

## The Alexis House Progresses



### Day 43 of Construction

The Construction of the new home for the Alexis family is progressing slowly but surely. We are all eager for its completion so that they can move in.

## Inflation Slams Haiti

Inflation is bringing great hardship to the people of Fond Doux. Over the last 20 months the dollar has doubled in value against the Haitian gourde. Because Haiti imports much of its food from the United States and import prices are in dollars, the cost of food has significantly increased hitting the poor (the vast majority of the country) very hard. Until we can do something more dramatic, we have been making some emergency food distributions for the poorest of the poor. We do not think that this is the answer, however. It is clear that producing more of the nation's food in the country would be a great benefit for the people and could reduce the toll of inflation. The Foundation has a goal of improving nutrition through better agriculture and animal husbandry. So far, our efforts have been in improving care of goats, chickens and pigs. We are also planning on using part of our new land for community gardens. We will keep you posted.

## Gang Violence Continues

Recently Partners in Health, the organization that runs the hospital in Mirabalais, wrote to their supporters, "Our team and the communities we serve are facing widespread, unpredictable violence. . . . Gang activity has turned cities and towns into active conflict zones, where daily threats are indiscriminate. The resulting assaults on daily life and movements are beyond anything we've seen in nearly four decades."

## Angela Lewis Visits the Clinic

On March 16<sup>th</sup> Angela Lewis of Edmund, Oklahoma visited the Fond Doux Clinic. She bypassed the gangs by going through Les Cayes. She is the sponsor of the pregnancy program run by Michaelle Sainatus at the clinic. Angela brought and donated a few supplies for the clinic as well as observed the program.



### A Few Clinic Supplies: Bandages, Masks, etc.

Several of the women in the pregnancy program gave birth recently. The babies were all born at home not at the clinic or hospital. The program enrolls pregnant women to monitor their pregnancy and provide sufficient nutrition and education for healthy babies.

## Staff Illnesses

The Fond Doux Community Clinic has had two significant staff illnesses this past month. Our regular nurse Myrdred Kaminski Delva has not been able to return to work yet after her 2 months planned medical leave. The leave has been indefinitely extended. She has been on leave for 4 months. We wish her well with her treatments and we hope for a good recovery soon. Fortunately for the clinic we have a competent replacement during her recuperation, Valarie Delva, Myrdred's sister, better known as Vava. She has been in the clinic since the beginning of January.

Meanwhile Christella Sylvestre, our community health worker, was hospitalized this past month and remains unable to return to work. Follow up on home care and emergency first aid care for the community remain interrupted during her illness. We ask for your prayers for the recovery of these two important staff members of the Fond Doux Foundation.

## Fond Doux Flyer May 2023

### Meet Poko Marise PAULO



**Poko Marise Paulo**

My name is Marise Paulo.

I was born here at FOND DOUX. My mother and father are from here. We were living here and I met a man here and I married here. And then, I stayed. I am blind. I woke up one morning and I don't see anything at all.

I have six children, but they are not responsible for themselves yet, even if one of them has a child. They are all living here with me.

The first one is 26 years old, Ysna woodine Richard. The second is Johnblow Richard; he is 24 years old, because I had them every two years. The third is Estemalie Richard. She is 22 years old. After that I have John Dieugo (Richard). He is 20 years old. I have Jenny Richard. She is 17, because I had one before her who died. Afterwards I have Felancka Richard. She is 9 years old. And she is the last one. Altogether I had 10 children but only 6 are still living.

Before I was blind, I could read and write. I went to the "Wesleyenne school" in FOND DOUX. After that I went to another school "KAY ISTWA." It's a school that has a

mission. That's why they moved me to go to it. At that school, I finished 6th grade. Then I went to another school called "Etzer Vilaire" where I was in 7th grade, and the next year the 8th grade also. And I stopped after the 8th grade. After that I was responsible for myself.

I am Christian. Since I was little girl I was in the "Wesleyenne school." It's a Christian School. They don't accept students who don't go to church. And the school I went after was "The Way." That's was my motivation to go to church regularly. And the man who is my husband, he is a pastor of a church.

My husband is Jean Richard.

I heard about the Fond Doux Foundation previously. But I didn't know that you were the one responsible for it. I can say now from this interview that If I had known before that you were the executive director, I would have talked to you earlier. They always say, "A person who deserves doesn't ask." But there are some needs you have, you should ask, because people do not always know if you are in need. . .

I feel good now, but last night I had a bellyache. When I don't feel this pain, I feel another one. I was sick in my feet. It was really bad, from my belt to my toes. I spent a month in a hospital. My body was giving off a lot of water. I had a very bad smell. People couldn't spend a lot of time next to me. My feet were rotting. I couldn't even wear clothes. In the morning when the nurses came to bandage me, they had to take off the blankets, because they were all wet. And now my feet are getting bad again.



**Her Affected Foot**



## Fond Doux Flyer May 2023

And you see my feet are sick now. I would already have liked to have gone to the hospital in Fond des Nègres because that is the hospital to which I always go. When I spent a month at the hospital, we spent all the money that we have. My husband spent a lot of money. He spent 1400 Haitian dollars every week. When we left the hospital, we were asked for 6000 Haitian dollars more. I don't have good health now. I always have a pain. And I sometimes cannot sleep at night because of the pain. You know, I am also blind right now.

It happened in 2018, I just woke up with a headache one morning. It was a very hard headache. And every time I put my head down, I saw dark. And I said to my husband, "I can't see well."

He said to me, "How come? What's happening?"

I said, "I don't see well, I can't understand what's happening" The next day. I didn't see anything at all.

I told him, "Today, I can't see anything."

I went to the hospital, but nothing changed.

My family asked me, "Go out with me."

I said, "NO, I don't want that." I mean to go see a voodoo priest (a witch doctor).

Yes, I didn't want to pass in that way. And I stayed in prayer. There was a time that I was seeing a little bit. Sometimes, I would see my sandals on the ground. I saw my basket. I saw when the day came. And my husband introduced me to the church to say how I was feeling. I saw the light inside the church. I testified, saying, I see the benches, I see the music players. Three days later, my eyes got blind again. And until now, I have never seen again.

They referred me to the hospital. They put a lot of medicines in my eyes.

I was going to the "Methodist Clinic." They told me the blood pressure in my eyes was high. I didn't want to have surgery quickly. That is until now. I stay like this, putting medications in my eyes.

A nurse gave them to me.

They said to me that I should keep putting the medications in my eyes for 3 months. After this period, I should go back. But that was when the country was blocked and I didn't go. There is a car that always comes to pick me up from here to go to the hospital. But with the blockade, the car had a problem. And I couldn't do anything. But, they told me to keep putting the

medications in my eyes. My husband went looking for these medications, but he couldn't find them. He went to Port-au-Prince to find some, very expensive! And he bought them. . . But the medications are all gone now. Actually, I have another quality of medication. When I put it in my eyes, it stings to clean my eyes.

When someone shares with me, I can take care of the children. Sometimes we wake up and we don't have anything to eat. My kids ask. "What are we going to do, mom?" I say, "Wait, maybe God can send someone on our way." Sometimes I put my pot boiling without knowing what I am going to cook. My children say, "Why you do that, mom? We don't have food here." I say. "I do it with faith. Someone will bring something for me today." And sometimes they do come. They just come to share what he/she has with me! I can't ever say.

After my faith in God, we're all on the charge of my husband. He pays for school and doing everything puts food in the house. . .

My life becomes more difficult because my husband used to give me money to do a little business. I used to be able to help the family with that, but now I can't do any business any more. If I could find a little help for myself especially, that could help my husband and the children as well. That would go better for us. Sometimes I want to cry, especially when I want to do something and my health doesn't allow me to. And I know I could do it before. So, I can say. It's God who keeps me breathing until now. I see I could have died already. But God keeps me alive.

Sometimes, I sit down talking with the kids. We're joking, having a good time. Someone can pass by, but they don't even know that I am blind. You're the first person that I tell that I am blind. I don't share that with too many people.

Yes, I can comb my girl's hair. I am experienced. That's why I said that not all of the people know I can't see.

I wash clothes too.

Yes, and I clean fish when we're cooking because I did that well before I became blind. I just check every part with my hands. And when I am washing, I just tell my children to verify. I can wash blankets too. When I am washing blankets, the first part that I wash I tie it; so, I am not confused. Then I follow with the rest.

Only, the others don't want me to cook because of the fire.

## Fond Doux Flyer May 2023

The church is in the yard. I just keep along the wall while I am walking. When I arrive at the door, I know to enter. Sometimes I get lost. When I leave the wall, I walk with my chair. I carry the chair in front of me to avoid me hitting anything. The chair can hit something before me. Then I stop walking.

So, to finish about a person's hair, sometimes they say, oh, it's not me who did it. And sometimes people have doubt that I cannot see, because I trace the lines very well in the hair.

I have several children who are at school. I have two of them who have finished classical school, but they don't learn anything else. It's a financial problem. They used to go to school. Money for taxi every day is hard; it's a problem. It's difficult. Actually, I have two of them who go to school in Miragoâne now.

I have to pay a taxi every day for them. But sometimes they don't go because we don't have money to pay the taxi fees. I told them today that they can't go. Sometimes they get their uniforms on and they ask me for money to pay for the taxi. I say. "Sorry I don't have any." And they just stay here.

**Emile MACEUS:** I can say you are a courageous woman. I really appreciate that. Thank you so much for your answers

I wish you a good evening, May God be with you.

**Marise:** Ok, thank you. You too.

*Poko Marise Paulo was interviewed by the executive director of the FOND DOUX FOUNDATION, Emile MACEUS in March of 2023. The article has been edited and is a somewhat shortened form of her story. She represents many people in Fond Doux that have suffered from inadequate health care and have an uncertain future because of it. The Fond Doux Clinic was formed to help people like Marise Paulo.*

### Improvements at the Clinic

The Haitian Clinic Committee recently appointed Dady Pierre to oversee the hiring of a lab technician to run the new laboratory and oversee the necessary improvements to the room to house it. Jeanol Vertus, Wilnor Charlemagne and Eluard Louis were instructed to oversee the construction of a toilet facility. Jeanol Vertus will also see that a new sign is erected. The board has authorized these improvements to begin as soon as a new lease agreement has been signed.

### in Memoriam



**Charmante Argentine**

Charmante Argentine, the grandmother of our Executive Director Emile Maceus, and also the grandmother of one of our reporters, Venelson Vitelus, recently died. She was a sometimes recipient of food from the Foundation during her recent illness. She is survived by at least two daughters Marie Jeanine Vitelus and Greta Louis Jean as well as at least 10 grandchildren and a host of friends. The Foundation extends condolences to the bereaved.

### Visit to Fond Doux Planned

Jim Johnson, Brent Engel and Linda Mitchel are hoping to visit Fond Doux to inspect the clinic improvements, plan the layout of new facilities on the land recently purchased by the Foundation and meet with Haitian Staff and committee members. A date has not yet been set, nor has it been decided who will actually go.

### “SO LITTLE CAN DO SO MUCH”

To learn about our projects or to donate, you may contact the Foundation in a number of ways:

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The Fond Doux Foundation engages friend-to-friend with people in and around the village of Fond Doux, Haiti, helping to provide better access to medical care and health education, improved nutrition through agriculture and animal husbandry, educational scholarships, and intercultural faith-based activities. FDF is a 501(c)3 organization based in Durham, North Carolina.