

Summary of one person's experience, just after visiting post-quake. February 2010

Things are very 'fractured' in Haiti and at Anis Zunuzi--I mean schedules, people's ability to cope with everything, transportation, meetings. . . It's just very difficult for everyone to concentrate and accomplish much due, I believe, to the stress of everything that's happened. Though we were welcomed with warmth, and we had camping spots on the soccer field, cold showers, flush toilets, and we brought our own food-- our presence created more for everyone to coordinate and think about. I would suggest waiting until the dust settles (figuratively and literally, the air is choking with dust still and everything that was green is white. When the wind blows everyone coughs). People just really have enough at this time for things that aren't critical.

The medical team provided a much needed service to hundreds of people in several locations. They delivered two babies, saved one from dying--an 8 day old infant hadn't eaten anything since birth and was so dehydrated a needle could not find a vein for IV. Rushed to the hospital from the countryside on a tap tap, they finally were able to insert a needle to IV and saved her little life. Mother was just as dehydrated and almost gone. They are alive today because of the fast-acting pediatrician. They also treated many wounds, set bones and treated infants for starvation and malnutrition. Too much to write here, but in many cases they provided life-saving services.

As triage person with Love for Haiti, I could see the results of the quake in their eyes. Everyone is scared, dazed and rather detached from reality. People really don't seem to be able to function well. Most everyone has a cough from the dust, watery eyes and a cold from sleeping outside. They won't sleep indoors at all even if their house is still standing. Can't blame them. I wouldn't either as it's frightening to think of all that concrete crashing down again. Most are suffering from shock and PTSD. Understandable.

I mention the above because it's my feeling that at this time your training wouldn't be nearly as effective as later. Teachers and other staff would benefit much more later--even after March--when their lives have returned to some kind of normalcy. Right now, everyone is trying to find a home, dealing with medical issues and death of friends and family. Though they would appreciate your visit, I believe your words would have more impact later when they're not so pre-occupied with trying to solve other problems like surviving. The FCL curriculum is greatly needed there to flesh out their existing program and give it a more world view. To me, (my observation only) Haitian see the world as only Haiti--Ex.--all the classroom have only one map, that of Haiti. There are no world maps anywhere! With FCL, children AND staff will include a world-view in their curriculum which is sorely needed. They might not hear the full message and understand the thinking of FCL at this particular time of pre-occupation. Plus, they're trying to get back to a regular school schedule. They have no idea how many students they still have at AZ. The first day of school was yesterday, after the quake. They plan to see how many students they have after thousands have left PauP for the countryside. So the school is in flux and reorganization.

When the rainy season starts in March, it will begin a whole slew of problems with it, mainly housing and drainage and possibly additional diseases. Those sleeping under sheets--thousands--will become ill with exposure, and there will be running and standing water everywhere. Let's just trust that outside efforts will help direct at least some reconstruction before then.

We did not have a UN convoy escort. Mark Freehill, DR, NSA, met us at his house (we had directions for the taxi driver) housed 12 of us on the floor, etc., led us to the border in his car (we were in a large bus/van pulling a trailer with generator and med supplies in it), helped facilitate the crossing into Haiti and Sue met us on the other side and guided us to Anis Zunuzi. HOWEVER, it is a grueling trip because of the roads and poor buses. The PAP airport will re-open mid-month. Fly there. You do not want to do what we had to do. Takes 8 hours one way with only one place for a break. Not a fun experience.

You would need to camp on the grounds and that would also present a problem during rainy season. It would be TOO WET. Plus, the kids will be using the field for soccer when school starts again. BUT, if these domes come through, you could camp inside on the floor, perhaps. Four people would be max, I should think, for staying with Sue and Yves. OR perhaps you could stay with Ferial as their children are gone now and they have space. Mark and a councilor from DR stayed there instead of camping.

One doc had only a one way ticket. He is now sleeping on top of the hospital for a month where his tent and belongings are safe. Many of us had things stolen during the day from our tents. We learned. We took our suitcases each day and locked them up, dragging them back to the tent each night. There are street children all over the campus and they take anything not on your person and they ask for things you're wearing too! It was very difficult eating dinner in the classroom (M. recall the kindergarten classroom behind the metal sliding grated door? That's where we stored things and had our two meals a day) when the children were looking on, hungry. But the minute something was shared it was like an announcement and 50 children would be there with their hands out. . . .Heartbreaking. So we could give them nothing.

So, bottom line, I would suggest waiting. Full Circle Learning is too important to get lost in the reconstruction phase after this disaster. It's my personal feeling that it would be more impressive coming later when things have relaxed more and people aren't so worried about another quake, getting safely through another day and all the other stresses just now.. I hope that helps a little.