



HAITI FOUNDATION OF HOPE

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MISSION STATEMENT

Haiti Foundation of Hope is a Christian organization addressing the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the people in the impoverished and underserved rural communities of northern Haiti.



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Community health brings answers

Community is the heart of development. This simple truth is the starting point for the community health program taking shape in the Haitian villages of Terre Blanche, Dubedou, and Finel.

Haiti Foundation of Hope medical teams and clinic staff working in Terre Blanche have helped thousands of people. Yet the problems for which people seek help, such as malnutrition and malaria, led us to ask, "What if we could prevent these problems in the first place?"

Community health offers answers by bringing health education into homes and by providing water, sanitation, and other resources to prevent illnesses.

THE BEGINNING

The community health program began by training local participants to identify the root causes of their problems and seek their own solutions. In January 2008, a team from Medical Teams International led members from the villages in a community health assessment. They found the top three priorities to be malnutrition, diarrhea, and maternal health.

The community leaders then formed health committees with 10 people in each village. The committees coordinate their work through a central committee led by Dr. Avril Dominique, the program manager. The committees underwent training by LifeWind International on how to organize themselves and their communities.

In March, David Castaneda (MTI) and Dr. Steve Sethi (HFH) trained 30 local participants on how to conduct a baseline survey. With long hours and many miles of walking in the sweltering heat — all done without pay because the participants believe in helping their communities — the interview teams visited between 200 and 300 homes to gather statistical information on the health of mothers and children under the age of 2.

SURVEY RESULTS

We knew that people in this extremely poor area face tough living conditions, but the scale of the health problems we discovered was surprising. We found that a third of children have some level of malnourishment. Thirteen percent of women get prenatal care during



Children were weighed during the recent survey to gather nutritional statistics for the new community health program.

(photo by David Castaneda)

pregnancy, and only 23 percent of women have skilled help during delivery.

A stunning 65 percent of children had diarrhea in the prior two weeks, a rate that is twice the national average. This is probably due to the lack of clean water and sanitation facilities, with only 36 percent of households using a latrine, 33 percent treating water effectively, and 11 percent able to wash their hands at their house.

Immunization coverage ranged from 20 to 60 percent. Only 12 percent of homes have a bed net to prevent malaria.

The numbers paint a challenging picture, but there is hope. Eighty-eight percent of mothers stated that they believe their lives can change for the better, and 97 percent said they believe that God cares about their health.

THE NEXT STEP

We have just received the committees' plan to tackle the problem of diarrhea. This will involve educating people on treating water, using latrines, and treating diarrhea with oral rehydration solution. It will also involve constructing latrines.

We will be walking alongside our brothers and sisters in Haiti through technical assistance and guidance, through financial support, and through our prayers, and we invite you to join us in this partnership.



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Surveying community health

On the first day of interviews, I joined a survey team as they trekked through the village of Finel. Following the statistical protocol, we walked to the center of our zone, spun a bottle to determine which direction to go, and then walked 45 minutes uphill through increasingly dry brush land to reach the edge of the village.

Picking a house at random to start, the teams continued house to house, weighing children and asking health questions. We reached a dilapidated house set off the main road on a hillside with almost no vegetation and found a mother with several children.

The woman's 18-month-old son was typical of the many children we surveyed. He had eaten only once the previous day, and had both diarrhea and pneumonia in the last two weeks. The family had no latrine and no way to wash their hands, and had to walk more than a mile to get well water. The boy had been born at home with only a grandmother to assist in the delivery, and had never had a checkup.

The home was a place of many challenges, but also a place with hope for a better future through community health which offers skilled help for baby deliveries, clean water and latrines. — *Dr. Steve Sethi, HFH board member*



A volunteer surveyor at work.

Read inside to learn more about the community health program.

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