

Notes from the Founder

Establishing a solid foundation to change a nation one life at a time.

It seems like it was only yesterday we were in Haiti for our ninth annual mission trip (January 2009) to continue to develop relationships and build partnerships with the people of Zorangé and Bainet, Haiti.

Most of you already know that in January 2000 there was a small team of six people that embarked on a trip to Haiti which was famously or infamously called a “survey trip.” Fast forward to nine years later, the number of travelers exceeded 40 people. This group of people includes jacks of all trades, doctors, nurses, teachers, specialists, pastors and laypeople. Although we promised ourselves not to take more than 30 people on this type of trip, we found ourselves taking more than 40 people on two different occasions.

Is it a comfortable trip? Many people would beg to differ after sitting on a bus hitting bumps and driving on ‘roads’ which should be called paths at best. Do people get hungry, thirsty, tired and overwhelmed? Absolutely! Would people who have been living in modern comforts all their lives adapt to a place with no running water, no inside plumbing, and no electricity? Well, I must say that I’ve been amazed at seeing how these people have not only adapted but thrived -- because they are not focused on themselves; instead, every fiber of their being is focused on serving the people of this little village called Zorangé. Before all is said and done, most of them are already contemplating their return to this village the following year. Indeed, overnight, they have become “victims of Haiti’s passion.”

As in previous years, our trip in January 2009 was a success as we were able to accomplish our objectives: conduct a medical clinic, put on workshops for our teaching staff and teachers from the surrounding schools, and of course hold an open-air revival, Haiti style.

As we planned the medical trip for 2009 we wanted to do two main things: reduce the number of people that we provide care for which would allow us to spend more time with the ones that we see. Yes, there was a paradigm shift in the way we wanted to conduct the mobile clinic -- because we opened a full-time operational clinic in March 2008, this medical trip was going to focus on providing specialty care in a way that we have never done before. In addition to our general practitioners, we had specialists in the following areas: cardiology, gastroenterology, obstetrics and gynecology, podiatry, optometry, pharmacy etc. The previous year we administered care to almost 1900 people, but in this type of specialty clinic, and given that our Zorangé clinic is in full operation, we wanted to focus on cases that would be difficult to care for any other time of the year. Our goal was to administer care to about 1000 people, and at the end of the 3-day clinic we saw exactly 1000 people. The majority of these people had been pre-screened prior to our arrival by our Haiti medical staff, while leaving room to see people that may come with emergency conditions.

I can't tell you how excited I was to see that this type of clinic worked almost flawlessly. Whatever kinks we found during the first few hours of the first day were corrected and improved upon, and we were rockin' and rollin' by our third day. But the most important thing for me was how much we empowered our Haitian medical staff by working and collaborating with them to conduct a different type of clinic. The US Medical Team was quick to point out the Haiti Medical Team is doing an excellent job at diagnosing and treating patients, and the documentation on the patient files is excellent. As you can imagine, Haiti Medical Team's confidence skyrocketed by getting such positive feedback on their work, and they showed a growing desire to learn. They're determined to provide the best medical care to the community despite the lack of resources.

As we move forward, we know that we'll have an impact in all areas of the people's lives of Bainet. Our work with the young generation in providing education, developing literary clubs, academic and sports clubs, Sunday school, mentoring—most important of all, establishing and building relationships with them—will continue. The ultimate goal is to see their lives changed, and in turn they seek to change other lives with the help of God.

We are about to establish community health workers (CHWs) in all of the sections of Bainet (a total of nine sections and two CHWs per section to start). These CHWs will be our eyes and ears to ensure that anyone who is sick in their community knows there is a place they can come to get medical care, or perhaps have us go to them. We know today there are people with a basic cut which can deteriorate into a medical emergency if not treated or taken care of properly and on time.

We are also in the process of working with some of the schools in the community where most of the kids have no school supplies and the teachers are not equipped. Our goal in education is not to have the best school in the area, but for all the schools in the area to provide the best education to all of the kids. We know we're not there today and we may not be there in 10 years, but we will get there. It's our intention to continually devote our time and energy to equip the leaders to impact their community in all aspects. I firmly believe that Haitians have to develop Haiti in collaboration with the international community—this is the only way our future generation will not have to face the current dire situations that exist in the country.

Dear supporters and friends, Hope for Haiti Foundation is embarking on its tenth year anniversary of its first trip to Haiti. Just like this decade has flown by, we know the next one will do the same. We have met some of our objectives by opening a church, a primary school, a secondary school, a medical clinic, and now we're planning to build a hospital.

By the end of 2009, we expect to have power in our school and clinic, Internet service, and the operation of the radio station on a permanent basis, as opposed to a few hours per week. We will also have completed the purchase and started the retrofitting of the two buildings in Bainet that will serve as a dormitory and a hospital. We will have established a team of community health workers that are trained to provide basic first aid and health

education to their community as minimum job requirements. It is absolutely and positively true that none of these things could have happened if it weren't for you who have supported us for a decade already. I am confident that in the next decade we'll see more supporters that will continue to take ownership of HFHF—those who will grow with us and help equip a generation that will take the country in places that she has not seen before.

Yes, Haitians helping and developing Haiti! What a beautiful concept!

Jean Elade Eloi
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