

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

- The Caribbean Republic of Haiti makes up the western third of the island of Hispaniola, the remaining two thirds comprising the Dominican Republic. Haiti is a mountainous country, and the mountain ranges that stretch east-west are divided by river valleys and plains. Agriculture in the mountain slopes and in the lowlands makes up the country's dominating economic activity. Population estimates of Haiti vary from six to more than eight million people (see appendix). About 30 percent live in urban areas. Social organisation in Haiti is highly complex, and associated with economic divisions, and distinctions according to language (French and Haitian Creole), religion (Catholicism and Voodoo/Vodoun), and in part to colour (cf. Labelle 1987).¹ Patterns in Haitian social organisation have been shaped by Haiti's past. Haiti broke loose from the French colonial power as early as in 1804, making the world's first "black republic". Independence and the abolition of slavery was followed by conflicts between elites and peasant communities around the country, between different elites; landowners and army-based; and between rulers based in the north and the south. Moreover, Haiti has been marred by political conflict, external interventions and repressive governments ever since independence. Today, the majority of Haitians is left with scarce economic resources. Agricultural land is split up in small units. Due to erosion and population growth, the relation between land suitable for agricultural production and the population is stretched to its limits. In addition, growth in non-agricultural sectors has been instable. Haiti is known as the poorest country in the Americas. When Haitian affairs reach international media, focus is usually directed toward political, economic and social crisis, rather than toward the country's rich cultural traditions. ⁷
- 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"² 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 official 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).³ ⁸

- 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. 9
- In 1984, Haiti adopted a Labour Law (Code du Travail), which prohibits the placement in a family of children under the age of 12 years for domestic work (article 341).⁴ It further specifies that children above 12 years, working in domestic service, are entitled to decent lodging, clothes, sufficient and healthy nutrition, and that they must be enrolled in school or to professional training (cf. Joanis 1996: 12; Ngom 1999: 23). It states that children shall not work during the hours that the school to which they are enrolled give classes, during Sunday afternoons or on public holidays, or during night. The children are furthermore entitled to 10 hours of uninterrupted rest daily. Finally, from the age of 15, children in domestic service should be regarded as paid domestic servants, and shall be given a salary equivalent to salaries paid other [adult] servants (article 345, 346, 347, 350 in the Haitian Labour Law, cf. Joanis 1996: 12). However, even though Haitian law thus attributes legal rights to children, they are seldom enforced (Joanis 1996: 12). 10
- As mentioned, more international attention has been accorded children's labour in industry and manufacture than their labour in household settings, and international conventions partly reflect this fact. Nonetheless, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ILO Convention 138 (1973) and, more recently, ILO Convention 182 (1999) can be applied to child domestic labour. Haiti has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratification in effect from 1995, see Danroc 1996: 35). The UN Convention establishes that children are entitled to protection from economic exploitation and hazardous work, and that work must not deprive them of education or be harmful to their development. It further calls for countries to specify a minimum age for admission to employment. 10
- Various forms of relocation of children are universal phenomena, and are as old as humankind itself. Early writers, such as Mackenzie (1971 [1830]), Herskovits (1964

[1937]) and Simpson (1941: 648 ff.; 1942: 666-667), have described Haitian practices in this respect. As early as in 1830, Mackenzie described godparenthood as a means used by Haitian landowners to “procure labourers” in agricultural fields (1971 [1830]: 273). Herskovits refers to Haitian practices of child relocation as “quasi-adoption. 20

- The main problem of the sample is not response rates, but rather imperfections in the sample frame because of the long time that has passed since the 1982 census. Although the master sample specifies procedures for how to include areas in the frame that was not inhabited in 1982, and also how to delineate new borders between enumeration units in ways that should ensure the possibility of representative sampling, such procedures are difficult to apply consistently. 97

Source: 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
- On January 12, 2010, in the middle of the third year of program implementation, Haiti was struck by a devastating earthquake. In consultation with USAID, PADF was asked to reprogram PHR to respond to the crisis, and an Emergency Response Plan was approved and implemented. The earthquake changed the game for human rights in several ways—it increased vulnerability for women and children, especially in IDP camps; at the same time, it mobilized PHR’s platform for collaborative action between civil society and the GOH, and opportunities for GOH leadership on several fronts. 5
- After the earthquake, PADF distributed 250 tons of donated emergency, housing, and basic supplies to its Haitian partners, reaching a total of 1.7 million Haitians overall; of these, 25,000 PHR beneficiaries were provided emergency relief. Public awareness and communications campaigns widely educated and mobilized civil society, sectors of government, and the Haitian public. These are significant achievements, but only tell part of the story. Perhaps more significantly, PHR made great strides in achieving its original vision of ensuring and protecting basic human rights for Haitians. It built on previous foundations created by the GOH, USAID, and other donors, and helped catalyze Haiti’s capacity to protect human rights. The program had two significant impacts—it increased GOH engagement and capacity to prevent and respond to human

rights abuse; and increased public awareness and civil society capacity to identify, treat, and refer victims of abuse. 6

- The Protecting Human Rights (PHR) 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. The IFES program had begun in February 2004 working with local and regional hospitals, clinics, doctors, and psycho-social workers to provide medical and psychological care to victims of torture and violence. Due to the previous and current periods of high levels of crime and violence, including both State Sanctioned and gang-related torture and organized violence, USAID's VOV program focused on victim services, establishing a network of providers, and promoting awareness among Haitians to prevent torture and violence. 9
- Other relevant USG-funded activities implemented by PADF that laid the groundwork for the PHR program were the State Department-funded Cross Border Anti-Trafficking Program (G-TIP, 2006-2008), which strengthened anti-trafficking efforts along the Northern border of Haiti and the DR, and set up a Border Monitoring Network. The USAID/IDB-funded bi-national program, Fwontyè Nou-Nuestra Frontera (2003-2010) was an important effort that built NGO capacity along both sides of the border across multiple sectors (health, education, women, agriculture, etc.) and strengthened cross-border cooperation along four major crossing points. A \$2 million Canadian-funded Haiti Border Stabilization Initiative (HBI, 2005-2010) implemented by PADF served as a complementary activity for the PHR program that would support the development of community action plans and civil society and bi-national cross-border collaboration to combat trafficking. HBI funded the construction of a model border facility in the Haitian town of Belladère, a critical border crossing point, to increase the presence of and strengthen government agencies (immigration, police, customs, etc.) and social services for victims of trafficking and organized violence in the area, including a shelter for victims. This effort included trafficking prevention, awareness, and advocacy training for community groups and GOH officials. Together these programs strengthened services for victims, better linked human rights networks at the community and national levels, mobilized the main GOH institutions, and developed critical relationships with key leaders in the executive branch, parliament, civil society, and business sector. These important precursors to PHR formed a solid foundation upon which to build this new program and strengthen Haiti's next steps in the fight against human rights abuse. 10
- Haiti is a country that is rebuilding following years of internal conflict. A succession of governments has demonstrated inadequate ability or will to provide citizens basic services or protection. Weak and often dysfunctional government institutions contributed to, and in turn were worsened by, corruption and Haiti's chronic underdevelopment of both economic and human resources. This negative cycle has perpetuated Haiti's overall poverty, instability, and state fragility. Haiti is rarely mentioned in public without its tagline of "the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere." It has the worst social and economic indicators in the region, and has had a negative annual GDP growth for much of the past 20 years, with the current per capita GDP estimated at only US \$360.

According to a 2007 UN/World Food Programme report, over two-thirds of Haiti's citizens live on less than US \$2 per day. There is extreme income inequality—the poorest 20% account for 1.5% of the income and the wealthiest 20% account for 68%, creating additional social and economic stressors. Growing at 1.9% per annum, Haiti's population of 8.4 million is expected to reach 12.8 million in just 20 years.⁴ Continued rapid population growth presents a fundamental development challenge that undermines stability and the government's ability to provide basic social services for this growing population. The same strategy document notes that Haiti's population is disproportionately young, with 58% below 25 years of age and 21% between the ages of 15 and 25. This "youth bulge" presents both an opportunity and a challenge for bringing about change. For the past 50 years, violence in Haiti was used as an instrument to impose authoritarian government. Gender-based violence became a tool used by those in power from the right (1957-1994) as well as from the left (1994-2006) to attack political opponents, their families, and communities through acts of politically motivated rapes and other forms of torture. 11

- Since the end of the 29-year Duvalier dictatorships in 1986, Haitians have suffered through more than a dozen government turnovers, including six military regimes, three appointed transitional governments, and five elected presidencies (of which only the two Préval presidencies lasted for the full term). The government changes were capricious, almost never the result of transparent or predictable election cycles, and were frequently accompanied by violence and repression of dissenting voices. Since the resulting regimes were not regularly and predictably accountable to an electorate, many national and local government institutions—which were never strong—fell deeper into corruption and ineffectiveness. This, in turn, further undermined the State's legitimacy. Haiti's army traditionally served as a domestic security force, but was disbanded in 1995. At the same time, the existing civilian police was replaced by a newly restructured national police force. Although the United States and the international community provided significant assistance and the Haitian National Police (HNP) became functional, it did not have sufficient numbers of officers, nor resources to be deployed throughout the country, especially in the rural areas. Violent crime, particularly in urban areas, increased steadily. This phenomenon was exacerbated both by the lack of effective law enforcement as well as a significant increase in illegal drug trafficking and use. Haitian women suffer disproportionately from increased crime, with more than 70% of the female population reportedly experiencing some form of violence, 37% of which is gender-based.⁵ By the mid-2000s, gangs controlled key "hotspots" in Port-au-Prince and major secondary cities,⁶ and there were indications that they were beginning to expand into other areas. Many of the current gangs had been re-armed in preparation for the 2006 elections. Many prospered through ransoms from kidnappings, something that did not exist in Haiti until fairly recently, and which were at their peak in 2005-2006.⁷ Though economic gain was the most prevalent motivation, several kidnappings, particularly in 2005-2006, have been characterized by brutal beatings, torture, rape, and murder.⁸ As a result of the political and consequent social instability, since 1994, Haiti has hosted two short-term U.S. military intercessions and several longer-term UN peacekeeping forces. The most recent is the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH),

established in June 2004 after the departure of President Aristide and the installation of an Interim Government of Haiti (IGOH). United Nations troops and police officers, as well as international and local civilian personnel, are operating under a mandate to provide support for a more secure and stable environment, sound political processes, and the protection of human rights. Reforms introduced in the 1987 Constitution established the legal and institutional environment to address the social handicaps affecting a country plagued by violence, including gender-based violence, domestic child labor, and human trafficking. Nevertheless this was not enough; the government needed to effectively implement these changes called for in the “new constitution;”⁹ however, the lack of regulatory, procedural, and fiscal support of these reforms became critical shortcomings for government institutions. ¹²

- A consequence of weak State institutions, NGOs working in development and social protection proliferated in Haiti over the past several decades. They were generally not coordinating their efforts with each other nor with the GOH; this made it difficult to provide an organized and comprehensive set of social services that would address the complexity of the country’s social and political landscape. For example, with no systematized or coordinated system of victim identification, referral, and service provision, a victim of violence and torture, gender focused violence, exploitation from the *restavèk* system, or repatriation from the Dominican Republic would find it difficult to access the specialized services he or she needed, whether medical, psychosocial, or other help to re-insert him or her into a sustainable and improved quality of life. The context for a new USAID human rights program in late May 2007 was one in which the second Prével administration was in its second year, levels of violence and kidnappings had dropped, but were still high, UN troops were still on the ground, and at least 70% of Haitians were unemployed. The IACHR also noted the extremely vulnerable situation of Haiti’s children, particularly *restavèk* and street children, who were subject to the worst forms of abuse—rape, prostitution, trafficking, and kidnapping.¹² A series of recommendations to the Haitian State called for actions across the board—security, judicial reform, protection of women and children, with access to legal, medical, psychological, and education services. Many of these recommendations were contained in USAID’s program strategy that led to the awarding of the Protecting Human Rights in Haiti Program to PADF in May 2007 setting the course of action on human rights to address the Haitian reality at that time. ¹³

Source: 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.⁴ 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.

- Only a few days after January 12th 2010, news stories reported that children orphaned by the earthquake were targeted by human trafficking. In one article published by the TIME magazine, the journalists quote American-Haitian emergency worker, Mia Pean, saying that “I really fear ... that most of the kids you see being picked up on the streets in Haiti right now are going to become *restaveks* or victims of sexual trafficking” (Padgett & Gosh 2010). The early stories on trafficking were never verified (cf. Schwartz 2014), but they continued to circulate in the media and many NGO webpages referred to an increase in “child trafficking” and connected it with the earthquake, earthquake orphans and Haiti’s history of child work and labour. The linking of child labour with trafficking, as was done in these representations, effectively re-associated child domestic work in Haiti with slavery and “the worst forms” of child labour. The representations also cemented the common stereotype that children in domestic work, including those who work in servant-like situations, live with unrelated strangers. ³
- The equation of child labour in domestic work with slavery was common before the 2010 earthquake too (see Schwartz 2011: 230ff). In rights-based reports and in media-coverage on children’s life situations in Haiti, there has been a broad tendency to link children’s domestic work in households other than their own, with slavery, without qualifications. Haitian children have become a symbol of exploitation of children in general, and no international report of child domestic work can avoid mention of Haiti (cf. ILO 2002, ILO 2004; UNICEF, 1999). Haitian *restavek* created headlines in media around the world following a seminar organised in Port-au-Prince in 1984 (see e.g. Anderson et al., 1990: iv; UNICEF 1993: 34) and especially following the publication of Cadet’s book entitled *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American* (1998)⁵ In 2000, Cincinnati Post wrote that “Hundreds of thousands of children are living in slavery in Haiti”. In the following years, Haitian “child slaves” appeared in headlines and articles in TIME Magazine, CNN, BBC, and elsewhere (see also Schwartz 2011: 230-233). ³
- A consequence of this surge of public attention to the issue both nationally and internationally is that the *restavek* notion has become increasingly negatively charged, also in Haitian usage. Connotations to exploitation, abuse and slavery trickle down and

contribute to increased stigmatization (Moncrieffe 2006). Consequently, many Haitians have become reluctant to using the term.⁶ It also seems that inferring a *restavek* narrative occasionally is done opportunistically in order to attract money and attention to different aid projects (cf. Schwartz 2011). The equation of child labour in domestic work with slavery intensified following a fact-finding visit in 2009 by the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery that conducted interviews with aid organisations and community leaders (United Nations 2009). The report concluded, “The Special Rapporteur considers the *restavèk* system a contemporary form of slavery” (2009: 2). Notwithstanding the varied usages in Haiti over the term *restavek* – and its multifaceted meanings in Creole – distorted images arise when journal articles refer to “*restavek*” as slavery and follow up by presenting estimates of how widespread “this practice” is – reciting, however, estimates of the extent of child domestic work or child labour in domestic work. The sub-text thus conveys that all children who can be seen as child domestic workers in a legal perspective live under conditions of slavery. This is evident, for instance, in an article on CNN in 2010, where the number 300,000 is supplied, in combination with a reference to the UN labelling of *restavek* as slavery (Cohen 2010), thus indicating that 10 percent of the child population lives in slavery. 4

Source: Haiti’s Model Communities Ending *Restavèk* Child Domestic Servitude

- *Restavèk* is a traditional system in which Haitian children are sent by parents to live with other families and work for them as domestic servants. In many cases, *restavèk* becomes child trafficking and forced labor slavery, where children are completely controlled through violence and exploited by members of the households where they work. Estimates of the number of children living in *restavèk* range from 150,000 to 300,000 - two-thirds of whom are girls. Despite Haitian law and Haiti’s signature on international codes that specifically prohibit the practice, *restavèk* continues largely unchecked. 6
- In 2011, the Free the Slaves began a three-year project in partnership with Fondasyon Limyè Lavi(FLL) entitled “Freedom for Haiti’s Children: Community Action to End Slavery Locally and Nationally,” funded by the U.S. State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP). The project aimed to prevent and reverse the flow of children from Haitian source communities into *restavèk* slavery. The project utilized a holistic method for community development that is one of the first of its kind in Haiti: the Model Communities approach. It was designed through an analysis of the risk factors that underlie the sending of children into *restavèk*, as well as family and community support needed to prevent this phenomenon and assist families in retrieving children. This report provides the results of an evaluation of the Freedom for Haiti’s Children project and the effectiveness of the Model Communities approach. 6
- Haiti is party to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Haiti has also ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (Convention 182), and the ILO Minimum Age Convention (Convention 138). Each of these conventions prohibits child slavery and servitude and

provides for children to have the right to education and the right to be free from degrading and inhumane treatment. In accordance with these international conventions, in 2003 Haiti passed the Act on the Prohibition and Elimination of All Forms of Abuse, Violence, Ill Treatment or Inhumane Treatment against Children, which prohibits servitude, forced or compulsory labor, and the use of children in criminal activities or armed conflict. The act also criminalizes child trafficking and the recruitment of children for sexual exploitation, such as pornography, and for illicit activities. However, there are no penalties established for committing abuse and violence against children through any of the crimes discussed in the act. It should be noted that the first article in the act annuls Chapter 9 of the Haitian Labor Code, which contained specific stipulations guiding the treatment, rights and privileges of a child working in domestic service. The intent was to make illegal any child domestic service, but as a result, there are no longer minimum guidelines for what a child deserves when working in domestic service. 9

- Despite the existence of these measures, which should assure the eradication of restavèk and the protection of all children, the restavèk practice continues largely unchecked. The continued lack of legislation prohibiting all forms of human trafficking, as well as a lack of formal protections for trafficking victims, remain serious problems. An anti-trafficking bill has been introduced, but has not passed the Haitian parliament. However, there are indications of the government of Haiti's commitment to building upon existing efforts. The **Haitian Ministry of Social Affairs** and Labor-led working group on restavèk (**Table Sectorielle Sur Les Enfants en Domesticté**) launched a process to develop a national plan to eradicate restavèk in Haiti by 2030. This plan will extend over 15 years and is aligned with the national strategic plan for Haiti's development. The working group has completed a draft of the national plan. In addition, the creation of an inter-ministerial group to address human trafficking and officials' stated commitment to passage and implementation of anti-trafficking legislation may lead to improved results in the future. 10

Source: 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.¹ 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.² 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).³ 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 2010.⁴ It further devastated the country's already inadequate social services, exacerbated political and social-economic instability, and weakened the

already poor educational system.⁵ 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. ¹

- The country's economic conditions put children in a precarious situation. It is customary for a Haitian child, usually around the age of six, to begin serving adults within his/her household and contributing to the family's livelihood.⁶ Haiti's Labor Code sets the minimum age for work in industrial, agricultural, or commercial enterprises at age 15.⁷ Children age 15 to 18 must obtain work authorization from the Ministry of Labor to be employed.⁸ Children are prohibited from night work in industrial jobs and from work that is likely to harm their health, safety, or morals. ³

Source: 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.¹ 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. ¹
- 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.³ Haiti is the western hemisphere's poorest and least-developed country. It ranks 145th out of 169 countries on the 2010 United Nations (UN) Human Development Index.⁴ Roughly 80 percent of its population lives below the poverty line and 54 percent in abject poverty (on \$2 per day or less).⁵ Roughly two-thirds of Haitians rely on small-scale subsistence farming for a living, but this activity makes up only 30 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).⁶ The country has experienced little formal job-creation over the last decade, although the informal economy is growing. 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 GDP to contract by an estimated 8 percent in 2010.⁷ It further devastated the country's already inadequate social services,

exacerbated political and social-economic instability, and weakened the already poor educational system. 3

- 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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. 3
- Anecdotal evidences suggest that the 2010 earthquake, which resulted in thousands of displaced individuals, likely increased the number of both restavèks and street children.¹³ 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
- Children in Haiti are exploited in the worst forms of child labor, most commonly in domestic service.¹⁶ Often described simply as the 'restavèk' system, the phenomenon is far more complex than this single term suggests. Smucker and Murray define restavèks as unpaid child servants living and working away from home, but note that the restavèks' fieldwork revealed significant variation in the arrangements and treatment conditions of the children who live or work away from their biological parents. 4
- Restavèks are mostly found in middle-to-lower-middles class households; they are also prevalent in the poorest slums of Port-au-Prince.¹⁸ A survey conducted by the Pan-American Development Foundation (PADF) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) found that Cite Soleil, the largest slum of Port-au-Prince, had the highest percentage of restavèks. While 16 percent all Haitian children surveyed were found to be restavèks, 40 percent of all children in Cité Soleil surveyed were found to be restavèks. The lack of public services, such as electricity and water, in poor neighborhoods where families lacked employment created a high demand for free child labor. Yet, with the lack of employment, these families could not afford to send these children to school. For receiving families who were not employed, many restavèks were not sent to school because of their long work hours and their low social status. 4
- Whether these children were sent to family members or to strangers, they rarely enjoyed the benefits that their parents had wanted for them. Some children escape from their new home; they then either live in the streets or are picked up by authorities who refer them to the Institut du bien-être social et de recherches—Haitian Social Welfare Institute (IBESR). The children stay at centers, such as the Centre d'action pour le

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développement—Center for Action and Development (CAD) and Foyer L'Escale in Port-au-Prince, until they are reunited with their biological families.



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