


Reports from the field

Answering THE CALL

March 2014



**The
Perils**

OF POVERTY



FOOD FOR THE POOR, INC.

Saving Lives... Transforming Communities... Renewing Hope

The House that Topped Down



*"I beg God for health and strength for my children. Day and night I cry for them."
— Jasmati, 41*



Living in extreme poverty means never being far from deadly hazards. Sometimes the most immediate hazard is the roof over your head. When your home is a patchwork of thin metal, rotting wood and plastic, it can literally topple down on you any time.

And that is exactly what happened early one morning in Parika, Guyana, to 13-year-old Ramon, who woke to the sound of wood breaking and crashing to the ground. Ramon's mother, Jasmati, frantically called out to him when she heard the wood cracking, but it was too late; the two were trapped inside the home, which collapsed on top of them.

With their stomachs pressed against the dirt floor, Ramon and Jasmati wiggled their way out of a narrow opening. They suffered some scrapes and bruises, but miraculously emerged from the flattened house without any major injuries.

Sadly, Ramon and Jasmati were forced to continue living in those treacherous conditions because they had nowhere else to go. With their clothes and other personal items messily strewn about among the rubble, some of their neighbors said their destroyed house was an eyesore, and wanted them to pack up their things and leave.

But some kind neighbors have been allowing Ramon and Jasmati to stay with them temporarily in return for Jasmati cleaning their home. However, this could end at any moment. Frail and visibly ill, Jasmati suffers from regular dizzy spells, and frequently is unable to keep down any food.

"I beg God for health and strength for my children," Jasmati said. "Day and night I cry for them. I get more sick."

Ramon has eight siblings between the ages of 6 and 22, but only Ramon is in his mother's care. The younger children are scattered in orphanages throughout Guyana because Jasmati was unable to care for them. Ramon had also been living in an orphanage but ran away to return to his mother.

Jasmati misses her children and wishes they could be back home with her, but her living conditions are just too dangerous. "I miss them telling stories and laughing in the nighttime," Jasmati said.

You can help families like Ramon's begin to rebuild their lives. With a safe and secure home, Jasmati can take those first crucial steps toward overcoming the perils of poverty. Please help deliver safety and security to poor families that urgently need your help. ♦

"For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven." (2 Corinthians 5:1)

Nothing to Eat, Nowhere to Go



Of all of poverty's perils, perhaps the most heartbreaking is the tragedy of children not having enough to eat. Just shy of 2 years old, bone-thin Romanico is living this tragedy.

High in the rugged, isolated mountains above Cuilco, Guatemala, Romanico's mother wipes away tears as she balances him on her lap. Romanico is severely malnourished. Chronic hunger has withered his body so severely, he isn't capable of supporting his tiny frame. His scrawny arms dangle loosely, and every inch of his spine can be seen through his bony, emaciated back.

"It hurts my heart, my heart is broken," said Aura, Romanico's mother.

It's been a hard road for this family. After Romanico's abusive father was sent to jail for stealing, they moved in with Aura's father. Sadly, he promptly turned on them and threw them out of the house — with a threat to kill them if they ever tried to return.

All of a sudden they were homeless.

"Why would my dad throw us out? I can't even go home to get my clothes or my kids' clothes," Aura said.

With nowhere to take her hungry children, Aura brought them to a local clinic to receive treatment. But they were forced to leave after several days.

The little family once again had nowhere to go, and nothing to eat.

Thankfully, a local woman named Cleotilda decided to take the family in for a few days, despite her husband's objections.

"Even though I'm poor I have compassion," said Cleotilda, who has two children of her own.

"I'm doing this for the children, I couldn't see the kids suffering," Cleotilda said through tears. "The only thing we're eating now is beans, and we're sharing what we have... When someone has God in their heart they must have compassion."

The day our team met with Romanico's family was the day Cleotilda's husband was set to return, and the day Aura and her children were supposed to leave. Once again, they had nowhere to go.



Romanico may have been abused and even despised by his father — who openly wished the boy would die because he seemed like a 'burden' — but he is a precious child who deserves a chance for a healthy future.

You can help Romanico have a healthy future. You can give children like Romanico the food they need to survive, and the opportunity to overcome the many perils of poverty. ♦

*"It hurts my heart,
my heart is broken."
— Aura, 25*

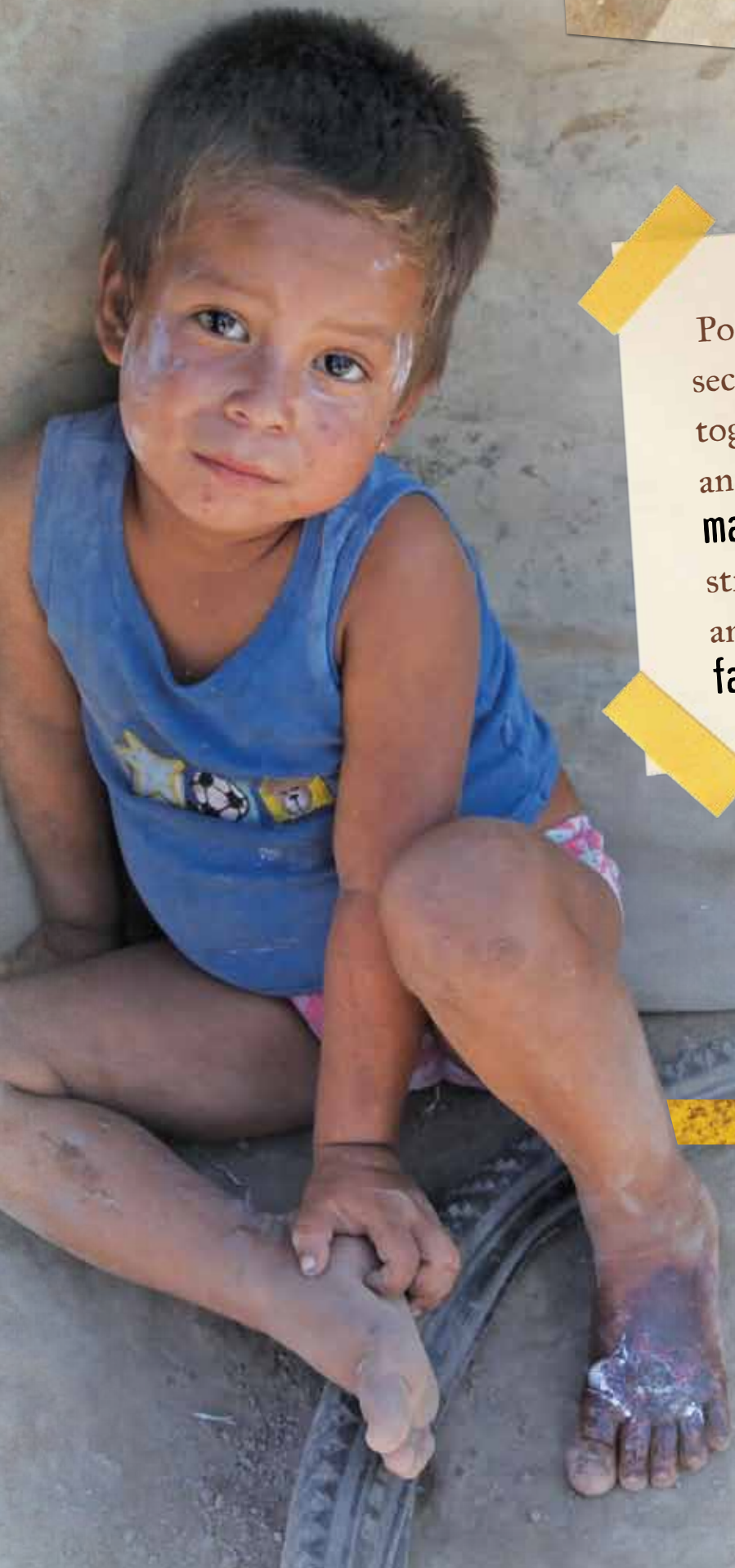


THE PERILS — OF POVERTY —

What dangers are there for those who live in extreme poverty?

Poor families can't afford safe, secure homes, so they piece together bits of cloth, plastic and old discarded wood for their **makeshift shelters**. These frail structures offer little protection, and can **collapse on top of a family** at any moment.

Open cooking fires are a constant threat. **Burns, scaldings and other injuries** are common for poor families living in cramped, unstable and hazardous conditions.

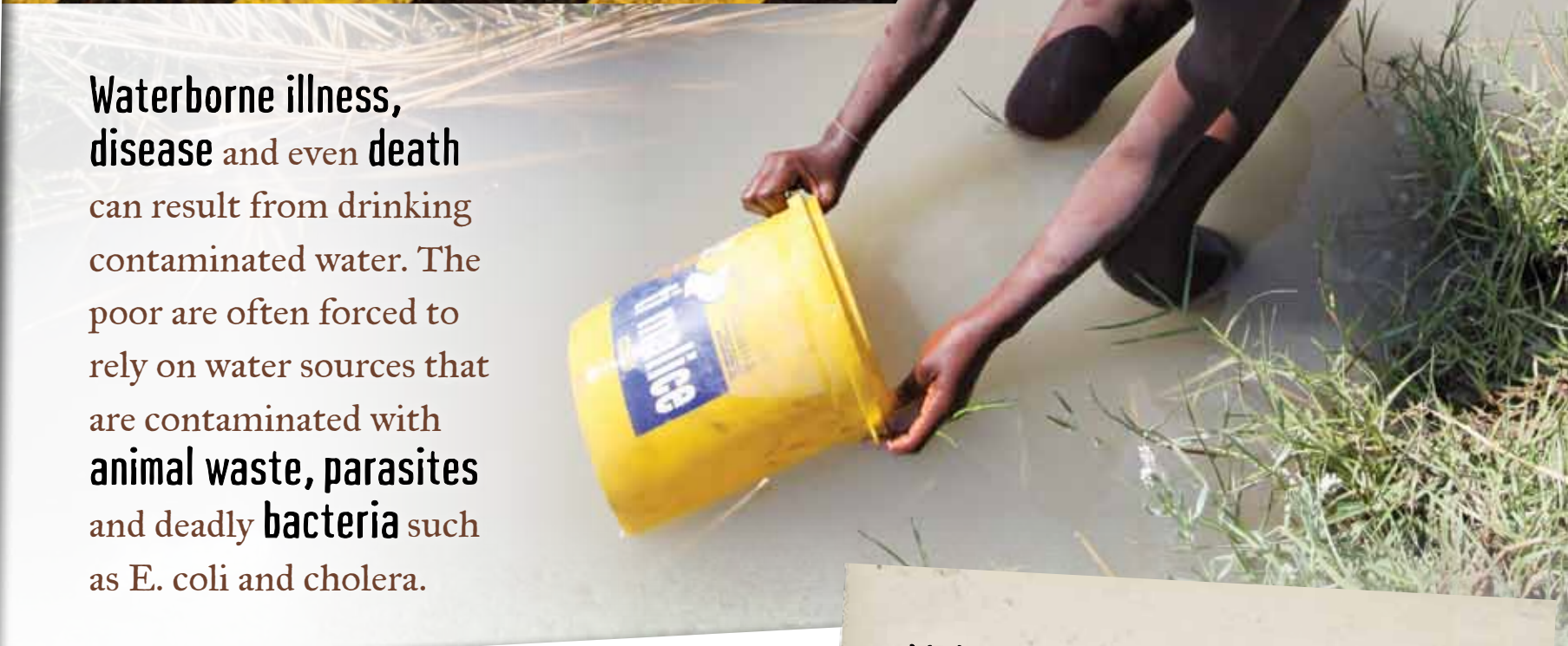




Even the most **basic medical care is not accessible** for poor families living long distances from clinics and hospitals. Instead of rushing a **sick child** to a hospital, parents often have to treat their child with **homemade remedies** because they don't have the money for bus fare or medicine that could save the child's life.



Waterborne illness, disease and even **death** can result from drinking contaminated water. The poor are often forced to rely on water sources that are contaminated with **animal waste, parasites** and deadly **bacteria** such as *E. coli* and cholera.



Malnutrition, which is common among the poor, can be irreversible and fatal — especially for young children. The two main types of malnutrition are **kwashiorkor** and **marasmus**; both resulting from a lack of proper nutrients. More than **10 million children under the age of 5 die** in developing countries each year, and nearly 50% die from marasmus.

(World Health Organization)

Forced to Build an Unsafe Home



One morning, the roof of their kitchen collapsed on 3-year-old Erick and his mother. Piping hot coffee spilled over Erick's bare foot, badly scalding his tender skin. There was no money for a doctor, so Erick's mother applied toothpaste to the wound, saying that she believed it might cool it off.



The nearest doctor was an hourlong walk from their home, and Neri didn't have the money to take her children by taxi, so she comforted feverish Maria, 1, by holding her close.

Erick's mother, Neri, makes a pot of coffee every morning with Erick always by her side. She doesn't drink the coffee, but instead goes out into the village and sells cups of it to her neighbors. Their makeshift kitchen was built from leftover pieces of tin that Erick's father had after building their current shack from any scraps he could find, including borrowed tarps for the roof.

Hoping for a better life

Erick's parents moved their family to a village in Honduras called La Esperanza, which means "hope." Residents were given a deed to a small plot of land through a government program. Erick's parents were hoping for a better life. "We lived with my mother-in-law before moving here, but it wasn't mine," Neri said.

But life hasn't been easy in the village. Erick's parents gave up electricity and a safe home to move to a tiny plot of land located down a muddied, pockmarked stretch of road where the landscape becomes dotted with tin-and-tarp shacks. One by one, these scrap heaps of rusted-out despair are abandoned and slump to the ground. Bright bits of trash offer up color where flowers refuse to grow, and tarp roofs snap angrily in the hot wind. Every day, their shack heaves and moans, threatening to collapse just like their kitchen did.

Your support can help provide safe housing for families like Erick's and real hope for a better life. ♦





Erick's burned foot was so painful, he cried and begged his mom to help him feel better. Without money for a doctor, Erick's mother could only offer him home remedies.



"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized." (Hebrews 6:11, NIV)



"I saw God coming down."

— Junick, 35, about watching her old hut get torn down to make room for her new home.



In her darkest hour, Junick cried out to God to end her family's suffering. "I said, 'God, I can't live like this. Can you take me and the kids; I can't live like that.'"

*"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."
(1 Peter 5:7, NIV)*

When we first met Junick and her two children in rural Haiti, her home was crumbling into its sand foundation. Junick was born and raised in this home and still shared it with her 85-year-old mom. The house was so unsafe, that every night the local church staff unlocked the church doors so that Junick and her family could sleep in safety. During rainstorms, Junick's neighbors often took them in.

But now, your loving support has turned Junick's suffering and cries unto the Lord into prayers of thanksgiving for a brand new home. As soon as she moved in, Junick praised God. "I prayed and I thanked God, and I thanked God for the people who donated this house for me, and to bless them and to protect them so they may continue to help people in projects like this," Junick said.

As a result of your generosity, Junick has been able to bless others as you have blessed her. "Yesterday there was a lot of rain... and yesterday, I sheltered a lot of people in my house," Junick said. "These are people who used to shelter me, but now that I have a house, I shelter them." ♦

“We love because He first loved us.”
(1 John 4:19)

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