

HAITI

October 2010

There are so many disasters around the world. I have often thought that I would like to help but have never had the opportunity before. In October 2010, I was invited to go to Haiti with Mission of T.E.A.R.S. This Toronto based agency does humanitarian work in many countries around the world (www.missionoftears.ca). We arrived in Haiti two days after cholera broke out and left two days before the hurricane arrived to devastate Haiti once again. I was invited to Haiti by Mission of Tears, along with a colleague and friend, Brian Nichols from Peterborough to look at the feasibility of setting up therapeutic programs for girls who had been sexually abused in the tent camps.

Mission of Tears supports two projects in Haiti. Our work was primarily with H.I.S. Home for Children (www.hishomeforchildren.com), a Crèche for children. The Crèche has 80 children in their main home. The children in a Crèche are available for adoption. The children in an orphanage in Haiti are not available for adoption. H.I.S. Home was asked by Social Services to begin a separate home for girls who have been sexually abused. There were 9 girls in the home when we were there. The home will have 25 girls living there and there were 25 more girls already on a waiting list for the home.

We also visited another project supported by Mission of Tears called Coram Deo run by Karen Bultje (www.haiticoramdeo.blogspot.com) Karen provides urgent medical care to Haitians. She also runs a school for developmentally challenged children and children who have not had the opportunity to go to school.

I have been fortunate. I have traveled to Russia on three occasions. In 1989 and 2002, I went to Russia and met with judges, prosecutors, educators and orphanage personnel about adoption. In October 2009, I went to Russia to teach at a University in St. Petersburg. Three colleagues and I (Donna Cuthbertson, Hannah Sun Reid and Brian Nichols) taught and did workshops about play therapy, attachment based therapy and adoption at a conference called Attachment Disorder and Therapeutic work with Children. I traveled to China in September 2010 with Donna Cuthbertson and Hannah Sun Reid and visited orphanages there.

In Haiti our goal was to set up therapeutic programs and return to support the staff in implementing the programs. We met with two girls at the Crèche to assess them in terms of a prospective adoption for one girl and aggressive/violent behaviour leading to possible expulsion from the Crèche for another girl. We set up therapeutic programs at the girls' home to look at the feasibility of ongoing programming for the girls. Unfortunately, we decided that the staff didn't have the experience or resources to follow through with the programs between our visits. At this point, Haitian energy is focused on providing the basics – food, shelter and safety. The original plan was for Brian and I to return to Haiti every three months. At this point, we don't know what the future plans are for this project.



Boys attending a class at H.I.S. Home



Older girls doing the younger girl's hair.



A girl with a prosthetic leg learning to skip



Sunday School at H.I.S. Home



The girls and staff.



Art and sandtray activities.



Brian Nichols and Sandra Webb doing activities





Activities with the children at the girl's home



A seminar at Morningside Academy with Social Services, Gordon and Diane Lewis,



Coram Deo run by Karen Bultje



A village outside Port au Prince

