



I just returned home a couple of days ago after a prolonged break in the US and I am extremely happy to be back in the Village where I have resided for the past four months! I must have hugged and kissed almost every single kid and adult I encountered along the way that first evening. I received warm welcome backs from our “big, hospitable family” which made me realize all the more how special this place is and how privileged I am to be working here.

Things feel and look differently around here: the planted grass has grown everywhere around the houses, on the soccer field and basketball court which are nearly completed, thus creating a cleaner and more peaceful environment. Something else is different in the “air”, there seems to be an apparent change in the children’s lives. Not only have they gained weight after the vacation break probably from drinking “cow milk” but they seem more “present and comfortable” at ASYV.

One of the first things I heard from the educators was their reports on last week’s genocide commemoration at ASYV and what it was like for them and the children. They described a rough experience and their struggle in dealing with the emotional challenges that the children presented at the time. One of the students that had a traumatic episode told me that had I been at the Village during that time, she wouldn’t have had the extreme episode. Overwhelming feelings of guilt resurfaced for me as I wished I had been around to help in some way. Although I am saddened to hear that people had a very difficult time, I am convinced the experience brought them together as one family.

This second term, I am quite encouraged that many teens seem to appreciate the value and importance of counseling services at the Health and Wellness Center, particularly as a result of the last week’s turn of events and the life skills lessons they have been receiving from our program that help them understand themselves, their issues and how to obtain help.

This week, a boy approached me after class and opened up about his mood swings and trouble shaking off “the blues.” “What can I do to help myself?” he asked me with a suppliant look. He continued to explain that he has been feeling this way for several years including feeling worthless and numb at times. This is not a surprise considering his psycho-social background. We find a quiet place to further talk and explore his issues. He begins to feel better after venting and being validated. I also offer him practical ways to deal better with his feelings such as talking things out, journal writing, sending him positive affirmations, relaxation techniques, etc. He agreed to see me on a regular basis for counseling and departed feeling relieved and thanked me with a smile on his face.

Another boy walked in my office this week and requested that we meet on a weekly basis as he feels he may benefit from me teaching him about “important things regarding life.” He is an articulate, bright, and serious looking young boy, with determination and devotion in his many different activities, always desiring to learn more and to excel. Although he came in with certain things in mind, I am excited to grab this opportunity to also work on the underlying anxiety which seemed to surface during the commemoration week.

There is never a dull moment in the Village, so much has been developed in three months and I am convinced that this second semester, the teens will undertake more responsibilities at building ASYV.

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