

By Freda Catheus and Brian Stevens
Ti Palmis, Lagonav –

Life in rural Haiti can be punishing, perhaps no more so than in the remote corners of Lagonav, a 287-square mile island that is less than 45 miles from the capital, Port-au-Prince.

Lagonav is home to roughly 80,000 who, for the most part, make their living from subsistence farming, livestock or small-scale commerce. Many are among Haiti's poorest, getting by on less than \$1.25 U.S. a day.

Reaching The Very Poorest

"Development programs can often help a community advance and yet leave behind the very poorest," said David Diggs, Beyond Borders' Executive Director. "These are precisely the people we want to reach."

To do so, Beyond Borders is investing in an approach proven to help the very poorest families lift themselves out of extreme poverty and stay out.

Known as the Graduation Model, the asset-building approach was pioneered in Bangladesh and first introduced to Haiti in 2008 by Fonkoze, Haiti's largest micro-finance lender.

Carine Roenen, Executive Director of the Fonkoze Foundation, described the results as "quite amazing."

Fonkoze's implementation of the model with 150 women—97% of whom graduated—resulted in a 50% drop in hunger among participants. The number who also reported that all or most of their children were regularly attending school increased too—from 27% to 70%.



Beyond Borders is launching an initiative to lift the very poorest out of extreme poverty - using a model researchers writing in the journal *Science* found had "large and lasting impacts on the standard of living" of more than 20,000 participants in six countries.

SIX STEPS TO 'GRADUATION' IN 18 MONTHS

The Graduation Model includes six components proven to help people lift themselves out of extreme poverty. They are:

- **Assets** to make a living with, for example goats, mules or other livestock, or goods to start an informal store.
- **Training** on how to manage the new assets.
- **Initial cash** support to reduce the need to sell the new asset in an emergency.
- Weekly **coaching** visits to reinforce skills, build confidence and help participants handle any challenges.
- **Health** education and access to healthcare to stay healthy and able to work.
- A **savings account** to help save money to invest or use in a future emergency.

Source: Innovations for Poverty Action

Proven, Lasting Results

Researchers writing in the journal *Science* this May found "large and lasting impacts on the standard of living" of participants as well, after testing the model in six other countries with 21,000 people over a three-year period.

"Not only is it effective, but it represents a significant return on investment," said Kate McKee of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor in Washington, DC.

CGAP researchers found that for every dollar spent on the program in India, for example, ultra-poor households saw \$4.33 in long-term benefits.

Beyond Borders will launch the

program with 80 of the most destitute families in four communities on Lagonav.

Each will have a choice of two income-generating assets – typically livestock like goats or mules.

Weekly meetings will provide ongoing training and support. Also included are free veterinary services and access to medical care.

Additional investments include basic home repairs, the construction of latrines, life-skills training, and for the first six-months, participants will receive a cash subsidy of \$6 U.S. per week.

A Relational, Comprehensive Approach

"What is special about the Graduation Model is the close accompaniment, the really human relationship aspect of it," Fonkoze's Roenen said. "I think it is absolutely essential for success."

Many of those selected are isolated from their community, in part because of their extreme poverty.

"They really feel alone," Roenen said, "so you need the close accompaniment and relationship building. It's not just you give someone a goat and then everything is going to be o.k."

The emphasis on accompaniment and building relationships, Roenen said, makes Beyond Borders uniquely qualified to introduce the model.

"I think it fits well with Beyond Borders' ethic and the way you intervene in communities," she said. ✕