



Covid-19 in Haiti & the DR

The coronavirus continues to spread. Cases in the DR have surpassed 16,000. In Haiti, official numbers are still low (1,400+), but it is nearly impossible to determine the actual number of cases. Social distancing restrictions are in place, much as they have been in Canada. Even though many activities are delayed or temporarily halted due to Covid-19, there is still action at all Rayjon-supported project sites.

[Read More ----->](#)

The Trip That Didn't Happen

Sue V is a trip leader who normally would have taken a group of Georgian college nursing students to the DR this spring. Back on April 22, she wrote the following letter, which appears here with minimal editing.

"We should be on the way to the airport right now, with 17 Georgian College nursing students and 5 leaders. 'Should' is the operative word in that sentence; since March 2020 when the world, as we knew it, changed.

Now, months of trip planning must be undone: flight bookings, room & board arrangements, the food plan and drinking water purchases for our nine day visit, bus transportation in the DR, and arrangements to hire 8 translators to work with our nursing team during clinic days. And our Dominican partner, Sister Nati had once again facilitated a schedule for the mobile medical team, so that we could accompany them to 4 poverty stricken villages. We would have been providing medical care and treatment for over 500 people.

Tours had been worked into our jam-packed schedule; to include the community hospitals, clinics, Coco plantation, church service, and one day at the beach. Guest speakers were arranged so that the students would have an understanding not only of the culture and history of the Dominican, but also, to present an awareness of the social injustice and inequality of the Haitian Community.

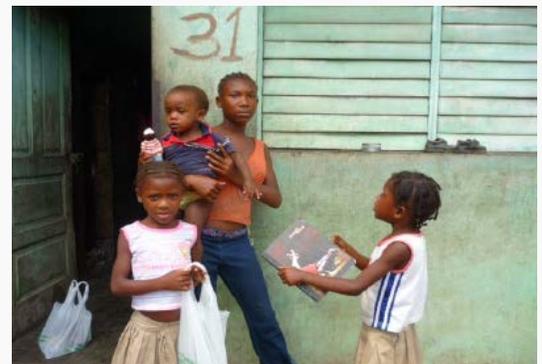
[Continue reading Sue's letter----->](#)



Supporting Rayjon through Covid-19 just might be the most fun you've had in a while. [Click here for info and to register](#)



Left: Georgian College Nursing Students and faculty sort medications at a clinic in the DR, 2019.



Right: A young mom and her three children on the Cambalachie Batey, DR.

Our trip had a blackboard site on Georgian College's interface to facilitate dissemination of information to the students. Information about World Health initiatives, poverty, health and physical assessment, Spanish, immunization requirements, flight information, accommodation information, our own 'CanadaHelps' donation site information, and meeting schedules and expectations.

The students were invested (both literally and figuratively) in our upcoming experience in nursing and had prepared diligently. They took time out of their own personal schedule to attend monthly meetings, learn Spanish, collect donations, hold fundraising events, create presentations on dengue fever, malaria, scabies, malnutrition, parasites and culture. They set up a private Facebook group for sharing more personal concerns / thoughts and photos quickly between our group members. We were connected at the hip - via cell phones in pockets!

The only thing left to do was pack - and then came March 2020, and the spread of Covid 19.

As trip leader, I contacted both senior leadership at Georgian and Rayjon with my concern, and a mutually agreeable decision was reached. This international trip had to be cancelled. The risk was too high.

Our Dominican partners were notified that we would not be coming and needless to say, they are extremely disappointed, but understanding.

I notified the students that we wouldn't be going and they were both disappointed and relieved: with this added stressor now removed and money coming back. Rayjon and Georgian agreed wholeheartedly that trip payments would be refunded, although donation money could not be returned if income tax receipts had already been sent out. (Once the final donation total is known, our trip leaders will make a decision on the allotment of the funds).

I notified our trip leaders - and we cried, for you see, we have seen the extreme poverty of the people living in the bateys and we know that there are many Haitian families; men, women, and children of all ages, who were counting on us again this year, for healthcare for their enslaved community.

And further, as leaders we were very disappointed for the missed opportunity for our students. This international nursing experience challenges them to a point of extreme learning. With 'front row seats' on this roller coaster week, the students are immersed with sights, smells, and sounds of the determinants of health: lacking healthcare, minimal education, not enough food, unclean drinking water, shack housing, political inequality, and social injustice. By "cracking open" this brief segment of the Dominican/Haitian capsule, our students are permitted to examine challenging global situations; question choices, debrief, reflect, integrate new knowledge and develop a new perspective. They return home, with huge personal and professional growth; forever changed!

Having said that, the decision NOT to go is the only ethically, safe decision that could've been made. We had to consider the risk for the health and safety of everyone involved; our nursing team, our Dominican partners, and the community members of the bateys.

Although I feel disappointment, grief, and void in my life today; I feel very strongly that someone needs to step up to the plate in the future, to continue what has been an ongoing mission of healthcare for over 20 years, to this impoverished community.

Life can't get any harder for them."

Note: The Georgian College team worked incredibly hard to gather donations in support of medical partners in the communities they work with in the DR. Even though their trip was cancelled, over \$8,000 will be forwarded to support health care in impoverished communities. These donations will arrive at a crucial time. **Thank you, Georgian Team!**



COVID-19 Project Updates

- **Consuelo, Dominican Republic:** Project Director Georges has completed an emergency care package distribution for 80 families in the community of Barrio 41. Each kit contained dried food goods and face masks (made by Doña Rosa, the sewing teacher)
- **St. Marc, Haiti:** Repairs to the gutters and rainwater collection system at the Pinson School have been completed during the school closure. Unfortunately, the actual planting of the community gardens and agricultural training for local families is on hold until it is safe to resume.
- **Cap Haitien, Haiti:** Rayjon is proud to be partnering with Konbit Sante and supporting their community health agents as they visit some of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Cap Haitien, install hand washing stations, and provide preventive training. The CNEWC is opening with reduced hours and limited staff, allowing parents to speak with the nurse and pick up needed supplies of the Medika Mamba nutritional supplement for their children. An additional emergency food distribution will take place this week, reaching some of the most vulnerable families.

[Donate Now](#)

