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Standing at the site of that unfortunate landslip that has impacted the lives of three generations of people, you really get the feeling that the Northern Range village of Morne La Croix is definitely a forgotten place.

Since the initial slippage on the day before Christmas when the Arima/Blanchisseuse became impassable at the 13 1/2mm, the plight of Morne La Croix villagers has steadily worsened.

Now, despite warning signage that reads 'pedestrian only', villagers opt to risk their lives by taking chances with their vehicles across the spot because there is no hope of remedial work being started in the immediate future.

Someone had the idea that spreading pitch on top of the landslip would help restore vehicular access to and from the village but as we watched a maxi load of tourists cross this spot, we observed the makeshift road visibly sinking lower into the loose terrain with the weight of the vehicle.

One of the villagers who parked his van around the bend just before the landslip suffered break-in and theft. This caused the other owners of vehicles parked there to brave the precarious crossing to get their vehicles home.

The problem of the landslides begins higher up the mountainside where the first major slippage continues to block the road after heavy rains. The loose terrain creeps further downhill towards the second loop in the road where it snakes downhill. Had it not been for a clump of bamboo just below this part of the road, an additional section would have also gone downhill.

The village of Morne La Croix is comprised of a significant number of the agricultural population between Arima and Blanchisseuse. The road that links the village represents the lifeline of the area.

Produce such as provision, vegetables and fruit is transported in vans and trucks to market in Arima and even as far as Tunapuna. Farmers travel this road to tend to cocoa lands way inside Mamoral, one of the areas earmarked for the revitalisation of the cocoa industry here.

Children of the area leave their homes while it is still dark to board the maxi that would take them to school in Arima. Some must also make their way to school in Paria. Each group of children must now cross the 'landslip spot' no matter the local weather conditions.

To help alleviate this situation, villagers have worked out a plan to accommodate the children. The maxi from Morne La Croix collects the children of the village and those along the route then proceeds to the problem area where the children alight and walk up the muddy road towards another maxi waiting some way up the hill. While this well coordinated system works for the while, it is heart rending to see the children and Arima-working adults having to walk from one maxi to the other in the mud and cold drizzly fog characteristic of the area in the early morning.

We caught Krystal Garcia, a student of Arima Central braving the rains to cross the wet make shift road to get to school on time to write exams. The Forestry Division cut a footpath up the hill to act as a detour and short cut past the land slip. However, looking at the slippery condition of the path, we understood why this remains unused.

It is the same scenario with produce that must be transported to market every Thursday morning. Christopher Garcia collects loads from the estate owners of the area and transports everything in his van up to the landslip area.

"This is a very time-consuming exercise as we have to carry everything manually to the van waiting past another landslip up the hill. Pascal Torres volunteers his wheel barrow to take some of the load across while his wife Isidora and the rest of us put everything on our shoulders. We are forced to travel earlier to make up for the additional time spent doing this."

Dwayne Franklin is the Pastor of the Beacon of Hope Ministries in the area. His parishioners too have been heavily inconvenienced by the present state of the road because everyone goes to church in Paria.

"It is very frustrating to see people all dressed to go to church and when they reach the landslip they are forced to take off their shoes and cross this dangerous place on foot. Last Sunday, everyone had to face the heavy rains to go to church. There was water and mud everywhere and there is always the danger of the whole place slipping at any time with the heavy rain water."

Morne La Croix is a popular destination for bird watching. Tour guides and maxi loads of tourists are regularly seen conducting bird watching tours throughout the area. The drive over the hills between Arima and Blanchisseuse is a favourite pastime for many nature lovers on a Sunday. Signs posted along the road informing people that the road is closed now cause dismay among such people.

The older generation of the community of Morne La Croix feels aggrieved that some of the people are considering abandoning this rural area for the sake of their little ones now growing up. Hope for a better tomorrow is diminishing as other parts of the main road are collapsing. Less than five minutes away from the landslip there is the threat of another large cave in as cracks deepen and widen. Torres' house is near to this spot and the walls have begun to display cracks as the land slowly slips downhill.

The Arima/Blanchisseuse Road from the Las Lapas lookout to Blanchisseuse has been neglected for too long. Instead of the usual patch here and there, contracts for the complete reconstruction of this road should be given out as soon as possible. This is the main access road to rural and coastal communities as it is the only road that goes over the mountains of the Northern Range directly to the sea. The life threatening situation that these communities face must be fixed now before the people really decide to abandon the area and leave ghost villages behind.