



December 2018

HAITI

Ecumenical Foundation for Peace and Justice

- A Christian, ecumenical, non-profit organization in Port-au-Prince
- Runs House of Hope, an educational program for children who are restaveks and adults who have been abandoned
- Provide resources for people to learn traditional Haitian/Caribbean art forms

What can I do?

Learn

Watch the Caribbean Initiative's December 2018 webinar with Polycarpe Joseph, Executive Director of the Ecumenical Foundation for Peace and Justice

Read news stories and newsletters from mission co-workers

Pray

Remember churches, communities, and families who are affected

Connect

Link to networks or mission partnership with the Ecumenical Foundation for Peace and Justice

Advocate

Write letters and lobby with US and Haitian officials

Support

Mission partner programs aid marginalized communities and families

www.globalministries.org

Human Trafficking in Haiti

Introduction

Human trafficking is one of the biggest global issues of today. It is one of the most profitable forms of transnational crime and affects around 25 million people in every country around the world. Human trafficking, also called modern slavery, exists in many forms: sex trafficking, forced labor, bonded labor, domestic servitude, child labor, and recruiting children to be soldiers. Forced marriage is also included in some definitions of human trafficking, which then increases the numbers of people affected to around 40.5 million. In Haiti, the faces of modern slavery are restaveks, children who are forced to work as domestic servants.



Overview

Restaveks are often children from poor rural families who are sent to an urban area to live with a wealthier family, sometimes a relative, who promised to care for the child. In reality, they are forced to work as domestic servants around the clock, with little to no pay, and are often abused. They are not usually provided with the basic necessities, never mind an education, with no way to contact their family or loved ones. It is estimated that one in fifteen Haitian children are restaveks.

An important distinction to make is that restaveks are often given up willingly by their parents with the hope of having a better life. There are some restaveks that are treated kindly and sent to school, but most are not. Most restaveks are isolated from other children, despite often working for families who have children.

The restavek tradition is believed to date back to the colonial period and



persists today thanks to the high poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment rates. When Haiti began as a French colony, slavery was legal and very prevalent. After the slave revolt began in 1804, Haiti became the first country founded by a slave rebellion. Consequently, many neighboring countries and colonial powers refused to do business with it, leading to the collapse of what was a thriving export-based economy and widespread poverty that continues today. Therefore despite the fact that Haiti was founded by a slave revolt, slavery still exists today.

There are a few reasons why parents will give up their children. 80% of people in rural areas are poor and many poor families have more children than they can afford to take care of. Most schools and educational facilities are located in urban areas so if rural parents want to give their children a way out of poverty, they need to send them to urban areas.

On the other side, families who have restaveks choose to do so for many reasons. Infrastructure problems in urban areas mean women have a very high burden when it comes to domestic chores and have little help from their spouse. There is little to no refrigeration so women must go to the market every day. They have to fetch water from a well as there is no running water which means they also have to wash clothes by hand. If a family has even a little money in an urban, there is a huge incentive to have a restavek.

While the term restavek is unique to Haiti, this problem is not. In June 2017, The Atlantic magazine published an article as its cover story called "My Family's Slave," which highlighted this same practice of sending poor rural children to family in urban areas in the Philippines. In fact, forced child labor affects around 4.3 million children globally, while around 152 million children (1 in 10 children globally) are engaged in child labor.



Embrace the Spirit
The Caribbean Initiative

www.globalministries.org/caribbeaninitiative

Get Involved

For more information

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