance.

Did you know that ?

Many women's rights organisations exist in your country. For example, in Quebec, the Quebec Women's Federation fights against all forms of violence, discrimination, and marginalisation or exclusion concerning women.



To build your awareness and to be able to express yourself regarding women's issues, we propose the following community collage activity: Words and Images!

COLLAGE WORKSHOP: WORDS AND IMAGES!

This activity will allow you to express your opinions and feelings regarding the situation and rights of women... while making a collage!

To complete this project, you will need a large box or heavy sheet of paper, magazines, newspapers, advertising pamphlets, paper, scissors, crayons, string, and glue. Any other salvagable material you can find might also help you.

Here is how the activity progresses:

- In small groups, choose some images, words, colours that express what you feel about reality of women.
- Complete a collage while collaborating with your group. All members of the team must contribute to the collage activity.
- In your team, present your collage and tell your classmates what is represented in the collage concerning the situation of women and their rights (here and around the world).
- Make an exposition of your work in the hallway or another location in your school.

Game