

Home Sweet Home

August 2020

“Man, this isn’t much bigger than the shed I just built in my backyard!” I remember hearing this reaction several years ago from an adult leader of a group on his first trip with Spectrum. We had arrived at the build site and he had just laid eyes on the 16’x20’ rectangular concrete slab upon which later that afternoon would stand a new house. While struggling to reconcile the fact that a family of six would occupy the same space as your riding lawn mower is an understandable reaction, the stark difference in perspectives stood out to me. In spite of this man’s disparaging thoughts, the family who was moving in was ecstatic about this once in a lifetime opportunity. This was going to be a big upgrade for them and they were about to have an actual house of their own!

Many of our families pay high rent for a small place to live. Sometimes the cost can be as much as 200-300 dollars a month in rent for a family that may only bring in 60-80 dollars a week in income. Or a couple may take the step to purchase a piece of land and make monthly payments towards ownership. However, those payments along with rent for their current housing make purchasing material to build a decent home on their lot, an almost insurmountable task. Another path a family might take is to live on their land and use whatever scrap boards they can find to construct something with four walls and a covering over their heads. Often these structures leak and aren’t secure. They can’t afford the concrete so they’ll have a dirt floor. I’ve heard many stories of kids sleeping on the ground and being bit by bugs during the night. Or digging a trench through the earthen floor of their house when it rains to funnel the water away from their belongings!

Situations like these are why Spectrum always has a long waiting list of families who have requested help in building a house. And each circumstance surrounding the need can be a little different. Arturo (Spectrum staff) goes out to investigate the need and determine if the property on which they want us to build is their own.



A before and after shot of a house a family pieced together with scraps and the home that Spectrum built.

Two recent stories we came across are great examples of the variety of situations families face. Many of you remember Elizabeth and her four kids who were being asked to leave their one room apartment and had no place to go. Elizabeth showed Arturo her paperwork that proved her rights



With no groups coming, our Spectrum build team incorporates willing workers from the community to help.

to the property we would build their house on. But when we were starting the concrete floor another man showed up with papers of his own disputing her ownership! This can happen in Mexico where poor records are kept and different offices can grant titles that are already owned. We were forced to put



Putting up the walls.

the project on hold. For now, Elizabeth and her kids are living with relatives until they can get their situation resolved. But praise God, through the process, enough people gave where as soon as everything is sorted out we will be ready to build. In fact, I'm so thankful for those who have given recently for our house builds. In the last two weeks, we've taken in enough to build five houses using our Spectrum team along with local help from the communities. That's five families whose lives will drastically be changed!

One of these families is another mother of four, named Maria. Her husband had been killed two months ago when the cartel in Chihuahua, Mexico took their house and farm. She decided to move to Tijuana and through a friend heard about Spectrum. She purchased a plot of land with what she had and thankfully we will be able to build it for her by the end of the month!

Our struggle this summer has been to find funds to meet some of these needs. In a normal season, groups come and build with us and cover the two-thousand dollar cost of materials. However with Covid precluding trips like these, people who were hoping to have their new house ready, instead continue to wait. The recent response to these needs speaks once again to the loving hearts of you, our Spectrum partners. Thank you so much to all the individuals as well as church groups who have given!



A happy family waiting for us to finish painting so they can move in.

Investing in a family by providing a safe and secure home transcends meeting just the physical needs of keeping them warm and dry. It can alleviate the stress of paying high rent with nothing to show for it and give them a peaceful environment in which a family can grow. It also allows us an open door to share with them about God's love and care for their family, and how through faith in the Lord Jesus, they can have an eternal home with Him!

From all of us at Spectrum,

Matt Kooi
Director of Spectrum Ministries



Many families are happy to have a solid concrete floor in their house.

"...provide the poor wanderer with shelter..." - Isaiah 58:7