

January 29, 2010

Haiti Earthquake Relief Update

No-no or Noslav was enjoying the late afternoon light in her neighborhood of Laplin in Port au Prince two weeks ago. She is a housewife and her husband works as a mechanic. She and her four teenage children were sitting in the front yard of their small, two story house when the world turned upside down. Their home was demolished before their eyes in the first 30 second quake. After No-no caught



her breath she began walking down their neighborhood street in disbelief. Every 30 yards she covered there were dead bodies lying on the ground. After she returned to their home, now a spot on the street where her family was sleeping, all she could do was gather the children around her and thank God they were still alive. She says, "God allowed me to live, and now I've at least found a place to stay." She arrived in our community on an early evacuation run, and is staying at Camp de la Grace. (Pictured here are No-no and her 16 year old son.)

Suzette makes a living as a cake-maker, specializing in wedding cakes. She looks younger than her 50 years. I teased her that she had less white hair than I do. Like so many others, in the initial moments after the earthquake, Suzette found her house uninhabitable. The first three days were the worst, she said because there was no food to be found. On the fourth day, a neighbor brought some food and shared with them. Even worse, her three teenage daughters were quickly becoming at risk for rape while so many were sleeping unprotected outside. Realizing the situation was deteriorating she took her four children ranging in age from 10-25 and left Port au Prince. Her husband stayed behind thinking he could still find some work. She had family in our community but they really didn't have space for her, so she has moved out to Camp de la Grace as well. Suzette relates, "I had felt a lot of stress before arriving,



headaches and my blood pressure was up.” She says the environment at the camp is much better and is helping her relax. I found her laughing at her children playing a relay race conducted by our volunteers. Smiling, Suzette says, “God has taken care of us. I know he’ll continue to care for us. She shared with me that now many people are embracing God and coming closer to God. “God has shown us who he is, God, the master of the earth.”

This is just two of the stories of families displaced in the current tragedy. They realize how fortunate they are to have found a way out to some security. They are grateful they are alive, and while still in shock, are appreciating the simple things for the present. As the days go on, we are planning on ways to encourage all those with us. Camp residents were excited to hear that I was considering launching an English class for them and also that school may reopen soon in our community. While it may be crowded, at least for the students that sense of normalcy can return. So day by day, we go on.

Meanwhile, things haven’t slowed down much for Caleb, but he is content that he sees progress being made. Yesterday he was in Port au Prince working away. One item of business was to stop by and pay for a charter flight at the smaller airport. As he entered the building, he spoke to a policeman he always greets. Caleb said, “Man, I’m glad to see you, that you’re alive!” (That is a common greeting in Haiti these days). To Caleb’s surprise, this middle aged man began to cry. As he stopped to talk to him, the officer told him that all he had left in the world was the uniform on his back. So he just keeps coming to work, because there’s nothing else left. Caleb encouraged him with some practical help but had to keep going. These are the daily needs all around us. Caleb received 150 phone calls/messages between 6-8 A.M. yesterday with people asking for help. Where do you start?

Today Caleb was working at arranging pick up and transport for a container of donated tents and relief supplies from the sea port of Cap Haitien 40 miles to our north. While he was doing that, I met Missionary Flights (www.missionaryflights.org) on their second day in a row flying relief supplies into our inland town. We received 1,200 lbs. of food items this afternoon for immediate distribution. Some may stay at the camp, but we’ll also be coordinating with needs of those throughout the country.

Please continue praying for safety, ease of getting supplies moving, and that supply lines would stay open. This is critically important. We appreciate all of you who take the time to read these updates!

Debbie for all

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