



Contact Us

Please reach out to us to learn about specific ways you can contribute to the transformation of Baitoa.

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PROJECT HEARTS

Drinking water. Living water.

2020 Impact Report



Letter from the Executive Director

“This isn’t a poor person’s house.”

A few years ago a construction foreman told me this in response to the design of a house we were planning to build for a needy family. What he said nagged at me. I had to ask myself, “*Why can’t a poor person have a nice house? Why do we offer the poor the bare minimum — small houses, used clothes, food & toys they wouldn’t choose for themselves — and then expect them to be overly grateful?*” I thought of the terrible conditions this particular family was living in, and wondered if they deserved that more than a decent house. The answer is no, no one does.

Most families in Baitoa are born into poverty that has been passed down for many generations. Parents don’t teach their children how to work their way to economic stability, because they themselves don’t know. Even for those who are determined to change their circumstances, education & work opportunities here are very limited.

The three-month quarantine we experienced this year made me grateful to have things that I once took for granted. Being stuck at home isn’t so bad when your house has running water, constant electricity, sufficient food, and enough rooms for everyone who lives there. I used to think such comforts were a standard part of life. Living in Baitoa has shown me that these are actually privileges which many people in the world don’t have.

Project Hearts believes everyone deserves to live with dignity, so we are working to exchange the cycle of poverty that exists in Baitoa for a cycle of empowerment. Rather than limiting what resources the poor have access to, we are using our privilege to lift up others by offering them the wisdom and tools that will allow them to alter the future, for themselves and their decedents to come.

We hope that as you read through this impact report you will be moved to partner with us in helping residents of Baitoa transform their own lives & communities.



Marissa
Marissa Doiron
Executive Director

Vision

Baitoa is **physically healthy**,
emotionally healthy,
and **economically healthy**,
offering citizens
a **high quality of life**.



Mission

We educate the people of Baitoa, D.R. in the areas of physical & emotional health so they have the knowledge & resources needed to transform their own communities.

Challenges in Baitoa



Baitoa is a rural municipality located in the north of the Dominican Republic with a population of approximately 15,000 people.

Due to its poor economic prospects, Baitoa still lacks many social services & basic infrastructure, like quality education, sufficient employment, healthy recreational options, accessible medical resources, running water, wastewater treatment, and garbage & recycling management.

Residents of Baitoa have much to offer, but few outlets to do so. For this reason many families are often not only entrenched in a cycle of poverty, but a cycle of idleness.



Theory of Change

STABLE
Physical Health
no thirst • no hunger • illness prevention



COMPLETE
Emotional Health
identity • confidence • service



IMPROVED
Economic Health
pursue education • obtain job skills



Sustainably Developed Communities

Our Programs

At the beginning of the year our staff conducted an inventory of their interests and talents. The results motivated us to restructure how we define our programs in order to ensure that our team's unique gifts are being fully utilized.

Along with new titles, each employee received greater responsibility for the areas of work that most align with their personal passions. There is still much overlap between programs, though, meaning that our staff work collaboratively with each other, as well as with community leaders, to achieve goals.

This slight shift has made us more effective in our approach to having a transformative impact on the communities and individuals that make up Baitoa.

Our impact numbers aren't as high as the goals we set for ourselves in January because we had to cease most operations for a few months due to the coronavirus.

We're still proud of the work we've done, and how we've been able to educate, encourage, and empower people during these unexpectedly challenging times. We invite you to celebrate these accomplishments with us as you read through the highlights of our 2020 impact.



Community Learning



Juana Rodriguez
Coordinator of
Community
Learning

Juana

As with much of the work of Project Hearts, the primary goal of this program is to prevent unhealthy situations for individuals and families. Doing so allows them to focus on attaining positive goals rather than merely surviving day to day. Most of the challenging situations we observe here are the result of a lack of knowledge and guidance, which is why we believe education for residents of all ages is crucial to ensuring that everyone is physically, emotionally, and financially healthy.

By training leaders in Baitoa, knowledge is multiplied in each community. If we can help people prevent problems — especially health conditions — we will save them time & money, while keeping them from missing work, stressing, and suffering unnecessarily. In some cases, our leaders are literally saving lives.



Program Objectives

- Improve the overall conditions of individuals, families and communities in Baitoa
- Empower women
- Prevent illnesses & other unhealthy situations before they occur

Our Approach










- Educate & train women as Community Health Leaders
- Encourage & support CHLs as they teach & serve their neighbors, families, and communities
- Conduct educational presentations in schools and community groups



Community Learning

2020 Impact Highlights



-  **25 adults** in San Jose Afuera learned about mental health
-  **35 people** in Yabanal learned about nutrition
-  **9 women** graduated as Community Health Leaders
-  **10 women** commenced the CHL course
-  **40 children** and 3 professors in La Lima participated in interactive W.A.S.H. workshops
-  **9 Bible studies** were held in Mocan Campana with nearly 15 residents participating (even a few men, which is rare!)
-  A **CHL graduate led a presentation** on hygiene at the school in her community, Los Peladeros
-  Many residents learned the **truth about COVID-19** and how to prevent contracting it, through in-person & virtual presentations
-  **44 videos** on a variety of topics were recorded by our staff and posted on our social networks—we even reached someone in Peru!

Santa, Project Hearts' accountant, lives in the community of San José Adentro, and has always had a heart for serving others. If someone in her community gets into an accident and needs to have wounds cared for, they often seek out Santa for help, rather than having to pay \$30-\$40 at the hospital. But Santa said that since one of her neighbors, Miguelina, graduated from the Community Health Leadership program, people are no longer coming to her for healing. Instead, when someone has health concerns, they will turn to Miguelina for advice and basic treatment. And Santa couldn't be happier that her community has Miguelina looking out for their health and well-being.

Personal Impact

“ In January 2020 I graduated as a Community Health Leader, and from then on I have assumed the duty and commitment to continue to educate myself in order to help others.

Now I am playing an active role in caring for my neighbors, including treating two patients daily [cleaning wounds & changing bandages], giving [penicillin] injections, taking blood pressure, and accompanying the patients to the doctor. ”

● **Miguelina**
Community of
San Jose Adentro



Holistic Well-being



Carmen Filpo

Coordinator of
Holistic Well-being

Carmen

As a behavior specialist with Project Hearts, I have the opportunity and joy to open my heart to those who have the courage to seek help with whatever challenges they are facing in life. People approaching me for counseling almost always express that in their childhood they did not experience the love and acceptance they needed. Most of the behavioral problems I witness, whether in kids or adults, are manifestations of not feeling loved by their parents. I am more than a psychologist for my patients; I am the home where they find shelter and, above all, the validation and love that they did not have growing up.

With support, people with behavioral problems and mental disorders can find stability & peace. This also allows them to achieve positive change in their families, breaking the cycle of hurt that is so prevalent in Baitoa.



Program Objectives

- Contribute to a society in Baitoa that is characterized by peace, love, and confidence
- Men, women, children, youth, and families have values and live in harmony with each other because they've received the forgiveness and healing of Jesus Christ







Our Approach




- Teach people the skills needed to live in a way that is mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually healthy
- Lead educational group presentations on a variety of mental health topics
- Provide one-on-one counseling to individuals, couples, and families

Holistic Well-Being

2020 Impact Highlights

-  More than **70 people** attended well-being workshops
-  **35 individuals** received tele-therapy
-  **17 couples & families** received counseling sessions
-  **4 children & youth** with behavioral issues were given skills & encouragement to support them



-  **25 visits** to sick or injured individuals
-  **36 home visits** to families going through difficult times
-  **18 grieving families** were comforted during funerals

“ I felt like an empty woman. I did not find meaning in life, to the point where I thought of taking my life. I didn’t trust telling anyone because I believed they would laugh at me, so I suffered in silence. But someone mentioned Project Hearts to me, so I sought their help. There I found beautiful people who opened their hearts to me. They taught me that I am a very special person, and that I can achieve whatever I set my mind to with Jesus as my center. I discovered a safe space where I can express myself and feel the confidence that there are people who love me and value me despite my weaknesses.



As a result, I’ve seen many changes in my life and in my family. Now I’m looking for a way to get closer to my daughters. We’ve already started being more playful and showing each other affection.”

● **Saulia** | Community of San Jose Afuera

Personal Impact

Recently our staff began hearing gossip about Saulia & her two older daughters, and how tumultuous their relationship was. When her oldest daughter, only 15 years old, moved out to live with her boyfriend, Saulia finally reached out to us for help. We developed a plan: once a week Saulia and her other teenage daughter, who was talking about following her sister’s example, would come to our office to receive counseling with Carmen, and academic tutoring with Issa. They’ve only had a few meetings so far, but we’ve already seen transformation in both women! Hopefully Saulia’s newborn will now grow up in a changed, healthy family.

Social Impact



Manuel Perez
Coordinator of

Manuel

This program has impacted the lives of many individuals, considerably improving their quality of life. Some have received investments that will allow them to provide financially for their families, others received decent houses to provide safe shelter for their children, and others received food for their livelihood.

Many families in Baitoa live in extremely impoverished conditions, and when I see these situations my heart breaks. But providing solutions to these cases fills me with joy and satisfaction.

I want my neighbors to be able to lead decent and stable lives, and I believe that helping the most vulnerable residents of Baitoa to have homes and food can change the standard of living in the community.



Program Objectives

- Empower families by helping them to stabilize their lives
- Individuals, families, and communities have the opportunity to develop themselves so later they can flourish on their own













Our Approach

- Be a consistent presence in the communities of Baitoa, listening to and understanding the issues being faced
- Provide unconditional physical and emotional support to families during their times of greatest need

Social Impact

2020 Impact Highlights

-  **7 houses painted** by volunteers, bringing new life to homes just before quarantine when families were required to stay in their houses
-  **3 water tanks & filters** donated
-  **1 house constructed** for a mother of three with nowhere to live
-  **7 families** received monthly bags of food or medicine
-  **30 families — including 19 Haitian families** — were given bags of food in response to the COVID-19 outbreak
-  More than **350 bags of food** were distributed in total
-  1 woman opened a restaurant to support her family
-  **7 blind students** had a day of fun sponsored
-  Baitoa's boys volleyball team was given **uniforms**
-  Redistributed **clothes, socks, toys, medicine, and adult diapers** whenever they were donated to us



“My situation was not the best. My economic condition, my house, my business. I wanted to sustain my family, but I earned so little that it was difficult. I knew fixing my house was impossible.

After Project Hearts knocked on my door, my mentality began to change and I began to see a different light.

My dream of growing my business — Project Hearts made it come true. And the calm I feel of knowing I'll have a new house soon, one that will be safe for my family, I already thank God and Project Hearts.”

• Josefina | Community of La Jagua de Baitoa

Personal Impact

We met Josefina when a community leader requested help to construct her a bathroom. Our staff visited Josefina at home to evaluate the actual need, and we knew we had to do more than just install a bathroom. Josefina's family of ten lives in a two-room shack with no bathroom. In addition to helping her with a new house, we wanted to empower Josefina to provide long-term stability for her family. Josefina cooked snacks from her home, so we proposed expanding the business. She loved the idea. After only a month, Josefina's restaurant is already sustaining itself, and our staff can testify that her food is delicious!



W.A.S.H. Initiatives

(Water access, Sanitation & Hygiene)



Through my work with the W.A.S.H. Program I have been able to give families permanent access to safe, clean, and purified water, which provides them with more comfort and better health.

Many of these families did not previously have direct access to water in their homes, and had to carry it long distances, either from other homes or from streams, or they had to buy water from companies that transport it from rivers in large trucks.

Now people are able to store and purify water in their own homes, restoring their dignity, saving them money, and improving their overall quality of life.

Manuela Saviñon

Coordinator of
Water Initiatives

Program Objectives

- Increase direct access to water
- Improve general health
- Decrease amount of money spent on water

Our Approach





- Facilitate access to water storage systems (tanks)
- Facilitate access to water purification systems (filters)
- Educate residents about W.A.S.H. topics and how they impact health





W.A.S.H. Initiatives

2020 Impact Highlights



-  **7 water filters** distributed, giving 26 individuals access to affordable, clean drinking water
-  **67 water tanks** installed, allowing 219 people to store sufficient quantities of water to use at home
-  **\$4,734 (USD) reinvested** in families via discounts on filters & tanks
-  Actively pursuing construction of a community cistern & well for an area that only receives water service every couple of months; this included visiting a group in another province who does similar work

 **40 children** and 3 professors participated in interactive W.A.S.H. workshops

 **8 hand-washing stations** were donated to various stores and medical facilities throughout Baitoa in response to COVID-19 & in partnership with another W.A.S.H. organization



“ We used to have to buy water from a neighbor in order to fill the two small barrels where we stored water, but with four of us, that would run out quickly. We also bought botellones [5-gallon bottles of purified water] in order to have clean water to drink.

I'm very grateful to have received a tinaco [water tank] and filter this year. Now when it rains, we can collect & store large quantities of water in the tank, and it lasts our family a long time. My family no longer has to struggle to buy or fetch water, and we are more comfortable and in better health.”

• **Águeda** | Community of Mocan Abajo



Personal Impact

Donating a water tank to Águeda was special for us because her son, Rahdames, works for the W.A.S.H. Program. We first met Rahdames in February 2019 when a volunteer team was serving at the elementary school in Mocan Abajo. Rahdames earned a little cash by collecting

buckets of water for the school from a nearby stream. At the time, the school didn't have any direct water access because both their pump & gutters needed replacing. Our volunteers fixed those problems, which was a blessing for the school, but left Rahdames jobless. We saw what a hard worker he was, so we hired him to install water tanks for us! In January 2020, we were looking for qualifying families to receive a tank donation from a volunteer team. One of our Community Health Leaders suggested Águeda's family. We've seen the impact it's made, so we're glad she did!



Future Hopes

If 2020 taught us anything, it's that our plans can be unraveled so easily. For that reason we haven't set any specific goals yet for 2021, but we have been imagining what Baitoa still needs in order to be healthy physically, emotionally, and financially:

- Sufficient employment opportunities
- Indoor running water 24/7
- A mental health services center
- Youth continuing their education after high school
- Both women & men involved in family planning
- Professional care for young children & the elderly
- Improved general health care
- More recreational options, so fewer youth are idle or turning to vices to fill their time

Next year we hope to continue the work that already has a proven impact on Baitoa, while we expand our focus to other needs we believe are urgent:

- Menstrual health education for teenage girls
- Sex education for all youth, with the goal of preventing unwanted pregnancies
- Mental health education for community groups & personal counseling services for individuals & families
- Construction of at least two more houses for vulnerable families

How to Partner with Us

VOLUNTEER

The unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic means we are not sure when we can safely host volunteer teams again. If you would like to use your talents to serve Baitoa from a distance, though, please get in touch with us!

SPREAD THE WORD

Please tell your friends, family, and other connections about the good work we're doing. As our network of friends & supporters grows, so does our impact on the Dominican Republic!

DONATE

If you have a passion for one of our impact areas, we would be eternally grateful for your financial support! We're also especially appreciative of general donations — they allow us to respond immediately to unexpected & urgent needs, such as the coronavirus.

The education & empowerment we offer is passed along from generation to generation. This means that even a small investment in our work will have long-lasting impacts on Baitoa.

Monetary donations can be made online:
www.heartsdr.org

Mail checks to our U.S. fiscal sponsor:
GRACE Cares, Inc.
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Brattleboro, VT 05301

