



## **A Ministry Initiative of the Sisters of the Mercy of the Americas**

### **Mission Statement**

Passionate for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and witnessing to the legacy of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Focus on Haiti members are led to service and solidarity with persons who are materially poor, especially those living in Haiti. Mercy Focus on Haiti collaborates with the people of Haiti to help meet their unmet needs. Mercy Focus on Haiti collaborates with other like-minded organizations to achieve shared goals that will benefit the people of Haiti.

### **Mercy Focus on Haiti**

In June 2011, at the Fifth Institute Chapter of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, a group gathered for a discussion about Haiti. Each Sister at the table had been to Haiti and was presently involved with an organization in Haiti. The conversation led them to believe they needed to consolidate their energies and commitment to the people of Haiti and develop a Mercy response to their needs.

The 'new foundation' - Mercy Focus on Haiti (MFOH) - came directly from the group's preoccupation with two dimensions of the Chapter activities. First, the prayerful quest to discover what God was calling them to do at this time in their history. Second, to address this phrase of the 2011 Chapter Declaration document: "to liberate and redistribute our human and financial resources across the Institute and develop creative solutions to unmet needs acting in solidarity with impoverished people."

Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and the second poorest country in the world. In rural Haiti, where Mercy Focus on Haiti works, the population lives in extreme poverty, many living on \$1.25 per day or less. The women and families MFOH has chosen to work with are truly among the ultra-poor.

Haiti's poverty and "redistributing human and financial resources" were challenges taken seriously throughout the Institute. Members from throughout the Institute volunteered to be part of this new initiative. MFOH received start-up financial assistance through grants and donations from across the Institute. That support continues today.

"Acting in solidarity with impoverished peoples" challenges Mercy Focus on Haiti to listen to the people of Haiti, to take direction from them, to work beside them in addressing their needs. All are sharing the desire to create conditions for them to thrive.

From its beginning, Mercy Focus on Haiti sought to collaborate with groups already there. Mercy Focus on Haiti was welcomed by the Religious of Jesus and Mary, who minister in Gros Morne, a remote, mountainous area in western Haiti. In 2016, MFOH began collaborating with Fonkoze Foundation, the largest microfinance bank in Haiti, to bring the *Pathway to a Better Life Program* to the Gros Morne area.

Collaboration and consensus are at the heart of Mercy Focus on Haiti's work. Since its inception, MFOH members have been committed to making all significant, and many less critical, decisions together. Monthly, chairs of the MFOH Committees participate by conference calls to coordinate the movement toward shared goals and receive updates on the successes and challenges that are before them. Each committee meets as needed, and the Mercy Focus on Haiti Governing Council meets six times a year.

This young 'new foundation' receives vital infrastructure services from the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, including financial, development, legal and business services. Being part of the Institute provides Mercy Focus on Haiti with inspiration, motivation and the challenge to be women and men of compassion and mercy. The Critical Concerns - care for earth, concern for women's dignity and equality, anti-racism, non-violence and immigration – call MFOH to fashion its ministry with these priorities when addressing the needs of the people in Haiti.

Organizationally, Mercy Focus on Haiti consists of 20 volunteer Sisters, Associates and Friends of Mercy. A Governing Council and seven committees - Agronomy, Maison Bon Samaritan, Women's Programs, Immersion Experiences, Communications, Development and Finance - guide the mission of MFOH.

Sisters Kathy Thornton, RSM, the chairperson, Dale Jarvis, RSM, and Marge Friedhoff, RSM, serve as an Administrative Team. Sister Jill Weber, RSM, is the Haiti Coordinator and lives in Gros Morne. Mercy Focus on Haiti receives support from hundreds of generous, compassionate donors who share the vision of creating conditions for all in our world to thrive. Because of this strong organizational support, Mercy Focus on Haiti, a new foundation, will be able to continue to serve the people of Haiti.

**Through one mission, in one tiny country,  
in the corner of the Western hemisphere,  
the charism of Catherine McAuley  
and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
is radiating brilliantly outward.**

See Video: ***Mercy Focus on Haiti***