Women and Livestock Farming: A New Paradigm

Last Fall, GHA President & CEO, Robin Davis traveled to Darbonne, Haiti to the GHA goat park to observe the monthly goat farmer training. Robin was able to meet and speak with some of the 12 women being trained and hear a little about their lives.

Increasingly, women in Haiti are seeking to achieve self-stability by participating in effective economic development programs. Services such as the GHA Goat Program provide additional income for their families.

Most of the women who participated in the training were from the 8th section of Leogane Commune, called Beausejour, an extremely remote and mountainous region of the country. Because of the limited options for transportation from Beausejour, many had left their homes between 2 and 3 a.m. in order to reach Darbonne by foot.

Marie Heureuse was, at 57, the oldest of the women being trained. A widow, Marie Heureuse helps support her four children (ages 17 to 28) with small scale farming. She earns approximately $1.67 per day from the sale of her produce. Purchasing a breeding goat like the one she received as part of her participation in the GHA program would normally be beyond her means. Marie Heureuse is likely to invest a great deal of her time and energy in caring for her doe so that it will be profitable to her for years to come.

Most of the women in the class were in their forties, like Remose Brutus. Remose is 43, and has eight children between the ages of 4 and 20. Remose has some primary school education, and in addition to traditional farming, she raises chickens on her small plot of land. She was very excited to begin goat farming and said, “This goat can change my life”. She is likely to use the extra income from the sale of her goat offspring for school fees or to pay for medical expenses for her children. Because of her success raising chickens in the past, Remose’s livestock may over time grow to have a small herd of goats that would provide a significant increase in income to her family.

“This goat can change my life”
Remose Brutus, GHA goat farmer
From the President and CEO

Recently I spent time in Haiti with Global Health Action’s Haitian staff and program partners in the rural communities where we serve. I was struck by their dedication, even under the most difficult circumstances.

Working and living in Haiti has never been easy, but the resilience and determination of the people in rural communities is even more apparent since the 2010 earthquake. They strive for health and a better quality of life for their families. Organized by GHA’s health team in Haiti, I participated in a health and immunization clinic for pregnant women, parents, and their children. GHA’s health staff worked for hours in 98-degree heat, without air conditioning or fans, to immunize children and provide health assessments and treatment for more than 150 people that day. Parents traveled for miles to make sure their children were immunized against polio and other diseases. The health services that many of us take for granted where we live, are viewed as a special opportunity by families in rural Haiti.

Your encouragement and ongoing financial support for GHA make these program services and many others possible. The health of the world’s children is very important to us. Thank you for investing in a healthier world through GHA!

Robin C. Davis

China: Reaching Out to Rural Left-behind Children

You could hear the sounds of laughter and see the smiling faces of Funing County’s left-behind children meeting their college student friends and mentors for the first time in rural LuPu Township. This “Hand-in-Hand” effort is an integral part of the partnership program implemented by GHA, Nanjing International Training Center, Jiangsu Province Population and Family Planning Commission and our other local Chinese partners.

Through the “Hand-in-Hand” program, volunteer college students from the local Yancheng Normal College are paired with rural Chinese children to help provide encouragement and guidance as they go through the challenges of their teenage years in the absence of their parents, working in large cities. These local college students show it is possible to continue your education through high school and college. Local school teachers and health educators are providing adolescent health education and emotional support for these left-behind children. Recently, Jiangsu Province officials approved this successful partnership program for expansion into three additional rural counties. Community-based action projects to benefit the children and their communities are the next step for this program.

A “Hand in Hand” college volunteer working with local left-behind children.
GHA has recently undertaken a number of initiatives and research partnerships designed to strengthen and better support our programs in Haiti. Below is a description of their impact and applicability in-country.

**The University of Georgia**
GHA completed a survey-based evaluation of the Goat Program in partnership with researchers from the University of Georgia (UGA) to measure the effectiveness of the current program. GHA will now use the evaluation results in making informed decisions about the Goat Program going forward.

Based on these results, GHA will increase, for example, the percentage of women participating in the program. Other options to consider are if it is better for GHA to continue training individual goat farmers or to work with cooperatives to build a goat farm with a group of community residents. Cooperatives offer GHA the ability to provide not only agricultural skills, but to develop transferable skills such as financial and business management acumen.

**Children’s Nutrition Program of Haiti**
GHA’s new partnership with the Children’s Nutrition Program of Haiti (CNP) will explore joint program efforts that draws on each organization’s expertise in the Leogane area. CNP brings a wealth of experience in improving the health and development of Haitian children, particularly those suffering from malnutrition. Approximately 35 female CNP community nutrition workers live in the villages in which they work to provide preventive health care and education, therapeutic care, water and sanitation projects and to empower the women and communities as a whole to improve their conditions through grassroots organizing.

Already, GHA and CNP have launched a livestock training and management program for CNP’s women’s groups. This is a pilot initiative to test the effectiveness of a farmer cooperative/association model in livestock management and it capitalizes on GHA’s decades of experience in livestock farming.

**The University of Illinois, Chicago**
Globally, more than 520,000 newborns die from neonatal sepsis every year, and nearly all of these deaths occur in low-income countries. Infections originating in the umbilical cord (omphalitis) are the most likely cause of sepsis. Preventing omphalitis may prevent up to 244,400 neonatal deaths every year or 700 neonatal deaths every day.

A recent study in Pakistan found an incidence of 217 omphalitis cases per 1000 live births. While similar data are not available for Haiti, the high prevalence of home births in unsterile and even unclean conditions makes it likely that the incidence is equally high in this setting.
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Applying these rates to Haiti, an estimated 53,200 new cases of omphalitis would occur every year. Efforts to reduce omphalitis are urgently needed. This year, in conjunction with the University of Illinois, Chicago and the Methodist Church of Haiti, GHA began a pilot community campaign in a village in Petit-Goave.

This program is based on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) protocol for newborn care which is daily chlorhexidine 4% (topical antiseptic) application to the umbilical stump during the first week of life for newborns who are born at home in settings with high neonatal mortality. The campaign will focus on teaching the community clinic nurse, traditional birth attendants and community health workers the WHO’s newborn cord care protocol with the intent that each health worker will then instruct mothers on the protocol during routine care encounters (Susan Walsh, Clinical Instructor, College of Nursing, University of Illinois, Chicago).

“Applying these rates to Haiti, an estimated 53,200 new cases of omphalitis would occur every year. Efforts to reduce omphalitis are urgently needed.”

University of Illinois, Chicago study

GHA is currently seeking the approval of the Ministry of Health in Haiti and is working with UNICEF Haiti to secure chlorhexidine for use in the program. Stay tuned!

Workshop on Community-based Approaches for Women’s and Family Health

Robin Davis recently conducted a workshop for 19 leading international health officials. These officials from 16 countries were part of the International Visitor Leadership Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and was coordinated locally by the Georgia Council for International Visitors.

New GHA Board Member

Stan Moor, Community Outreach Coordinator and Philanthropy Class and Spanish Instructor at The Westminster Schools was elected to the Board last Fall. Stan will serve on the GHA Development Committee. Welcome, Stan!

Global Health Action
1902 Clairmont Road
Decatur, Georgia 30033
p: 404.634.5748
f 404.634.9685
email: gha@globalhealthaction.org
www.globalhealthaction.org