Haitian Health Foundation

“Happy Houses” Program

Building Homes for Poor Families

— Jérémie, Haiti —

“The God of heaven himself will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build…”

Nehemiah 2:20
Project Synopsis

Description
Build 10 safe, concrete homes for destitute families.

Purpose
Improve the overall health and well-being of poor families by providing secure, sanitary houses.

Location
Jérémie, in the rural Grande Anse region of southwestern Haiti — with outreach to about 230,000 poor people living in 105 remote mountain villages.

Cost
$11,000 will help build 10 safe, concrete homes for families in desperate need.

Project Highlights
- Families living in the rural mountains in and around Jérémie are extremely poor.
- This area suffers higher rates of infant and maternal mortality than other parts of the country due to its isolation and lack of medical resources.
- Poor and unsanitary housing conditions are a major deterrent to health, creating an environment rife with disease and chronic illness.
- The Haitian Health Foundation (HHF) has been working in this area of southwestern Haiti since 1987, providing comprehensive medical care, health education and community development to more than 230,000 people.
- Through their “Happy Houses” program, poor families living in dire circumstances are given a brand-new, concrete home and, when necessary, also a detached, sturdy latrine in efforts to improve their overall health and well-being.
- With your support, Cross Catholic Outreach can help build new houses and share the love of Christ with 10 destitute families.
The Need

“The walls of our house collapsed,” said Enise Brutis, a 29-year-old mother of three from a rural, mountaintop village outside of Jérémie. “Now, when it rains, water pours in. My family and all of our belongings get so wet. We have lived the past five years in these conditions.”

Sadly, her situation is common among poor families in southwestern Haiti. There, large families live in rickety, one-room shacks pieced together with whatever can be found — cardboard, wood, tin scraps, tarps, even old rags. Roofs are made of banana leaves and thatch, offering little to no protection from the elements and serving as an attractive nest to rats and other disease-carrying vermin. And as Enise shared, these poor conditions become dire during the rainy season, when strong Caribbean storms destroy flimsy houses. When it rains, families also contend with the run-off from surrounding mountains, which triggers dangerous floods — and in villages lacking general sanitation, this means the dirt floors of family homes quickly turn into septic mud.

“We just cannot live like this any longer,” Enise said.

But as rural farmers in an isolated, mountain community, Enise and her husband were barely able to put food on the table for their three children. A new home was simply out of their reach.

Creating a Health Crisis

Miserable living conditions are not only uncomfortable — they are also unsafe and unhealthy. Cross Catholic Outreach’s ministry partner the Haitian Health Foundation (HHF) began their work in Haiti in 1987 with the goal to improve the health and well-being of the poor, the sick and the infirm in Jérémie and its’ 105 surrounding rural villages.

As their medical ministry developed, they began to realize that treating illnesses was not enough. Villages of children were suffering from deadly diarrhea and bacterial pneumonia; pregnant women were vulnerable to cholera and other waterborne illnesses; and the elderly were struggling against malaria and other mosquito-related fevers. These ailments would only perpetuate if families continued to live in squalor.

In order to prevent life-threatening diseases, HHF decided they must help combat poverty at its core. As a result, they began their “Happy Houses” program, offering clean, new homes to destitute families in an effort to increase their overall health.
Today, with the help of Cross Catholic Outreach, HHF offers health, development and hope for the future to more than 230,000 poor in rural, southwestern Haiti. And nearly 3,000 of these have received sturdy, concrete homes through the “Happy Houses” program.

The “Happy Houses” program replaces unstable, dilapidated shacks with safe, cement block homes. Each house has shuttered windows, doors that lock, a metal roof and poured-concrete floors, so families no longer have to worry about their homes turning into a muddy, unsanitary mess during the rainy season. To further curtail the spread of disease, HHF also constructs concrete latrines with metal roofs behind the new houses when necessary.

To best determine who receives a new home, HHF closely collaborates with community leaders. The priority of need is given to families with small children, people with disabilities, the elderly and those whose homes have been destroyed by fire or weather. Most of these people live in extremely rural and mountainous villages, like Enise Brutis and her family. In these hard-to-reach areas, it is difficult to transport resources, so HHF uses local construction crews and materials as another way to lift up these families out of their poverty. Not only does this bring employment to desperately poor villages, but it also encourages a spirit of ownership and Christian unity among neighbors.

“The housing project that Cross Catholic Outreach supports is an example to the poor of how they are loved by a Catholic sponsor, and this will serve to encourage their adherence to loving their neighbors and serving their own churches and communities,” said Marilyn Lowney, HHF’s Executive Director.

At Cross Catholic, we believe that physical change is not complete without Christ. In order to make a lasting impact, we must meet more than temporal needs. That’s why we support ministries like HHF, who share our mission to transform lives by changing hearts.

Marilyn continued: “HHF impresses upon these villages that love of God and love of neighbors is what inspires their benefactors – and they should learn from their example and make this a part of their spirituality in action as well.”

**Cross Catholic Outreach:**

**Improving Our Partners Capacity to Give**

Our relationship with HHF extends beyond building houses for the poor in southwestern Haiti. Over the years, Cross Catholic has also helped improve HHF’s ministry by:

- Providing annual comprehensive and preventative medical care to thousands of people in four remote villages (*Project 1025).*
- Facilitating empowering training sessions and peer education for HHF staff on community mobilization and relevant health issues to improve their capacity.
- Shipping milk, which has been critical in the constant battle against malnutrition.
- Supplying an emergency ambulance that has been used for more than 300 trips per year.
- Funding a soccer program for 50 rural villages as a part of a women’s empowerment program that resulted in a reduced pregnancy rate among girls.
You Can Change a Life!

Remember Enise Brutis, the woman whose plight was described at the start of this report? Her young family of five was struggling to survive in a half-collapsed shack, and they were vulnerable to the elements. Thankfully, her prayers were recently answered through the support of Cross Catholic Outreach and friends like you. As recipients of a Cross Catholic-sponsored “Happy House”, Enise and her family are now living proof of the transformative impact of a new home.

“My children are no longer worried and sick,” Enise said. “They are so thankful for what has been done for them — what God has done. They know it is only God who could have done this!”

Since they received a new home, Enise’s children now look for opportunities to help others. Her youngest daughter, just 3 years old, is often seen gathering rocks and sand to help neighbors still in need of housing repairs, and her older children fetch water and other materials for the elderly and sick in their community. The gift they received from kind Catholics represented so much more than a sturdy shelter. It also stands today as a tangible testament to the Lord’s love and faithfulness.

Now the attention of the program is turning to other desperately needy families, and Enise is praying more faith-filled Catholic brothers and sisters in America will rise to the occasion. “We keep you in our prayers,” she said. “May the Lord give you strength to continue this good work for others.”

HHF’s Executive Director is also praying for additional support. There are so many more families who are currently living in terrible conditions, unable to escape their poverty and its associated dangers. Those families urgently need an act of compassion to rescue them from their misery and transform their lives. With your support, Cross Catholic Outreach can provide that help. We can empower the “Happy Houses” program further and create life-saving changes in other families by building them safe, sturdy homes — a solid foundation upon which they too can build a better life.

Please, join us in this important mission of mercy today!

Our Promise to You!

Proceeds from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred during the current calendar year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.