

FACE AFRICA'S SITE VISIT TO THE HOPE MISSION SCHOOL BERNARD'S FARM COMMUNITY

by Emmett Wilson, Program Administrator

INTRODUCTION

I called pastor Boniface Diggs on Tuesday April 19, to introduce myself and schedule an appointment for the site visit as stated in our timeline. After this 5-6 minute introductory telephone conversation, we decided that the visit be made the following day at 10am local time.

On the day of the site visit I was accompanied by Mr. Julian Korti, FACE Africa's newly recruited Field Assistant. We arrived at Bernard Farm junction where Pastor Diggs was awaiting us, and walked 30-35 minutes into the Hope Mission School compound. The road that leads to this community seems to be very muddy during the rainy season and very dusty during the dry season. But currently, due to the dry season and abundant sunshine, the road is fairly assessable for cars to drive through.



MEETING

Upon our arrival at the school campus we went in to a meeting to catch up. During this meeting we were joined by Mrs. Diggs. I first began by informing them of the potential partnership that FACE Africa has with their sponsor, the Westminster Presbyterian Church Albany, New York USA (WPC). They were also informed of the purpose of our visit. Pastor Diggs thanked the FACE Africa team for coming and for our intervention. He informed us that school was currently on their Easter break. Pastor Diggs also told us that the school does not have its own source of water, stating that an Elder owns the only well in the community just a few minutes' walk away. Pastor Diggs put the current number of student at two hundred (200). He also said a lot of these students are from the surrounding communities. He mentioned that because of the present hard times, a lot of parents are unable to pay the kids tuition, thus leaving the school to operate on losses and gets by with assistance from WPC. Mrs. Diggs also said she very happy to see the FACE Africa team and she hopes and prays that the project is carried out as soon as possible to address the water issue in the school and community.

SITE VISIT

Our first visit was to the only well in the community owned by Mr. John Kollie. Mr. Kollie informed us that the well was between 8-9 feet deep. He said the community has a little over 400 residents, and this was their only source of water. He mentioned that to keep this well clean some students from the Hope Mission School and surrounding community go down into the well to dig and clean out dirt and debris. When also asked what is used to keep the water safe for drinking, he said chlorine, when affordable. The well is covered with some rusty zinc and the bucket used to fetch the water is old and dirty.



The wife of Mr. John Kollie said “this well water is not safe to drink at all, but this is all we have now”. She also said “as you can see, this well is located in the swamp, and when it rains all the water from the swamp runs directly into the well.” Mrs. Kollie who stood with two of her children said the unsafe conditions of the well as led to a lot of illnesses in the community especially during the rainy season, when the water from the swamp runs into the well. Some community residents standing by appealed to us for urgent intervention.

The school also currently does not have toilet facilities, and the one under construction is not adequate. This seems to be a huge problem in the community as well, based on some of the residents we spoke to. One fellow told me that close to 90% of the houses in this community do not have toilets in them. The residents urinate and defecate in the nearby swamp which exposes them to any number of pathogens and disease-carrying animals and insects. During the raining season, the feces and urine are washed into the very well that the residents drink from.



OBERVATIONS

- Water is a major concern for the students of Hope Mission School and residents of the surrounding community. Their only source of drinking water is an open well, which we assume is contaminated and also depletes during the dry season. They currently have no access to a hand pump or latrine facilities. Most of the residents urinate and defecate in the nearby bushes which exposes them to any number of pathogens and disease-carrying animals and insects. During the raining season, the feces and urine are washed into the very well that the residents drink from.
- This is a very rocky community and the Hope Mission School is situated up a hill
- The current toilet facilities under construction cannot accommodate the students and staff at the Hope Mission School
- During the entire visit, children as young as 5 years old were seen crushing rocks. Pastor Diggs mention that some of them were his students. When some of them were asked what they do with the rocks, they informed us that they sell the crushed rocks and give the money to their parents.



NEXT STEPS:

- Emmett Wilson to meet with FACE Africa's implementing partner to discuss Hope Mission School Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Project
- Emmett and implementing partner to visit Hope Mission School for 2nd site visit and technical observation
- Implementing partner to revert to FACE Africa with project and budget proposal
- Next steps to be determined by FACE Africa and WPC