

*Hands Across The Water* would like to tell you about a project we have undertaken with a previous HATW family. Beverly and Claudius initially came to HATW to adopt. Due to various reasons, their path took them in another direction. Recently they came to HATW with the plight of the people of Piperou, Mali. The Dogon people are a minority ethnic group that lives along the Bandiagara escarpment in Mali. Piperou is located on the edge of a gorge, which for most of the year contains a slow flowing creek. It dries up almost completely by April. During the short rainy season, June – August, the gorge can swell precipitously by more than 15 feet. Most of the fields (>95%) of Piperou are located 30-40 minutes away by foot on the other side of the gorge. To reach their fields, the people of **Piperou** have constructed an uneven series of steps in rock and cement to descend from the village into the gorge.

The causeway served the village of **Piperou** extremely well over many decades. In recent decades, however, the climate in this region has been changing. The rains have become more unpredictable and have increased in intensity. As the rainy season is barely long enough to allow one crop of millet per year, the farmers have to time their planting to the first rain. After planting, the young plants need tending (weeding, loosening the soil etc.), requiring daily visits to the fields. However, getting to the fields has become difficult as the run-off from strong rains rushes into the gorge and produces water levels not seen before. The causeway becomes completely submerged and the only way left to get to the fields is a one-hour detour to a road bridge further downstream.



A substantial amount of the field work is done by women, in addition to their regular chores of carrying water, collecting fire wood, cook, etc. Girls are recruited to help their mothers as soon as they are physically able. They start out babysitting for younger siblings and carrying small buckets of water on their heads. If their mothers have to spend less time going back and forth to the fields on account of the bridge they will have more time for other chores and able to release some of the work load. School enrollment for girls in **Piperou** is ~10% and the quality of the education is very low due to the complete lack of resources. One of the goals of the bridge is to increase that by reducing the work load of mothers and their daughters. Much is needed to improve this situation and HATW wants to help in this area as well.

*The villagers are eager for assistance with the construction of a footbridge that would be passable throughout the rainy season. This is where Beverly, Claudius and HATW come in. Beverly and Claudius approached HATW for help with raising funds for this project...and of course we agreed. In addition to raising funds for the construction of the bridge, some of the money raised will help the schools provide for the children.*

**How can you help?** Please consider being a part of this project. HATW would like to ask you to consider making a monetary donation. Your donation to Hands Across The Water is tax-deductible. Beverly and Claudius have made arrangements to have the progress of the building of the bridge and improvements to the school documented. Each update will be posted to the HATW Facebook and website. How exciting it will be to see the construction of this bridge and view the first people to cross! How exciting it will be to see the smiles on the children's faces with their school supplies.

Please contact HATW today to make your donation. Also consider sending this information to others you think might be moved to help. Our office number is 734-477-0135 to donate by credit card. To donate by sending a check, our address is **2890 Carpenter Rd Ste 600, Ann Arbor MI 48108.**

Thank you.