

June 2015

# FOOD *for* THOUGHT

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

## POVERTY + CHILDREN

- ✓ No Childhood
- ✓ No Food
- ✓ No Education

## LOST CHILDHOOD

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young girl's  
answer to  
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at work

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**FOOD FOR THE POOR, INC.**

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

# GROWING UP TOO SOON

In the mountains of Copan, Honduras, there lives a little boy who is doing the work of a grown man.

**E**arly every morning, 8-year-old Hector treks into the dense forest on the mountainside near his home along with his brothers to gather firewood for his mother. Hector's father is away for weeks at a time to look for work because there is no work locally.

Benita, Hector's mom, relies on Hector and his brothers to gather wood so she can cook what little food they have. She also needs wood to make fires to provide warmth for the family on chilly days, and to boil water for medicinal teas when her children are sick... which is often.



*Jose, 10, shoulds a heavy bundle of wood while his younger brother, Hector, puts down his backbreaking load.*

## Backbreaking labor for a little one

Although Hector is not the oldest son, he has taken charge in helping to care for the family while his father is away. Instead of going to school each day, Hector is trekking long distances to cut and then carry the large and heavy bundles of firewood his mother needs. **"I cut the wood, and I bring it to help cook the tortillas. It makes my mom happy,"** said Hector.

When the three young boys return from the mountainside, they are dwarfed by the heavy bundles of wood on their backs. The boys have been gone for about three hours. They return smeared with dirt, and are sweaty and breathless. They have to help each other out from under the weight of the burdensome bundles. Hector unloads his younger brother's heavy bundle and carefully stacks it under the makeshift stove. He does the same for his older brother's load.

Hector is focused and diligent at his task. He knows how important this wood is to his mother. Even though this small boy has completed this backbreaking chore, he stands ready for the remainder of his daily chores. His afternoons are spent helping his sisters fetch water, pulverizing corn for tortillas, and anything else his mother asks.

## A legacy of poverty

**"When I was a child there was no school for me. My job was to carry water, and here, my children do the same thing,"** said Benita. Hector's sisters, Marisela, 8, and Ludin, 6, stay close to their mother during the day, fetching water and also helping with chores. Poverty is robbing Hector and his siblings of the precious gift of an education. A gift that could break the cycle of poverty for Hector and his brothers and sisters.

## No safe place of refuge

Hector's house is a shack built from scraps of wood with a thatched roof. Rats and mice freely come into the house through the huge gaps in the makeshift walls of the house, and mosquitoes bite them every night. The children have even killed snakes in the house. It is an unsafe environment for anyone, let alone such young children.

**"God helps me to carry on in this situation. We pass each day with what we have, we can't do anything else,"** Benita said.

*Hector, 8, does the work of a man.*

*(Article continues on next page...)*



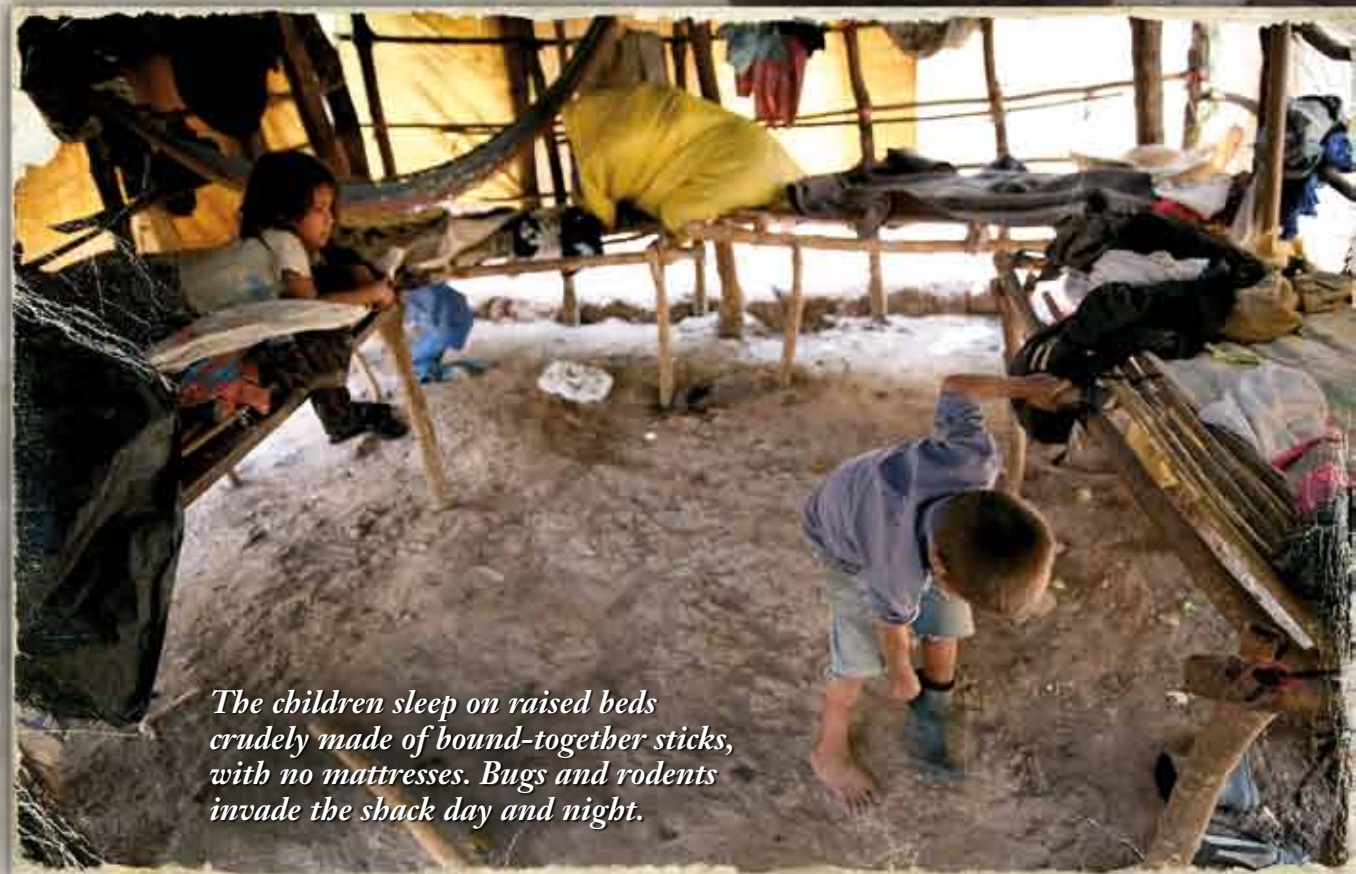
*Although he wears a baseball shirt, Hector, 8, has little time for play. Instead, he must help his mom provide for the family's basic needs.*

(Continued from page 3...)

### Rotten or not, it's food

After a morning of gathering wood, Hector and his brothers are ravenous, their tummies grumbling. They delight at seeing the old black pot their mom uses to cook sitting out in the sun. Today, there will be something for them to eat.

Little Selin, 5, is so excited that he can't wait and runs up to peer inside the pot and takes a big whiff. He smiles as if he were face-to-face with a Thanksgiving turkey. Instead, what waits for him is a small head of wilted, rotting cabbage sitting in a pot of water mixed with a few handfuls of beans. Sadly, there are many times when there is no food at all for Hector and his siblings to eat. **"When there is no food, I tell my children not to cry, that there is nothing to give them, but hopefully tomorrow I will have something."**



The children sleep on raised beds crudely made of bound-together sticks, with no mattresses. Bugs and rodents invade the shack day and night.

Ludin, 6, is sick with a fever and a cold. She also has parasites that bloat her stomach. Her mother can only afford to give her a tea made from leaves to soothe her.

### Persistent rain, lack of sleep

The entire family has to stand inside the house during a rainstorm. The children frequently get sick from the wet house and muddy floor. When it rains, Hector's mom wakes him and his siblings, covers them in scraps of nylon tarp, and tells them not to cry. "That's all I can do," Benita said. "I get scared, too. I don't like the rain falling on them. I can tell you the house moves in a lot of wind, and I can tell it might fall."

**"Open your mouth, decree what is just, defend the needy and the poor!" (Proverbs 31:9)**

### You can help

Hector and his siblings are malnourished, living in an unhealthy environment without proper sanitation. They are in desperate need of your help. Vulnerable children like Hector and his siblings are depending on your compassionate generosity and support of Food For The Poor. There is no reason for children to live like this when we have the blessings to share to help them survive. **Won't you please give a gift today, and save a child from a harsh, poverty-stricken life? ♦**

## HONDURAS IS ONE OF THE POOREST COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA.

- **65%** of Hondurans live in poverty. (World Bank, 2013)
- In the rural areas of Honduras, most families live far below the poverty line, **earning less than \$1.25 per day.** (World Bank, 2013)

# PRAYING FOR FOOD IN HAITI

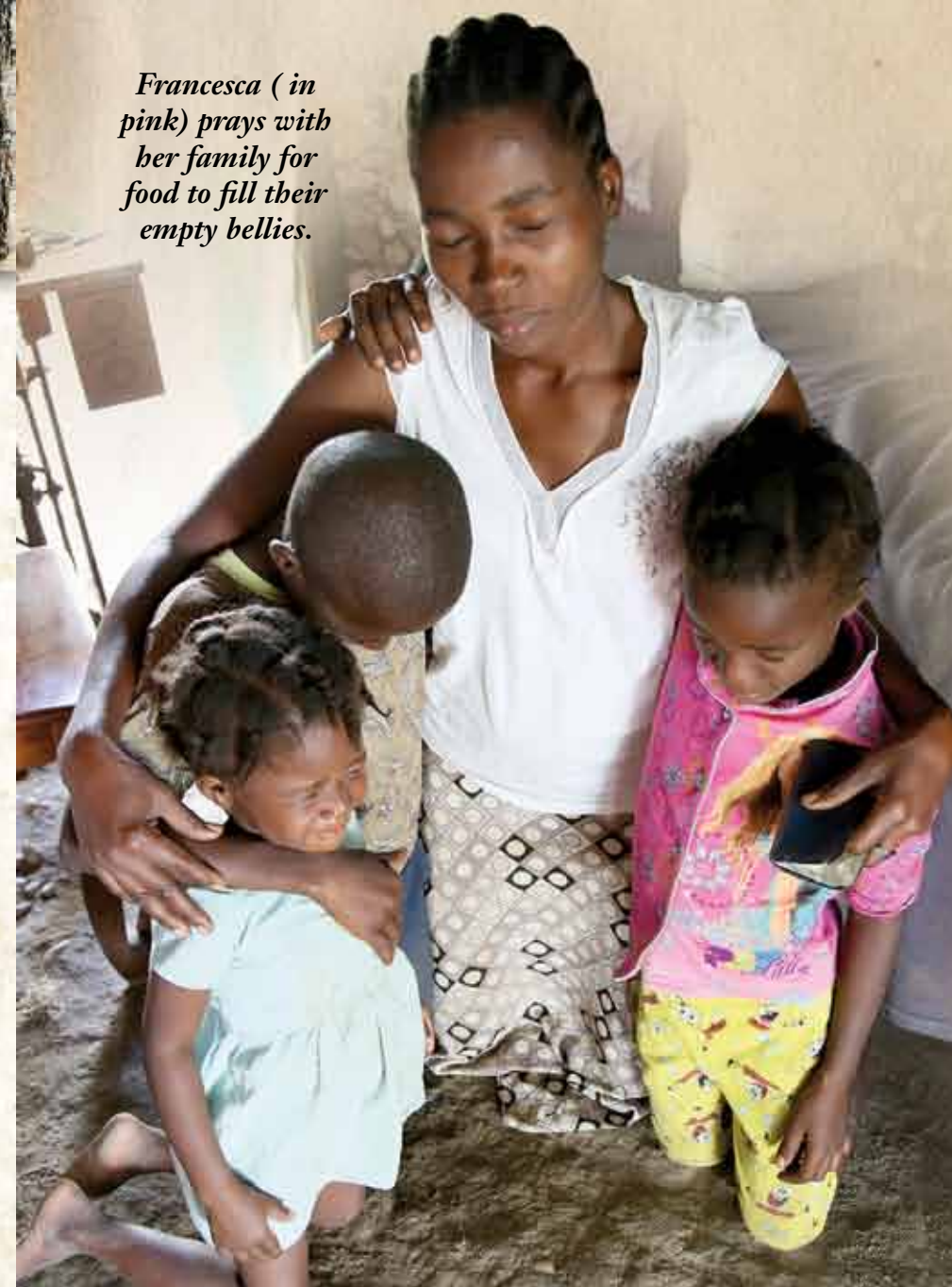
Some days there is nothing for Francesca to eat.

**F**rancesca, 8, prays for an answer to her hunger. When there is nothing to eat in their humble shack in Haiti, the hunger in Francesca's belly "makes me tired," she says. So Francesca, her sister Jovani, 4, and brother Magenes, 11, all get down on their knees with their mother Marie and pray.

Francesca doesn't hesitate to pray for her favorite food — fried chicken. She hopes that maybe a kind neighbor will give them some, like one did the week before. It was the first time in a very long time the family had meat.

"I pray to God for chicken. It's my favorite. I love chicken," Francesca said.

Francesca (in pink) prays with her family for food to fill their empty bellies.



Francesca reads from the Bible and recites Psalm 118 with little Jovani because their mother encourages them to pray when the hunger pains get bad.

**"I was hard pressed and falling, but the LORD came to my help."**

*(Psalm 118:13)*

More often than not, there is no protein like chicken. Sometimes there is no food at all. Marie rents a sewing machine to sew clothing for local residents, but the work is sporadic. Sometimes she resorts to buying ruined clothing in the market to try to repair them for resale. But some days she has no work, which means and there is nothing to eat.

**"When I have no food to give the children, I play with them,"** Marie explained. "I sing. And we pray to God. I try to distract them. I tell my children, 'You should never be sad because God is the master of all things.'"

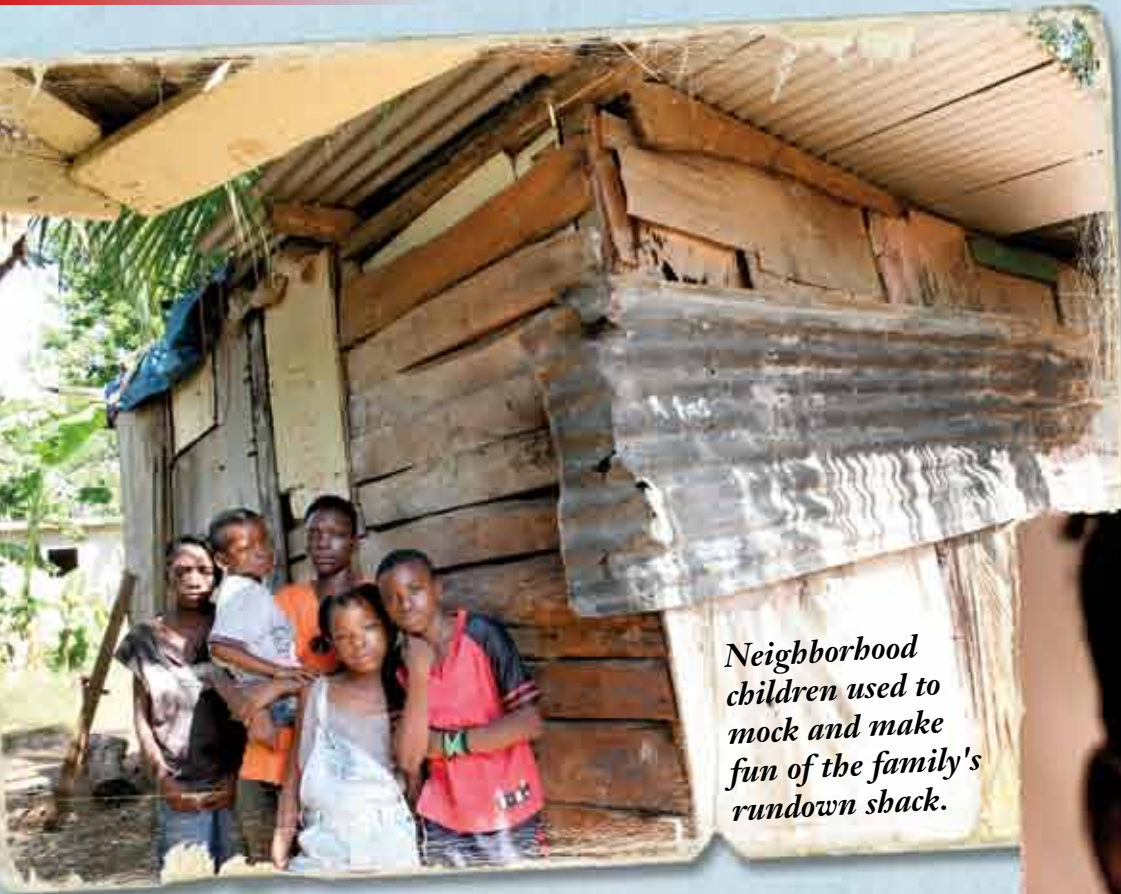
When Food For The Poor staff visited Francesca and her family, Francesca's brother Magenes had just celebrated his 11th birthday. When asked what he wanted most for his birthday, he replied, **"I would be happy to have a beautiful meal."**

Rising food prices make it a challenge for Marie to provide food each day for Francesca and her siblings. Yet she never ceases to pray and be thankful to God for every little blessing. Her greatest blessings are Francesca, Jovani and Magenes.

"Every year when their birthdays come, I say thank you to God because He gave them another birthday," Marie said.

With your help, Food For The Poor can provide food and other essentials for children like Francesca. Food For The Poor is dedicated to helping innocent, precious children. **Please, won't you help hungry children like Francesca and her siblings today? ♦**

# NO MORE TEARS, Because of You



Neighborhood children used to mock and make fun of the family's rundown shack.

When asked if she and her siblings had friends in their neighborhood, 10-year-old Lanae's eyes welled up with tears. She shook her head and began to cry.



Lanae cries when asked about her friends.

Lanae's mom, Annice, explained, "The children curse at them, and tell me to fix my house. I tell my children, 'One day it will be better.'"

***"Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy." (Psalm 126:5)***

Lanae's mom built their shack from scraps with help from friends. But roaches, rats and bullfrogs were constantly in the house, and every time it rained, the floor turned to mud. The children frequently caught colds from the damp environment.

Lanae's brother Lavaughn, 14, often unable to sleep in his bed, would squeeze in with his siblings. Lavaughn said he easily fell between his bed and the wall because the ground beneath the bed was so uneven. Even the littlest one, Ajuani, 4, offered up his struggle with their shack's uneven dirt floors: "Sometimes I trip," he said.

Annice prayed for her children every day, and kept trusting that God would hear her pleas for them. **"He always answers me," she said. "That's why He sent you here to help them [my children], not really for me, but for them."**

Thanks to the generosity of compassionate people like you, Lanae now has a safe and secure Food For The Poor home... a home that is no longer a source of ridicule among the neighborhood children.

"Thank you for giving me this house because it's comfortable and nice," Lanae said.

Annice is grateful for the change you've helped make in her children's lives.



Annice and Ajuani are full of joy since moving into their new home.



Lanae (behind, in black) and her family now have a safe, new home thanks to the generosity of kind-hearted people like you.

"Thanks for helping me and my kids," Annice said. "First and foremost, **I would like to thank almighty God for bringing you guys here to do this for me.** And thank you guys also. You make me feel good. You make me feel on top."

Feeling comfortable at home is a drastic departure from the sleepless nights she and the children used to endure in their shack. The family no longer worries about rodents entering the home. They're protected from the rainfall, so the children are healthier. Referring to their first night's sleep in their new Food For The Poor house, Annice said, "We all wake late like it was the most comfortable sleep we ever had."

In Jamaica, Food For The Poor homes have a loft space. The loft has become a popular spot among Annice's children. Lavaughn, likes to claim it as his own because when he's up there, his sisters don't bother him. "It's my little space and it's fit for me," he said. The restless nights he used to endure in a slanted bed are now long behind him.

Your compassion has made a big difference in the lives of Lanae and her family. **Thank you for sheltering families who desperately need your help. ♦**



Ajuani, 4, is soothed when he is close to his mother.



Lanae is all smiles in her new home.



*“No one has  
ever seen God.  
Yet, if we love  
one another, God  
remains in us...”  
(1 John 4:12a)*

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