



# Unstoppable

**2020 IMPACT REPORT**



**MESSAGE FROM** Fr. John Baumann,  
*Founder and Director of Faith in Action International*

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We're so proud of the grassroots leaders who were unstoppable in protecting their families from COVID, building health clinics, gaining clean water, and advancing land reform in 2020.

Behind each success is a deeper story of long-term impact. With your support, ordinary people are holding their governments accountable to improve the lives of the most vulnerable families.

The pandemic showed how interconnected we are. We're grateful to the 860+ people who joined international Zoom calls. You helped us launch new initiatives to make U.S. policy toward Central America more humane and support efforts to restore Haitian democracy.

Your support made an impact in some of the most challenging places in the world. Individual giving in 2020 reached a new high for the sixth year. More than 300 people donated \$321,319. Thousands more put their time and talent to work to create a humane and equitable world.

With gratitude, we're pleased to share our 2020 impact report. We hope you will be inspired and share your inspiration with others. We promise to keep you informed about all the ways you can take action so we can continue to know, love, and work with one another in 2021.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Baumann".

Fr. John Baumann, S.J.

**MESSAGE FROM** Rev. Alvin Herring,  
*Executive Director of Faith in Action*

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When I returned to Faith in Action in 2018, I committed to doing everything in my power to lift up our international organizing. Three years later, It gives me joy to see so many signs of solidarity.

The Faith in Action network stands with you in your faithful struggle for land, water, good health, and dignity for all people. We applaud the progress that you have made in improving material conditions for so many people amid this global pandemic.

We thank you for bringing the good news of faith-based community organizing to new communities and countries despite the challenges to traveling and face-to-face connection.

We honor those who've locked arms together to put the U.S. on the side of people struggling for democracy and sustainable development in Central America and Haiti rather than corrupt elites.

Together we can learn from each other and create societies free from racial and economic gaps in wealth and wellbeing.

Sawubona - I see you, you are important to me, I pledge myself to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alvin Herring".

Rev. Alvin Herring



## Impact through community building

Faith in Action is dedicated to the idea that people can transform the world when they build trusting relationships, listen to their neighbors, inventory their resources, speak directly with decision-makers, and propose and negotiate solutions based on local wisdom.

We begin with people who believe in miracles before they see them, for whom *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1).

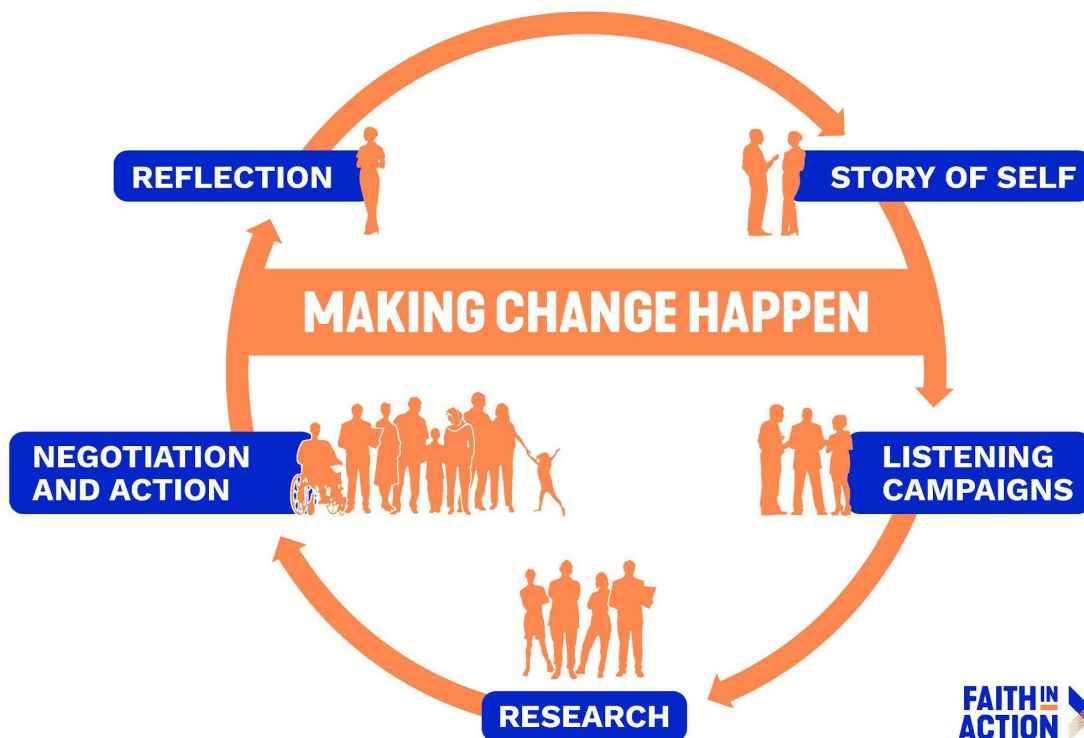
Over time, people who've never before met their mayor win funding for a bridge to get their crops to market. They build a health clinic or a school. Their lives improve, their sense of power and agency grow. Local victories help people imagine bigger national changes.

More than half the funding to support this community transformation comes from individual donations. This funding makes it possible for people to determine their communities' needs rather than depend on development projects designed by others.

But the community we're building that makes change possible is not just local, regional, or even national. It's global.

While we couldn't do our work without your generous contributions, we want you to be more than a donor. Recognizing that our fates are intertwined, our goal is to build a global community that can learn and act together. We invite you to connect directly with people organizing around the world, to learn from them, share what you know, and take action together to support change.

**Join us on this journey of community building that will impact all of our lives.**





## Slowing the spread of COVID in Haiti

In mid-April, Faith in Action International organized a call with grassroots leaders in Haiti to hear how they were preparing for the pandemic. Without a functioning government, Haiti was ill-prepared to confront COVID. More than 100 people joined. Florcie Tyrell and Dr. Louis Clonel explained the threat and laid out plans for a prevention campaign. The cost: \$10,000, most of which we raised before the call ended.

Over the next three months, Florcie, Dr. Clonel, and 90 OPODNE leaders ran a widely praised campaign to educate people in Northeast Haiti about COVID. They reached 35,000 people. They spoke weekly on radio shows, trained 600+ community members, made announcements at public markets, and distributed masks, gloves, disinfectant, dozens of washing stations, and 5,700 educational fliers.

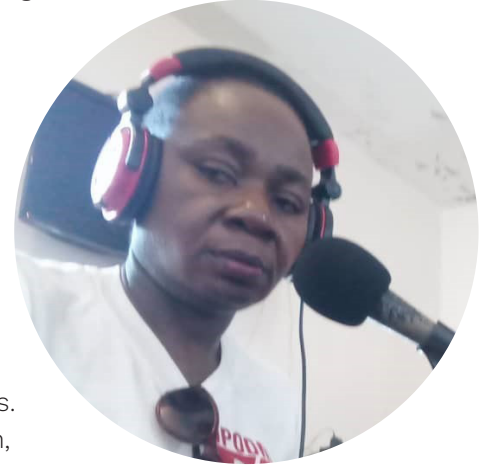
OPODNE could spring into action and reach so many people because it had spent five years building leadership teams in 13 towns. People had harvested their crops together, improved basic sanitation, started computer-training centers and built roads. They had created eight cooperatives and three micro-loan programs as economic lifelines for families.

Haiti avoided the brunt of the pandemic in 2020. Among ten departments in the country, the Northeast had the lowest rate of COVID by the end of the year. By running a successful public health campaign OPODNE raised its profile, opening up opportunities to work in other parts of Haiti. And the Boston-based Haiti Development Initiative selected OPODNE to participate in a capacity-building project to strengthen and grow the organization.

In 2020 we saw how trusted relationships built through grassroots organizing gave ordinary people the power to confront a global pandemic. Health centers built by communities in rural Rwanda became hubs for prevention and treatment. Local organizing teams in El Salvador helped people who lost their jobs feed their families. A lesson from the pandemic: Organizing creates resilient communities able to confront the worst and imagine the best.

*“When we learned of deaths from COVID in Northeast Haiti, OPODNE leaders decided to take action, even if the government would not assume its proper role to protect people. We all agreed to provide whatever help we could to prevent people from catching and spreading the virus.”*

– **FLORCIE TYRELL, OPODNE Executive Director**



IMPACT IN HAITI

**\$375,000**

invested in income-generating coops, micro-loan programs and community improvements as a result of organizing since 2015.

**35,000**

People receiving masks, disinfectant, washing stations, and educational fliers during OPODNE's COVID prevention campaign

**600**

Grassroots leaders participating in OPODNE training in 2020



## The long-term impact of health clinics in Rwanda

When Ezra Nkubana was diagnosed with COVID, he was fortunate to be treated in a health center built through an organizing campaign he helped lead a decade ago.

The Mumeya clinic was the first example of a Rwandan government planning decision made in response to local pressure. It now functions as a 38-room hospital, providing preventive and acute care, pharmacy services, health education, and testing to more than 32,000 people.

While residents built the clinic with their own hands, public funds cover operating costs, bringing an estimated \$60,000 into the community each year, along with dozens of jobs.

Small shops, new homes, and a community center have mushroomed up around the isolated hill on which the clinic was built. Community leaders planted 2,500 trees, built six classrooms, and won new roads, a water system, and electric lines that connect people from ten villages.

Building community in post-genocide Rwanda helped Ezra, Specioza, Poline and other Mumeya leaders see their own power and trust their neighbors. They've shared their experiences with other grassroots leaders, inspiring organizing in six other communities across Rwanda. In 2020 leaders in a neighboring district, Nyarubuye finished construction on a third health clinic.

Mumeya leaders are also teaching municipal officials how to engage residents in development. They're changing how Rwanda works by demonstrating the power of bottom-up community-led change in a country where government planning has been top-down.

When Ezra left the health center after recovering from COVID, he returned to a community transformed by his labors. Donations from supporters in the U.S. have made it possible for Ezra and his neighbors to leverage more than \$1.7 million in life-saving and life-improving investments. They've shown how modest contributions to support deeply-rooted community organizing can result in long-term personal, communal and society-wide transformation.



*“I am amazed at the change I see in this community. Twenty-five years ago, thousands died in the genocide. Now, it is united in building this clinic in Nyarubuye.”*

– **MSGR. MATATA, Catholic Bishop of Kibungo Diocese**

IMPACT IN RWANDA

**\$1.5 million**

Leveraged since 2012 for investments in new health clinics, schools, water, electricity, roads and income-generating coops.

**78,000**

Number of people directly benefiting from grassroots organizing

**85,000 people in 40 villages**

Reached through COVID-19 education and prevention campaign in 2020

## The struggle for land rights in El Salvador

From 1979 to 1992, the U.S. spent \$6 billion supporting El Salvador's military regime in a civil war that killed 75,000 people and forced more than one million people from their homes.

Many of those displaced migrated to the U.S. Others moved to precarious settlements without water, streets, and public services. In 2019, almost 30 years after the war ended, organizers from Communities Organizing for Faith in Action (COFOA) began working in one of these areas where people had paid for their land but never received their titles.

Without titles, people couldn't sell their property or borrow to make improvements. Nor would municipalities pave streets, provide water or develop green spaces, leaving communities in limbo. After organizing for a year, eighty families celebrated when the Minister of Housing presented them with titles to their properties, collectively worth over one million dollars.



Word quickly spread. In 2020 COFOA brought people together from 33 developments to push for national legislation. The RENACER (Rebirth) campaign aims to win land titles for 350,000 families defrauded across El Salvador. COFOA leaders have held marches and met with legislators and ministers. They also began negotiating with land developers directly.

In 2020, as a result of the RENACER campaign, a partnership with the Archdiocese of San Salvador, and financial support from John Sobrato and other donors, COFOA expanded across El Salvador. By the end of the year, COFOA was working with teams in 39 communities in seven of the fourteen departments in the country, and partnering with Caritas to begin organizing in Solola, Guatemala.

Over the past decade, COFOA leaders have won access to clean water, job programs for young people, and new roads and bridges worth more than \$12 million.

Two years ago, Fr. Octavio Cruz, who worked with Archbishop Romero before he was killed, and returned in 2014 to lead the Archdiocese's social ministry office, told COFOA that a generation of priests and laypeople had not been taught Catholic Social Teaching. He said that COFOA had kept that tradition alive and needed to train clergy and leaders across the country.

When we bring delegations to El Salvador we visit Centro Monsenor Romero honoring the nuns, priests, and laypeople killed standing up for land rights and human dignity during the civil war. With El Salvador still pulled apart by extreme inequality and violence, COFOA leaders, clergy and organizers are carrying forward that struggle for justice in our own time.

*"We will be heard! We need our deeds to our homes so we can live in dignity. Our fight will continue, and we will stay strong."*

– PATRICIA DE GONZALEZ, COFOA leader

IMPACT IN  
EL SALVADOR

**\$12 million**

Funds invested into local communities for roads, bridges, water access, and other improvements

**\$1 billion**

Value of property owned by the 350,000 families that have been defrauded of their land titles

**33,032 people**

Engaged in COFOA's organizing campaigns

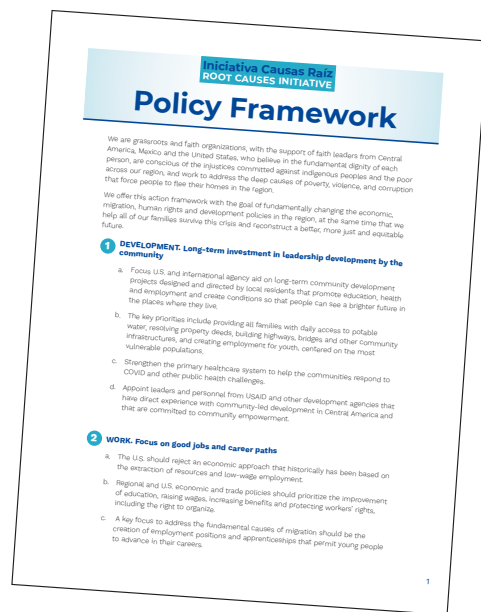


# Tackling the root causes of migration from Central America

In 2020, Faith in Action joined with the Hope Border Institute and faith-based organizations from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and the U.S. to launch a Root Causes initiative to change the underlying social conditions forcing people to migrate.

In December, we shared a framework, supported by 340 organizations and two dozen bishops, with the Biden Transition Team, asking the Administration to channel foreign assistance through civic organizations based on local priorities and create safe legal pathways for people to migrate to reunite with family, find temporary work, and seek refuge.

The Root Causes initiative is a platform for people from the U.S., Mexico, and Central America to work side-by-side to learn from each other and transform lives in our region. We're grateful that so many people have joined this effort by donating, participating in calls, and speaking out to the Biden Administration and Congress.



## A Way Forward in Haiti

Zoom calls to learn how Haitians were responding to the pandemic led to raising emergency funds for OPODNE's successful COVID prevention campaign. And then a larger conversation about what could be done to resolve Haiti's political crisis. As a result, in fall 2020, we launched an initiative to connect Haitian-American diaspora faith communities with OPODNE to work together to restore democracy and sustainable development in Haiti.

Like the Root Causes Initiative, A Way Forward in Haiti is working to persuade the Biden Administration and Congress to put more U.S. foreign aid into the hands of locally-based organizations. Our goal is to improve living conditions in the most impoverished communities, help small farmers adapt to climate change, and achieve free and fair elections.

## Growth and Expansion

Despite travel restrictions, we conducted training events with religious and community leaders from Guatemala, Ghana, South Africa, Hungary, and Slovakia in 2020. Through coaching and training, we're helping faith communities lay the foundation for organizations that they can use to address the biggest problems facing their communities and societies.



# Thank you to our generous donors

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# THREE WAYS

You Can Make A Difference

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- 1 **BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR**
- 2 **SPONSOR AN ONLINE EVENT** with leaders and organizers from Haiti, Rwanda or Central America (Or in-person when visits are possible again)
- 3 **SIGN UP FOR MONTHLY NEWSLETTERS AND ACTION ALERTS**



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