



Bethlehem
Ministry

SPRING 2023



PO BOX 48387, ATHENS, GA 30604

A NEW BEGINNING



Imagine having to flee your house leaving all your possessions behind, with only the time to grab your kids and some key documents, not knowing what the future holds. This is the story of one of our preschool teachers.

Marie, like many Haitians, was living in Martissant, a suburb of Port-au-Prince controlled by gangs where the insecurities, crimes, and the kidnapping are at the highest. However, being a single mother of two, she was determined to continue to provide for her children. She was working as a teacher in a school, but this quickly came to an end when one afternoon, after coming home with her children, some heavily armed gang members went to her house and gave her an ultimatum: to leave ASAP. By pity, they allowed her to grab her children and a few documents. She left behind her whole life and all material possessions. In the blink of an eye, she lost everything.

The next morning, not having a place to stay in Port-au-Prince, she went to Terrier-Rouge to live with a distant cousin. When she arrived in the community, she was looking for help with starting her new life and finding a school for her children. She was advised to go to Saint-Barthélémy since we are known in the area to help people in need. Once she got there, our director of scholarship enrolled her children in school for free. Marie, feeling safe, talked about her horrific experience. During the conversation, the director of scholarship realized that she was a teacher with many years of experience. And since we had an opening, a job was also provided to her. This was just the beginning. We also realized that her living conditions in Terrier-Rouge weren't appropriate. We helped her secure a place for her and her children to live. She was so moved by the way she was received at the school that she wrote us a letter expressing her gratitude, stating that once she went to Saint-Barthélémy she was no longer alone and became part of a family. To quote a sentence from her letter: « Cet acte de votre part m'a confirmée qu'ici à Terrier-Rouge, je fais partie d'une famille unie qu'est vous institution. »

*"Your actions have assured me that here, in Terrier-Rouge,
I am part of a united family..."*

This is one of the many situations that we face daily. Without your prayers and financial contributions, we wouldn't be able to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti and provide them with a new beginning.

With gratitude,

Rachel Bruno, Chief Operating Officer
Sarah Bruno, Chief Association Executive
Jean Robert Bouloute, Chief Financial Officer

Making a Difference in Haiti



WHAT'S THE BUZZ



Did you know *Espérance et Vie* owns farmland which provides fresh produce for the school's cafeteria?

In addition to providing a source of nutritious, reliable and economical food for the students, it turns out that the farm is an ideal home for bees! *Espérance et Vie* is partnering with Villages Apicoles Horizons SA (VIASHA), to begin beekeeping at the farm. VIASHA is providing training, equipment, and bee colonies to *Espérance et Vie*. This organization will also help with processing the honey and the bee's wax, which is used to produce soap and other products. Honey is a traditional staple of the Haitian diet, and honey and the bee's wax are significant cash crops in Haiti. The synergies of this project are truly buzz worthy: employees learn useful skills, the plants get pollinated and generate food, the bees get the pollen, and *Espérance et Vie* gets honey to use and sell as a cash crop.



KIDS *for* **CHANGE**

A Campaign to Empower Women in Haiti

A goat is a gift of hope to a woman in Haiti. It provides milk, it multiplies, and acts as a savings account for a rainy day. In partnership with JP, we have restructured "Kids for Change" to now provide full grown nanny and buck goats to women. Necessary ongoing medical support by local agronomists is part of the gift to assure that the goats stay healthy. Women in a small area organize into cooperatives owning their own goats while also supporting each other in their care. The sense of community engendered among these women is a further benefit of the program.

You can help! During May, in celebration of mothers here and in Haiti, we are raising funds toward gifting goats to Haitian women. One goat is only \$50! Thank you from Bethlehem Ministry and the women of Haiti for your support!

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JATROFA PROJENOU

She led me straight up the mountain on foot from one little farm to another. When we got to hers, you could see the ocean and feel the wind. Her sons were disassembling a large smoldering dirt pile. They were harvesting the charcoal they'd made and next week would be selling it. There were only a few trees left and cows tugged at threadbare sod. Not her cows, she could never afford one. They belong to a man in the city, who pays her a little to keep them.

We talked. She told me she loves this land, that it came to her through generations going back to when people like her threw off the slavers and broke up the land into little farms to support themselves, and that this land is her legacy to her children. It begged a question, "Why harm it with charcoal and cows?"

Jabbing her finger at me she replied, "I'm doing the best I can with what I have, where I am right now to keep my family going and I'm not letting up." And I'm thinking neither is the erosion that is taking her land down to the rock on this dying mountain. I believe she knows that too. It is a tragedy of poverty that by doing what is necessary to care for your family kills the land's capacity to sustain them.



To keep that from happening we are helping her plant fifteen hundred trees on her land to protect the soil and grow a woodlot she can selectively harvest for income. The cows will be replaced by cashew trees, which will earn more than the pittance she ever got from them, and yams will grow a supply of nutritious food she can count on. By Christmas, her family will begin reaping benefits. And maybe up on that mountain feeling the wind on her face, she'll feel some peace, knowing the legacy to her children has been reclaimed and the promise of the slave revolution reaffirmed.

Her little farm is on top of this dying mountain.

She owns two hectares 500' above sea level. She and her family live in a village and each day hike to the farm to work. More than eighty percent of Haiti's farms are in rugged terrain.

On the plane heading home the gift of her words stuck in my head, "I'm doing the best I can with what I have, where I am right now". And I thought, am I?

Take care and thank you for your interest and concern.

Rob Fisher

DIRECTOR, PARTNER FOR PEOPLE AND PLACE