

### Sources: Child Domestic Labour in Haiti Child Domestic Labour in Haiti Characteristics, Contexts and Organisation of Children's Residence, Relocation and Work

- In 1998, Jean-Robert Cadet published an autobiography titled "Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American", describing his life as a "restavek", domestic servant, or "slave child", and the general social acceptance of this practice in Haiti. The book drew international attention, and in the aftermath, the topic was given space in newspapers around the world. The Creole term "restavek"<sup>2</sup> became close to an idiom of child domestic labour in wider circles. In Haiti, however, the issue had been raised in public forums earlier. In 1984, Haitian officials and scholars gathered in a Conference on child domesticity (which produced a conference report, "Colloque sur l'Enfance en Domesticité", see Anderson et al. 1990: iv; UNICEF 1993: 34). The first known estimates of the extent of child domesticity in Haiti stem from this conference. With basis in census data from 1982, Dorélien estimated that Haiti had a number of 109.737 domestics, which comprised 2.2% of the total population, or 9% of the population aged less than 18 years (Dorélien 1990 [1984]: 1). During the same conference in 1984, E. Clesca suggested an estimate of 120.000 child domestics, or 11% of the children from six to 15 years of age. However, Clesca also noted that this figure may be doubled, to 240.000, as domestics considered as relatives or lodgers/paying guests/boarders (French: pensionnaires) are not included in the estimate of 120.000 (Clesca 1984, in UNICEF 1993: 39, 58n43; Anderson et al. 1990: 1).<sup>3</sup> The issue did not bring together a larger political or specialist audience until 1990, when a new Conference took place (gathering largely the same participants as in 1984, see UNICEF 1993: 34). Since 1990, the issue has been debated regularly, and estimates of the number of children abound, though a general lack of more recent representative survey and census data often leads to cross-referencing to a few older sources. UNICEF points to the lack of sources in a report on children in a "particularly difficult situation" in Haiti (1993: 39). At the same time, the latter study makes use of data from a smaller sample of children (totally 1.117 children) in three of the major cities of the country, and estimates the number of child domestics to about 130.000, or, between 100.000 and 160.000 (UNICEF 1993: 39, 58n48, see also p. 87).<sup>8</sup>
- In international publications that treat child domestic labour in more general terms, there seems to be a tendency to quote the highest estimates of the number of child domestics that figure in national reports. In 1999, for instance, an estimate of 250.000 Haitian child domestics appears in an issue of Innocenti Digest (UNICEF 1999: 3). In this case, the source of the estimate is Anderson et al. (1990, i.e. Minnesota Lawyers International Human Rights Committee, see UNICEF 1999: 3, 18n34). In turn, the estimate in Anderson et al. (1990: 1) is given with reference to the highest estimate from the 1984-Conference held in Haiti, i.e. Clesca's "double estimate" (E. Clesca 1984, see also our comments to this above). All in all, there is a need for more up-to-date, accurate, and representative data on the situation of children in domesticity, and the extent of child domesticity, in the Haitian context. This is the focus of the present report. Additionally, we aim to describe how arrangements of child domesticity come about and how they are organised; describe the economic and social contexts in which child domestic labour

takes place; and analyse how the practices, relations and processes involved are generated and reproduced. Internationally, more attention has traditionally been accorded children's labour in industry and manufacture than their labour in household settings. During the past decades, however, child domestic labour has become recognised and referred to as a form of child labour. Moreover, no international conference on child labour can avoid the issue. The current attention to child domestic labour in Haiti is partly a reflection of this fact. On the other hand, it is important to note that the attention to the issue in Haiti is not only a reflection of international discourses in UN and non-governmental organisations. Nor are Haitians' negative descriptions of some practices of child relocation simply an expression of political correctness of recent date, or of a will to conform to alien ideals on the upbringing of children in the face of outsiders. Melville Herskovits, who conducted fieldwork in Mirebalais as early as in the 1930ies, describes the "giving" of children, and "'ti moun qui 'reté à caille 'oun – small folk who stay at your house', or more briefly, 'ti moun'" (1964 [1937]: 103). 9

### Sources: Protecting Human Rights in Haiti

- When the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) began the three-year, \$9.6 million Protecting Human Rights in Haiti Program (PHR) with USAID on May 30, 2007 (cooperative agreement No. GPOA-00-07-000020-00), the primary goal of the program was to assess and address two of Haiti's most serious and deep-seated sources of human rights abuse: trafficking in persons (TIP), and torture and organized violence (TOV). These particular abuses were considered to contribute to high levels of instability and low levels of citizen security and confidence. The focus of the program was to build sustainable local capacity to monitor, prevent, and combat these kinds of severe human rights abuse, and to restore the wellbeing of victims, thereby increasing security, citizen confidence, and social stability. The program (Pwojè Kore Dwa Moun, in Creole) was an ambitious one. It was one of the first USAID programs in Haiti to take a more integrated approach to human rights, building on two earlier USAID programs—a Victims of Organized Violence (VOV) Program implemented by IFES and the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) program implemented by PADF. 5

### Sources: Child Domestic Workers in Haiti 2014: Analytical Report

- The 1990s saw a renewed interest in child labour. In reports and rights-based work, the scope widened. Attention was no longer limited to children's work in industry and manufacture, and was increasingly directed towards children's work in the household sphere, in households different from their own, standardized under the label "child domestic labour" (see for instance Black 1997; UNICEF 1999). At the same time, child domestic work was often equated with "child servitude" and "child slavery" (cf. Blagbrough & Glynn 1999). The ILO Convention on "the worst forms of child labour" from 1999 includes "all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour" (ILO C182, article 3). Arbitrary references to this convention in many reports automatically

classify child domestic work as slavery. In this usage, the distinction between children's work in the domestic sphere and child slavery remains unclear, but tends to be related to the degree of restraint that children experience, and the degree of exploitation they are subjected to. For instance, whereas children's work in industrial settings is negatively evaluated because it makes part of a commercial wage labour relationship, children's work in domestic settings is typically considered similar to slavery precisely because it is not paid.<sup>4</sup> Without considerations of a child's workload, as recent initiatives attempt to do (Edmonds 2008), this effectively includes many forms of child fosterage and caretaking in the category of slavery. Though the equation of children's domestic work with servitude or slavery is appropriate in some cases, it is problematic in cases where children's work input is typical of household production and child rearing more generally.

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- Odd equations of children's domestic work with servitude or slavery are particularly striking in the case of Haiti. In this introductory chapter we address overall tendencies in the international discourses on child domestic work, as these play out with respect to Haiti, as well as main issues in the scholarly literature. This is of relevance to the present study, as different approaches shape agendas for knowledge production and focus attention to very different aspects of children's experiences. 3

### Sources: Haiti's Model Communities Ending Restavèk Child Domestic Servitude

- Restavèk is a traditional system in which children are sent from home to live and work elsewhere, most often from impoverished rural families to wealthier urban families seeking a domestic servant. In many cases, restavèk becomes child trafficking and forced labor, meeting international criteria for slavery: many restavèk children are completely controlled through violence and exploited by members of the households where they work. Often far from home, isolated and excluded within their own environments, children in restavèk slavery have no viable options, are under physical control, and thus cannot walk away. Restavèk slaves are abused physically, verbally, emotionally and sexually; forced to do age-inappropriate chores; not sent to school; and treated as inferior to the children of the "host" or receiving family. The Haitian government has estimated that 150,000 children have been living in restavèk servitude. The Pan American Development Foundation has estimated the figure of urban restavèks to be 225,000, two-thirds of them girls. The National Coalition for Haitian rights has estimated the number of urban and rural restavèks nationwide to be 300,000. 8

### Sources: Urban Child Labor in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

- The Republic of Haiti is located in the northern Caribbean Sea, approximately 600 miles southeast of Florida. It shares the island of Hispaniola with its neighbor, the Dominican Republic, occupying the western third of the island. Estimates in 2011 put Haiti's population at over 9.7 million.<sup>1</sup> Haiti is the western hemisphere's poorest and least-developed country and has the greatest inequality of the hemisphere. It ranks 145th out of 169 countries on the 2010 United Nations (UN) Human Development Index.<sup>2</sup> The

country has experienced little formal job creation over the past decade, although the informal economy is growing. Roughly 80 percent of its population lives below the poverty line and 54 percent in abject poverty (on USD 2.00 per day or less).<sup>3</sup> Already one of the poorest countries in the world, Haiti's economy suffered severe setback when a 7.1 magnitude earthquake damaged its capital city, Port-au-Prince, in January 2010. The damage to Port-au-Prince caused the country's gross domestic product to contract an estimated 8 percent in 2010.<sup>4</sup> It further devastated the country's already inadequate social services, exacerbated political and social-economic instability, and weakened the already poor educational system.<sup>5</sup> As a result of these and other challenges, Haiti has a significant population of working children, many of them in urban areas. However, the information available on children working in urban areas is limited. <sup>1</sup>

### Sources: Child Labor in Domestic Service (Restavèk) in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti

- Child domestic labor is a significant problem worldwide. Although there are no global estimates, more girls are thought to be in domestic service than in every other sector combined.<sup>1</sup> Children working in domestic service are commonly exposed to physical risks such as carrying heavy loads, long hours, exposure to chemicals, and physical abuse. They also risk psychological damage from the lack of opportunities to play, the absence of support and affection from their parents, and maltreatment from their employers. In many countries, the importance of children's roles in domestic labor is not recognized and their challenges go unnoticed. In other countries, including Haiti, there has been rising attention to the issue and the potential damage to children's future. Known as restavèks, children working and living away from home as domestic servants is a too common fate for Haiti's children. Many of these children are exposed to serious physical and psychological risks, and their future opportunities are often limited by not attending school or attending after a long day of work. Little is known about the motivations and attitudes of the families who send and receive these children. This research was intended to provide information on these families as well as on the conditions under which the children work. <sup>1</sup>
- Haiti's economic conditions put children in a precarious situation. It is customary for a Haitian child, usually around age 6, to begin serving adults and contributing to the family's livelihood.<sup>9</sup> The U.S. Department of State's 2012 Trafficking in Person Report states that Haitian children are frequently found crossing the Haitian-Dominican border illegally, often in the company of an adult who is paid to pretend to be the children's parents.<sup>10</sup> While some of these Haitian children are reunited with their real parents who are working in Dominican Republic, others are forced into organized begging rings, domestic servitude, or sex trafficking.<sup>11</sup> Children in Haiti also work on farms, where they may be exposed to pesticides, sharp tools, harsh conditions, and long hours. In 2007, ICF International (known as Macro International Inc. at the time of the research) conducted a household survey in one of Haiti's department about the agricultural sector. The survey found that children constituted one-fourth of the farm workers sampled. They contributed to the cultivation of pistachios, corns, peas, millet, sugarcane, manioc, and rice. <sup>3</sup>

## Contributing Factors/Causes

- Anecdotal evidences suggest that the 2010 earthquake, which resulted in thousands of displaced individuals, likely increased the number of both restavèks and street children.<sup>13</sup> Children on the streets perform activities such as washing car windows, vending, or begging. They are exposed to a variety of hazards, such as severe weather conditions, car accidents, and vulnerability to gangs and prostitution. 4

