

For this week long trip, five “brave souls” (Rod Ingram, Arlene Ingram, Sally Spencer, Linda Brown, and Michel Brown) set forward to the island of Haiti, in the hottest season, a time when insects are also at their worst; all in an effort to pave the way for establishing future improvements for the lives of those that live in Haiti.

Indeed, these individuals were “pioneers” in a number of ways. First, they visited a number of sites unfamiliar to previous Hope on the Move trips to Haiti. In addition, this team was uncompromising in their personnel dedicated to seeing a long-term vision planted, and cultivated, in terms of self-sustaining agriculture.

The trip began in Christianville, where team members visited a facility that was diverse in operations (e.g., a medical clinic, dental and optometry clinics, a school, etc.). This facility has partnered with the Universities of Florida and Alabama, and they have an on-site research laboratory where researchers are working to eradicate malaria, typhoid and dengue fever from Haiti. However, the primary reason for visiting this operation was to see their feeding program. This facility raises chickens and tilapia. Protein is a major component that is missing in the diet of the people in their area, and we know it to be a leading factor in the malnutrition in most parts of Haiti, as well. Christianville has about 1,000 chickens in a large barn yielding 1,000 eggs per day. The manure from the chickens is washed into a pond that grows algae. The algae is diverted as feed to several tilapia ponds. The fish are harvested weekly, and the children are fed meals that include ground fish, rice and eggs. Clearly, many lessons were learned, for potential application elsewhere.

From there, we visited with Dr. Kelly Crowdis, hearing about her “Kids for Kids” program. The program is a one year extra-curricular class for fourth graders. Care of and feeding for goats is taught in a three month curriculum. In the end, the children are tested and must pass with at least an 85% knowledge score. Once they have passed (a remedial class is available for those who do not pass as the real goal is that all fourth graders receive a goat) the children then receive a pregnant goat to keep. The children give back their second kid so the program can be self-perpetuating. The rest of the year is spent on follow-up and further instruction on goat husbandry.

On day three, we did what was a first for Hope on the Move. Not a first in that we went to LaHatte...but that the visit involved camping there, full time, for three days. This effort began by presenting to the villagers a small slide presentation of what we had seen earlier in the week in the hopes that the individuals watching could catch a glimpse of the possibilities for their own community. We also showed them pictures of themselves that we had taken earlier that day; for many, this was a rare event if not the first time they had seen themselves in this fashion.

After an “interesting” nights sleep, we met Tim Vanderbeek from Healing Hands International about the potential for installing a well in LaHatte. If we could wish one thing for LaHatte, it would be water as currently, it is about a 3-mile walk, round trip, to obtain this life sustaining substance. The encounter, and interaction, was amazing! Our visit with Tim was, in a word, remarkable. So much so that in October of 2011, we hope that Tim will return with a man who digs wells and knows the equipment best to see that a rig can be moved up to the dry, mountainous area of LaHatte. Beyond water, we also had a major concern regarding crops. One of the locals, Osmane graciously walked us to his farm. Most of the farmers grow—and have always grown— watermelon, corn, sorghum and some beans. Yet, they have problems with caterpillars eating their plants, and they lose about half of their corn after it is harvested to rats and mice. One-half! There are several banana groves in the area, but the villagers think it is too dry for mango, breadfruit and other fruit trees. For us, providing a means of irrigation was considered a must!

On this trip, the team also learned a little of Haitian history, in terms of LaHatte. The area used to be called La Racque, which means “nothing” as in “nobody lives there” but after it became more populated, they changed the name to LaHatte, which they said is just a name with no particular meaning. The team met Duville, a person that was born and has lived his entire life in LaHatte; he is 62 and his parents lived there before him. Duville said that the village was originally settled because the land was given to the new residents for free. There has never been any stream or any springs in the area. There is a spring about two hours walk up the hill to the North, but it is “salty.”

Beyond this, our trip also took us to Montrouis at the Watershed Initiative For National Natural Environmental Resources (W.I.N.N.E.R.). WINNER is a government organization funded by USAID and partnering with the University of Florida- [IFAS, the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences](#). Our thought was that they might do soil tests and maybe have a type of extension service available. What we found out exploded the possibilities for LaHatte. They do have extension services available as well as a Master Farmer program, but, they also do micro-banking and micro-business; they are working on a wholesale network so that participant farmers can get better pricing from bigger markets without having to spend time physically selling at a local market; they have a program that can set farmers up with chickens for egg production that will provide income (and hopefully food/nutrition) year round, not just during the growing season; and they have grant money available for irrigation projects, reforestation and ravine remediation.

After splitting off two members of the team, the remainder went to visit the Mission Possible headquarters in Lanzac. There, the tea, cleaned the old leaves out of the drying shed, undertook soil tests from samples taken in LaHatte and met with Mission Possible staff for plans related to the future. Without a doubt, help can be provided! This was an amazing trip...a major first step to what will without a doubt, lead to positive change for the people of Haiti.