

HAITI MISSION NEWSLETTER

Religious of Jesus and Mary

Summer 2020



In its **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, The United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals, to transform our world, saying:

“We resolve, between now and 2030,
 to end poverty and hunger everywhere;
 to combat inequalities within and among countries;
 to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies;
 to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the
 empowerment of women and girls; and
 to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources.”

(Page 8 has a hyperlink to the full Declaration. The above quote is taken from the Introduction.)

This issue of the Haiti Mission Newsletter, features 17 Haiti Mission projects that illustrate the United Nation’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals.



Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Creating win-win solutions: Empower soy bean cultivation, provide families a ready market for their soy, soy used for hen feed, school children eat eggs

Local farmers are empowered to plant soy and will be given a ready market for their soy production, helping them financially and spurring the whole local economy. Until recently, soy was not grown locally. But soy is one of the main ingredients in the hen feed, used at the Campeche Hen House (story page 5), so now the hens can lay eggs, and can be eaten when too old to lay eggs.

And because it’s difficult to learn without nutritious food in your stomach, the hen house eggs are purchased through **Mercy Focus on Haiti’s** “Be a Good Egg” initiative, to provide the school children with an egg three times a week for breakfast.



Daily hot lunch comes from students’ keyhole gardens like this one, the large school garden tended by Mr. Claude Etienne, and bought from local family gardens. Fish is purchased from ponds near the school in Fon Ibo (story page 6).



This cycle of empowering families to raise more food and to supplement their income, empowering the hen house to produce eggs, and empowering school children to eat and learn, empowers the whole community!

2
ZERO HUNGER

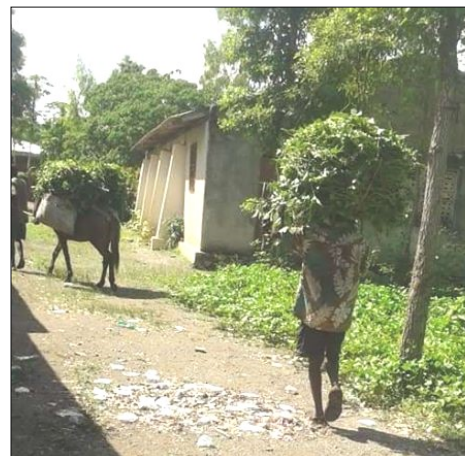
Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Seed Bank (at Grepen Center in Gros Morne)

The seed bank makes available a variety of quality seed, experimental seed, yams and sweet potatoes, all which grow well in the Haitian climate and are available at a subsidized rate to local farmers.

Grepen Center also provides instruction on preventing sweet potato weevils and other pests, drip irrigation, double-dug gardens, aquaculture and numerous other topics of interest to local farmers.

Transporting these sweet potato vine cuttings will be well worth the effort once they are planted and harvest time comes. One participating farmer said, "This [sweet potato] program is a gift from God. It is enabling me to support my family."



3
GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Coronavirus Food/hygiene Distribution to Families in Isolated Villages

Alma Mater Hospital manages to provide services while supplies run low

Because of coronavirus, this group, "Ekip 7", distributes food packs to families in isolated areas. This photo is of a distribution to over 200 families in Acadien and Gros Sable, located in the northwest region.



The distances they must travel to reach the remote locations are a real challenge! The distributions are held at schools and Ekip 7 takes the opportunity to give instruction on coronavirus preventive measures. Team members wear masks and are careful to wash their hands as they enter and leave a school.

A big "MÈSI ANPIL" (thank you), to all our donors who enabled this urgent food distribution to take place.

The cost of food, hygiene materials, masks and transportation to Acadien and Gros Sable alone, was \$5,600 American dollars. But, people are begging that the deliveries come as quickly as possible, so it's on to Fromadou and Diondio, then other schools next week.

Meanwhile, **Alma Mater Hospital** has been chronically running short of needed medical supplies, a problem aggravated by politically blocked highways and the insecurity of roadways due to gang activity.

From its existence, however, Alma Mater has always been helped by friends in the USA, Germany and in Haiti. And once again partners and friends have come to the rescue. Our friends at **St. Damien/St. Luke's Hospitals** in Port-au-Prince were the first to help when the country was shut down by demonstrations in October 2019. They were creative in finding ways to get needed hospital supplies. Then **Mercy Focus on Haiti**, (a ministry initiative of the **Sisters of Mercy of the Americas**), sent a donation to purchase needed materials. The **Haitian Ministry of Health** also provided some help. Since COVID-19 began, a new friend, **Michele Hartigan**, packaged and sent boxes of personal protective materials for staff and patients as well as much needed supplies for the operating room.



We continue to serve, thanks to all our faithful friends!

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QUALITY EDUCATION

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Innovations at Jesus-Mary School 2019-2020 (before Coronavirus, and after)

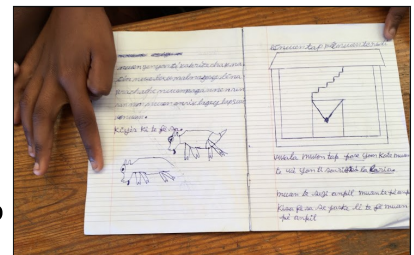
To enrich our students’ academic life and outcomes, Jesus-Mary School extended the school day by an hour, went on a modular schedule, and added afterschool programs, (i.e., gym, library), to the regular school day. Also new is “sik matinal” (morning circle), a warm-up that happens just after flag raising and morning prayer.

Despite many prolonged interruptions to school this year, **Vivian Niestrom (Quest Volunteer)** and **Abby Belt (Maryknoll Lay Missioners)** have guided our administrative staff and teachers in developing an online system for recording grades and attendance so they can isolate data and compare variables in order to improve learning outcomes.



We continue to be greatly pleased with the diocesan-sponsored “Ayiti Li” (Haiti Reads) method for Creole and French in 1st and 2nd grades and anticipate including 3rd grade! The program includes extensive teacher training, supervision, evaluation, reading and writing books, as well as library books.

Abby Belt (left) works with teachers and groups of 5th graders who are writing their own storybooks which will be shared with lower grades. Students work in small groups, type their stories into the school computers and add their illustrations. The books will be added to the school library to improve its selection of Creole storybooks.



Since coronavirus has stopped classes and most of our families do not have computers or internet access, let alone electricity, “Haiti Reads” is using radio broadcasts to teach the students!



At Jesus-Mary School in Fon Ibo, 1st and 2nd grade parents, were given this battery operated radio, which can be charged at local charging stations or by a solar panel provided by the program.



On the left, **Principal Met Leny** and **Mme. Germaine** distribute radios, radio instruction sheets, and worksheets to go with the lessons, along with coronavirus prevention information to the excited parents. God bless the **University of Notre Dame**, Indiana, their **ACE program** and the **Diocese of Gonaives**.

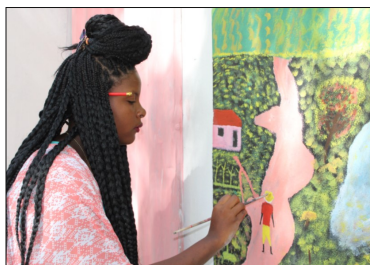
5

GENDER EQUALITY

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Lakay Atis - House of the Artists in Jean Rabel welcomes women

Typically, in Haiti, painting is a “male activity”. The artists that can be found selling their pieces in Port au Price, are usually male. It is rare to find a female whose profession is painting.



But in Jean Rabel last summer at Lakay Atis, four Haitian volunteers who received their training at the workshop, gave back to the community. **Jules, Junior, Tchilaa,** and **Figerson** created two different spaces for children and teens to do art and craft activities, and the programs included girls and women.

Opening this course to girls and women was a step forward in breaking these stereotypes that exclude females. Encouraging each participant to bring out their creativity and do the best that they could, gave them confidence and created an atmosphere conducive to learning and growth.

6

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Composting toilets at Jesus-Mary School in Gros Morne

After Christmas our students and staff received the gift of seven new composting toilets which greatly reduced our student-to-toilet ratio. Toilets like this one, are located behind each of the seven stall doors.

Each stall is large (double pit), airy with natural lighting, and the doors provide needed privacy. The urine will be separated from the solid waste and used for crops like corn and bananas which need more nitrogen.



The school toilet committee (both students and staff) thank our contractor, **Fritznel Noelsin**, our generous consultants and all our donors who made this much needed gift possible!!!

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AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

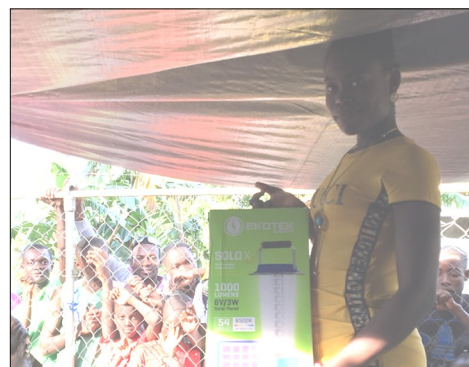
Solar Lamp Winners - Leaning into culture change (before Coronavirus)

Here Evda Bernard smiles slightly as she hold the solar lamp she just won, while many onlookers watch from outside the school fence. Evda said that now in the evening she can study and listen to music.

Lickensen Martial, whose neighborhood is near the RJM’s house, does not have access to electricity even if his family could afford it. The children in his house were very happy he had won a solar lamp.

Woodley Thérésias’s grandfather was so happy he had won the solar lamp, because now the grandfather can listen to news on the radio.

All the winners thank our raffle donors: the **Rutherford County Soccer League, Michele Hartigan, Fr. Barthélemy Garçon, and Bryan Kleperak.**



Most of our Jesus-Mary School students do not have access to electricity. The solar lamp winners and their families will now experience the advantages of solar energy. When the day comes that they have a voice in determining whether or not to produce electricity with coal/heavy oil/diesel or solar, maybe they will push for cleaner and sustainable SOLAR energy. Meanwhile, there are 13 more houses with light at night, in Gros Morne.

8

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Sewing Atelier in Jean Rabel

The sewing Atelier has responded to Coronavirus by making masks, which can be re-washed. Individuals come buy masks for their family. The Atelier also receives orders to buy 100, 200, or 1,000 masks at a time in bulk.

The women are working 5 days a week in groups of 10 while they observe safe distancing and take preventive measures. They are advertising on the radio and expect to have plenty of work in the days ahead. The **Department of Health** in Port de Paix has seen the masks and congratulated the ladies on the quality of their work.



9

INDUSTRY,
INNOVATION &
INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Hen House in Campeche - sustainably producing own feed using solar power

Hen house staff produce feed with a solar-powered mill and mixer, to reduce feed costs. The local farming economy is helped by buying corn for feed locally and through the introduction of soy bean cultivation, and the soy purchased from farmers. Solar panels on the hen house roof, eliminate the use of diesel or gasoline which further cuts feed costs, with no environmental pollution!

Thanks to **Sr. Pat Reid, OSF** a generous grant from the **Allegheny Franciscans community** offset the high initial costs of the solar panels, inverter, mill and mixer.

At its current egg production levels with just shy of 1000 hens, the hen house cannot meet the demand from local clients. After eggs are supplied for school breakfasts through the “Be a Good Egg” initiative, the rest are purchased by small business owners who make egg sandwiches, a local lunch favorite, at stable market prices.



10

REDUCED
INEQUALITIES

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Reducing maternal and infant mortality *(In Haiti: 1 out of every 637 mothers die in childbirth and pregnancy*; 1 baby dies per 17 births*, 1 child in 16 dies before age 5**)*

While visiting Jean Rabel in late 2017, **Sr. Bridget O’Driscoll, OP**, observed that an unnatural number of mothers and babies died within a very small area (statistics higher than those above).

Sr. Bridget had already spent 22 years in Brazil as regional and diocesan coordinator of *Pastoral de Crianca*, a program which accompanies pregnant women and children up until the age of 6. The program was instrumental in greatly reducing the number of infant mortalities in Brazil. She was invited and agreed to come to Jean Rabel to establish the program in its local communities.

Over the next 15 months, she established 8 voluntary groups that are up and running today. It was not easy! She quickly learned the Creole language, then recruited 36 volunteer participants for the first week-long training by **Fr. Honore**. She forged ahead despite national administrative and local church obstacles. Her able assistant, **Paloma Peñas Dendariena**, accompanied her on house visits and to monthly celebrations.



(*Pan American Health Organization: www.paho.org/salud-en-las-americas-2017/?page_id=131; **World Bank <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.MORT?locations=HT>)

11

SUSTAINABLE
CITIES AND
COMMUNITIES

Goal 11: Make... human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Meetings in the Communal Sections - Developing local leadership for positive change local people want for themselves

In an effort to better engage with small farmers out in the communal sections, the Grepén agronomy team hosts community meetings where farmers share their struggles and successes and learn from each other. Sessions help local farmers develop their own leadership skills, and give them the knowledge and capacity to evoke change on the local level.

Meeting participants identify resources that already exist in their local area, and then with technical support from the agronomy team, they try to tackle some of the struggles they face. This training was in Peru.



12

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Yard Gardens - to decrease hunger and poverty, to improve nutrition and to harvest surplus food which can be sold for income

Whether it be a broken bucket, an old tire, or a used coffee can, anything lying around the house can be reconfigured into a vessel for a yard garden like this.



The agronomy team encourages people to plant whatever they can, wherever they are able. They are told to "Start small and grow", so your family can save money while eating a wider variety of vegetables, diversify your income by selling any surplus, right where you live.

And if they have a little more yard space, then create a garden plot growing sweet potatoes and yams.



13

CLIMATE ACTION

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

The Lorax Project - 111 families growing trees sustainably to make charcoal for their own use or sale, and for building material

In Haiti, many families use charcoal as a fuel source, which can lead to deforestation.

The agronomy team, *Haiti Connection* and a local primary school, *Lekòl Presbyteral Perou*, have started a pilot project that sustainably grows trees for charcoal and building material, while also teaching about caring for trees and the environment. Rather than vilify the practice of making and using charcoal, the project recognizes that a local market already exists for charcoal and that families can supplement their income by making and selling it.

The Lorax Project is named for the Dr. Seuss character who cares for the trees. Families with children in the school are tasked with planting trees that grow quickly and so are suitable for making charcoal or for use as building material. With assistance from the agronomy team, families raise the trees and make charcoal in a manner that produces an income source to pay for school AND more trees in the community!

When these saplings are of sufficient size, they will go to families for planting.



14

LIFE BELOW WATER

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Aquaculture expands around Grepen Center in Gros Morne

The Grepen Center raises and sells Tilapia and Carp from its fish basins like the one below. Agronomists promote aquaculture and will give their assistance to those who have adequate land and access to water and who would like to build their own fish basin from local materials.



Mr. Jean Desnor, Jesus-Mary School co-founder (striped shirt) and Mr. Claude Etienne have fish ponds from which the school buys fish. Here Mr. Desnor stands next to a bowl of fish that these women will prepare for the students' lunch.



15LIFE
ON LAND**Goal 15: Protect, restore and ... sustainably manage forests, ... halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.****Reforestation - Jean Marie Vincent Forest Pilot Project**

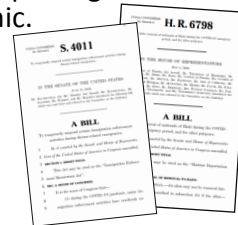
In 1999, there were few trees on Tèt Mòn mountain near Gros Morne and soil erosion was a big problem in the area. **The Montfortain Fathers**, supported by the **Quixote Center**, began this reforestation pilot project to combat the erosion, restore the forest, and serve as a model for reforestation in Haiti.

The success of this project shows local residents that the land degradation caused by cutting down trees, can be reversed and the environment restored. Now there is a large forest of over 200,000 trees! Today song birds have returned to Tèt Mòn and from the trees hangs this new sign for the Jean Marie Vincent Forest.

**16**PEACE, JUSTICE
and STRONG
INSTITUTIONS**Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies ..., provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.****WILL YOU JOIN US in demanding that deportations to Haiti stop during COVID-19?**

Haitian migrants held in US "ICE" custody have an increased risk of contracting COVID-19 because of crowded and unsanitary conditions in the jails and detention centers where they are held awaiting deportation. Carissa Etienne, head of the *Pan American Health Organization* warns, "There is real danger of a large-scale outbreak followed by a humanitarian crisis." There have been 10 flights from the U.S. deporting Haitians and spreading the virus to Haiti, whose healthcare system is unprepared for the pandemic.

The Religious of Jesus and Mary and other partners have written U.S. government officials. Senator Edward Markey has introduced the Immigration Enforcement Moratorium Act, Senate Bill 4011, and Congresswomen Frederica Wilson and Veronica Escobar have introduced a companion bill, House of Representatives Bill 6798.

**Won't you please join us in supporting the Immigration Enforcement Moratorium Act?**

Go to: <https://quixotecenter.salsalabs.org/supporttheimmigrationenforcementmoratoriumactnow>.

17PARTNERSHIPS
FOR THE
GOALS**Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development****The RJM Haiti Mission wishes to thank donors, volunteers and partners**

ALL our individual donors

Our many volunteers including:

"Timi" Ajayi, Quest-Haiti**Paloma Peñas Dendariana**,
Entreculturas**Brittany Galvin**, former
Quest-Haiti**Gail Grady**, MBB**Michele Hartigan****Geri Lanham**, former
Quest-Haiti**Claudia Macha**, Entreculturas**Vivian Niestrom**, Quest-Haiti**Sr. Bridget O'Driscoll**, OP**Sophia Pasqual**, Quest-Haiti**Breda Sammon**, Viatores Christi**Sr. Jill Weber**, RSM, MFOH

Our partnering organizations:

Allegheny Franciscans**Diocese of Gonaives****Entreculturas****Gwynedd Mercy University,****Capstone biology class****Food for the Poor****Haiti Connection at EIU****Haitian Ministry of Health****Hens for Haiti****Juntos Mejor****Maryknoll Lay Missioners****Mercy Beyond Borders (MBB)****Mercy Focus on Haiti, (Sisters of Mercy
of the Americas) (MFOH)****St. Damien/St. Luke's Hospitals,**
Port-au-Prince**St. Jude's Parish, Chattanooga****Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (Kentucky)****Solèy Haiti****The Haiti Project****University College of Dublin Volunteers
Overseas****University of Notre Dame, ACE Program****Viatores Christi****Quixote Center**, and many others!**Mèsi Anpil!" "Thank You!" because this work is not possible without you!**

UPDATE on Situation in Haiti

By Geri Lanham in Gros Morne

Living life during a pandemic is a challenge. As with all of the daily compounding challenges that they face, the people of Gros Morne are responding to this new pandemic challenge with their characteristic strength of will. After more than 5 months at home, students began a staggered return to the classrooms of Gros Morne in mid-August. The latest academic calendar calls for about 50 days of instruction, to somehow cobble together what the students have missed after more than 100 days out of the classroom, and then final exams in mid-October. Then students are scheduled to have a few weeks reprieve before returning to school for the 2020/21 academic year in early November. It is by no means a perfect, or even adequate, system, but people are managing as best they can. While the students were out of the classroom, Lekòl Jezi-Mari and St. Gabriel's School made sure to keep their students engaged by broadcasting lessons on local radio stations (story page 3).

Public handwashing stations remain well-utilized, and schools that did not previously have them, rigged up their own handwashing stations in preparation for the return to school. People wear masks when required in order to enter schools, banks, and churches, but mask-wearing in the local open air market and on the streets in general has been sporadic. Churches officially reopened in mid-July, but funerals have been held throughout the pandemic, it seems with increasing frequency. Many people have had coronavirus symptoms, but testing capacity to confirm whether they actually have Covid-19 is lacking. There is a natural tea that seems to providing people with relief from the symptoms, which is how the majority are coping with illness.

Economic activity remained stagnant during the early months of the pandemic, but thanks to partners like **Quixote Center** and **Mercy Focus on Haiti**, the Grepen agronomy team was able to purchase seeds to help farmers in all 8 of the communal sections plant during the spring season (story page 2). This vital support enabled the farmers to have hope amidst all of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic. If they can pull off a successful harvest, they will be in a much better position to send their children back to school. The borders of Haiti reopened at the end of July, but the exchange rate has ballooned to an abysmal 120 HTG to 1 USD. As salaries remain fixed, families struggle to respond to their decreasing purchasing power. Basic provisions of rice, beans, and oil for a family of 6 for a month now cost the equivalent of \$50 USD, which is unsustainable for the majority of families.

QUEST—Volunteers for Haiti

For APPLICATION or QUESTIONS:

Visit: www.rjmusa.org, or contact:

Sr. Rita Ricker, RJM
rricker@rjmusa.org

Choose between two QUEST service opportunities:

One-Month Volunteer

Be a Summer Camp Counselor at Kan Klodin (Creole for "Camp Claudine") which runs the month of July, for about 300 elementary school children.

Yearlong Volunteer

Be a yearlong volunteer from September to August, changing lives by working in a wide range of ministry areas including: Education, Agriculture, Technology, and Economic Development.

Pictures available at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/RJM-Haiti/157881924310644>

People respond to all of these challenges as best they can, and try to provide for their families amidst these uncertain times.



**Haiti Mission Fund
donations
are tax-deductible**

Donate online at www.rjmusa.org, click on "Support us" above green bar, select "Donate Online" and fill in info., select "RJM Haiti Fund" as designation.

Donate by check payable to "Religious of Jesus and Mary" with "Haiti Fund" on the memo line, and mail to:

**Haiti Mission Fund
c/o Religious of Jesus and Mary
821 Varnum Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017**