



Work Team Leader Manual

Section 2 – Haiti

History of Country

The republic of Haiti is located on the western one third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. The first non-native visitors to the island were Christopher Columbus and crew, landing in the country of Haiti (near Cap Haitien). The island of Hispaniola was divided into a French and a Spanish colony, the west being French Saint-Domingue (now Haiti), the east being Spanish, the present Dominican Republic.

The French exploited the natural resources of Haiti for the enrichment of their nation with imported African slaves, who were brutally treated by the colonists. Around 1800, the slaves revolted against their masters, led by Toussaint Louverture, a former slave. The bloody revolution resulted in the slaves gaining freedom from the French and forming the first black republic. The freed slaves killed off most of the French colonists and destroyed most of what the French had built in Haiti. Even the language of the French was changed (Haitians speak Creole, derived from French), as the newly freed slaves abandoned all French vestiges they could. The people have struggled in poverty for much of the national existence, as many of their natural resources were depleted and they were internationally shunned after the revolution.

Haiti has been plagued by political instability throughout its existence. Even today, there are frequent coup d'état and general uprisings. Several times in history, American military forces have intervened to quell bloodshed and revolution. In the period 1950-85, Haiti was ruled by Francois Duvalier, and later, his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier (Papa Doc and Baby Doc), whose secret police, the Tonton Macoutes, maintained order with a ruthless brutality. A revolution in 1985, led by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, resulted in the Tontons being disbanded and the Haitian armed forces disbanded. Duvalier was forced into exile in France. A few years later, Aristide was forced into exile, although he later returned to Haiti. For the last decade, United Nations troops have been deployed in Haiti to maintain order. Many of the past Haitian leaders have been ineffective in improving the quality of life for their citizens. Some were overtly corrupt, enriching their own wealth by plundering the resources of the Haitian people. The current government is headed by Michel Martelly.

As a result of the instability, violence, and corruption rampant in Haitian government, the people of Haiti have suffered economic stagnation. Illiteracy, poverty, crime, drug traffic, and STD's are prevalent. Although the nation is nominally Christian in faith affiliation, many so-called Christians practice a corrupted doctrine of Christianity, as it is mixed with voodoo practices. The voodoo practices constitute a blasphemous activity, and the true, sincere Christians in Haiti are concerned and very disapproving of the sinful pagan practices that have infiltrated some of the nominal Christian churches.

In spite of the national difficulties, the Haitian people are a friendly, happy people and the nation is blessed with natural beauty and a tropical climate. There is much upside potential for the nation and it's people, but the needs are great. The opportunities to help are sometimes overwhelming.

Background

Cultural Characteristics

When working with Haitian nationals, several cultural differences become readily apparent. These differences are not to say they are wrong, and we are right, rather, they are to point out differing perspectives and how they vary from our own. For example, Haitians are slower and easier going in their approach to completing a project, emphasizing relationships rather than accomplishments and deadlines. Also, they are more focused on collective activity, rather than individual accomplishment. This can be frustrating to American Type A personalities, and to be sure, there are some goals that a work team should accomplish on a short term mission. Just remember, cultural differences are not others failed attempts to be like us. Forbearance and understanding are essential as we work together and we should take care not to run roughshod over their feelings as we strive to complete activity.

Haitians are also much more expressive than Americans, who tend to be more reserved. Haitian worship is spirited, singing is enthusiastic and loud, and in some services, clapping and shouting can be part of their worship. Funerals in particular are loud and emotional. However, Sunday worship and song service in the Christian church tends to be somewhat more reserved and reverent.

Superstition pervades Haitian culture. Colorful flags flying over a house denotes the village witch doctor, with the number of flags signifying the powers he is purported to possess. Evangelization of Haiti has resulted in some witch doctor conversions, and by the grace of God, more can be led to abandon their false religion and superstition

Language

The official language of Haiti is French. However, many Haitians do not speak French, but Creole, a language nearly unique to Haiti and similar to French. English is spoken by a few Haitians.

Demographics

Most Haitians are dark skinned, descendants from slaves imported from Africa in colonial days. A class of people of mixed race, or mullatto, are light skinned. They tend to split into class divisions, with the mixed race sometimes regarded as a higher social standing as are whites, or blancs. While Haiti is a very poor country with widespread poverty, there is a class of extreme wealth, and the class divide is stark, with private armed guards frequently patrolling wealthier places of business to keep out poor pedestrian traffic to the business.

Customs

Behavior to be avoided (or encouraged) that may be different from home

Haitians are in general modest people. However, most do not have running water, and clean bathing facilities in their homes. It is common for people to bathe in river crossings while washing their clothes.

When crossing a river and encountering bathing individuals, respect their privacy, just look the other way and do not photograph!

Photo recommendations

One must be careful when photographing people in Haiti. Taking a picture of a person without permission at close (portrait range) can be offensive, perhaps rooted in the superstitious nature of the Haitian people. However, in Christian villages in remote locations, Haitians have been known to ask to be photographed, enthusiastic about having their facial image recorded on a digital screen for them to review. (This may well be a Christian vs. non-Christian reaction). It is always better to ask permission before taking a photo to avoid an angry confrontation.

Many children in Haiti are not adequately clothed. It is common for a child to have only a t shirt on. When encountering Haitian children not decently covered, refrain from photography.

General interactions with locals

Haitians are a friendly people in general. However, the poverty and hopelessness have taken a toll on some of the citizenry. When a local smiles, waves, or generally acts friendly, it is acceptable and encouraged to respond in kind and treat them with kindness and friendliness. However, when encountering hostile attitudes, confrontational situations should be avoided. Friendly Christ-like behavior will go a long way toward defusing a conflict, but it is best to not get into conflict situations in the first place

Avoid giving phone nos., addresses, e-mail

While it may be tempting to give e-mail addresses and phone nos. to newfound friends in the country of Haiti, care should be taken to give out personal information and it should be done very sparingly. A contact in the United States may be perceived to be overly generous, and if one gives contact information, be prepared to be contacted by the friend, as well as some of his friends. Contacts may invite the perception of generous means, so be careful where contacts are given out .

Language translation where applicable

Many of our local missionaries are fluent in English and Creole and have the ability to translate. Also, some of the Haitian locals HarvestCall works with can speak some English. Where possible, team members are encouraged to converse with Haitians and connect on a personal level. Where translation is not available, a smile is a universally recognized communication of love.

List of commonly used phrases for team members

Included in the packet of information to team members is a list of frequently used phrases. This can be useful in basic communication between team members and locals and team members are encouraged to memorize a few basic phrases, i. e., thank you, good morning, God's blessings, etc.

Recommendations for gifts and gratuities for locals (i.e., kitchen help, laundry at guest house)

In general, team members are instructed to use caution in distributing gifts and gratuities to Haitian locals. However, where the Haitian employees have provided services such as laundry and food service such as at the HarvestCall guest house, it is entirely appropriate to show appreciation for their efforts. Simple gifts of towels, basic toiletries, etc., are appropriate, and token cash gifts are also. It is best to give a gratuity through the HarvestCall mission personnel managing the guest house, as they understand how to distribute the money to the Haitian workers. When in doubt, ask one of the in-country Haitian missionaries what gift amounts would be appropriate.

Activity in host country

Sanitation recommendations

Sanitation practices are substandard in Haiti and many pathogens are present everywhere. Work team members should carry personal hand sanitizer bottles or disposable hand sanitizing wipes. It is important to keep contaminated food or objects out of your mouth. Always wash before eating! Even tooth brushing should be performed with sanitized water, as tap water in most areas of Haiti will contain pathogens and will cause illness in a visiting work team member. Under no circumstances should one every drink water in the country that is not sanitized and bottled. If in doubt, ask the in-country missionaries if the water is safe to drink. (The exception is water on the MEBSH and Hospital Lumiere compounds that has been treated and is safe to drink.)

Many areas of Haiti do not have running water and toilet facilities consist of outhouses. While this may seem crude and inconvenient to some, just several generations ago in the USA it was also commonplace. It is advisable when travelling in rural areas to carry in one's luggage a roll or rolls of toilet paper for those occasions where outhouse facilities will be used.

Emphasis on work safety when on job

The team leader is responsible for jobsite safety. Prior to beginning work on the job, a safety meeting is advisable. Much of the work team effort in Haiti involves construction work, and there is inherent physical danger in some of the work procedures. Safety must be practiced to avoid personal injury to work team members and bystanders. Read and observe the safety practices in the work team guidelines booklet.

All work team members in Haiti are required to purchase and have in place temporary mission trip insurance for emergency evacuation coverage. This insurance is available online at www.travelwithgallagher.com. Short term mission insurance is reasonably priced, usually \$3-4/day for the short trips. The team leader should be familiar with emergency evacuation requirements as noted in the policy available with the insurance purchase.

Act as work leader if requested by in country missionaries

Depending on the work to be performed, the in-country missionary may take supervision of the team once in the country. For instance, the MEBSH Construction personnel will plan and direct the work for visiting work teams. Work team leaders should coordinate in advance with the in-country missionaries.

Work teams should be a help to the designated project and the extent to which a work team leader is active in leading the team should be cleared prior to arrival at the work site.

Staying together as a group

There are many dangerous areas in Haiti. The police force is ineffective in eliminating crime from the country and there is general resentment of foreign visitors by some Haitians. Some violence and instances of kidnapping have been reported in the past. The current US State Dept. warning is often repeated and updated to warn of the dangers in Haiti to American citizens. For this reason, it is important that team members use extreme caution when travelling in the country. There is safety in numbers and visitors to Haiti should travel as a group. A lone traveler or one who has wandered out alone in a danger area may be a crime target. Stay together!

Areas to avoid for personal safety (high crime areas, kidnapping, etc.)

There are known areas of the country that are susceptible to crime and violence. The in-country missionaries will be able to provide guidance on areas to be avoided. Generally, main thoroughfares and public areas will be personally safe, but there may also be pickpockets. Valuables should not be carried in the open. Wallets should be carried in a manner to make it difficult to reach, i.e., a front rather than back pocket or in a concealed carry location. Passports are a theft item and they should be especially guarded from pilferage. A photocopy of your passport, carried in a separate location, is advisable, in the event a replacement is ever necessary.

During times of protest and political instability, the dangers of travel may increase. Roadblocks and demonstrations should be avoided wherever possible.

Areas unacceptable for leisure time activity

While the country of Haiti has great potential as a tourist area, most of the country does not have much in the way of tourist activity and most of the commerce takes place on the street or in crude kiosks. Most of the street vending is legitimate and a customary practice of Haitian society. A trip to the market is an enlightening experience and in some cases, may be an opportunity to procure some work trip souvenirs. Be aware, there may be unwholesome activity in the crowded streets and areas recognized as unwholesome should be avoided. Again, stay together as a group!

Work team leaders should be spirit led and areas of danger should not have to carry a warning. However, if youth and particularly, unconverted youth, are along, and exposed to areas where unwholesome practices may be observed, it may be a teachable moment to express disapproval of the sin while lovingly recognizing that all men are God's creation, many captive to Satan's wiles.

Food and water to be avoided during trip

Much of the food prepared in Haiti would be considered unusual by American standards. However, it is in general, tasty and nutritious. Some foods, especially watercress in salads, are unsafe for consumption due to absorption of pathogens. Heated or cooked food is generally safe to eat. The in-country missionaries will provide instructions on food preparation to Haitian locals where precautions need to be taken, such as mild chlorine rinsing of lettuce, cabbage, and other uncooked vegetables. When in doubt, seek the advice of in-country missionaries.

Only treated water is safe to drink. Do not drink water from wells, from streams, from taps, or anywhere in Haiti that is questionable. Bottled water is safe, but make sure the bottle cap is sealed before opening. Make sure carbonated beverages have a sealed cap when opening. Water from the MEBSH compound and the Hospital Lumiere compound is treated and safe. When travelling to a work site, safe drinking water must be transported with the supplies. Haiti is a hot weather climate. Drink water or Gatorade frequently to maintain hydration while working in the high temperature climate. Failure to drink frequently could cause a team member to become ill.

When travelling to Haiti from the USA, there is frequently a period of time from the departure from the American airport to the arrival in the in-country guest house that may exceed 6 or 8 hours in plane, bus, or car travel where food and water is not available. Fill a large or several smaller water bottles after security check in the US for carry on use, and pack food that can be consumed along the way such as nuts, granola bars, packaged cheese sticks, meat jerky, etc. Packaged food is advisable to prevent contamination and insect infestation.

Worship services to be anticipated and attire expected by local customs

In general, the Haitian people dress very nicely for formal worship services. Suits, ties, dress shirts and shoes are the norm for men, and women wear hats, dresses, modest skirts and blouses, or suits. Casual dress may be offensive. Check with the local in-county missionaries on what the local practice is. Generally, women should wear modest length skirts, dresses or blouses with sleeves, and men should wear a shirt with collar and long pants, with tie optional. Sisters should wear head coverings during all worship services.

Immunizations and medications

Travel to Haiti requires immunization for certain communicable diseases. A consultation with the local travel immunization clinic in your area will determine which immunizations are required for travel to Haiti. These should be reviewed periodically since some require a booster immunization periodically. In addition to immunizations, preventive medication for malaria is required and an oral prescription is available from a travel clinic or your personal physician. There have been past instances of work team

members skipping recommended preventive medication and becoming seriously ill—most episodes of this are preventable. Please take preventive measures.

Evacuation Insurance

When travelling to Haiti, it is HarvestCall policy to require short term missionary travel insurance. Purchase of this insurance should be made for the group by the team leader. Instructions for this purchase and online purchase can be made at www.travelwithgallagher.com.