



Whole
CHILDREN,
Whole
HAITI

Inspiring stories of care,
family, and advocacy for
children in Haiti

“Every child has a right to a family and a home. Investing in families and communities builds their resiliency and ability to stay together, and provides a safe environment for children. Our collective investment in care reform will improve early detection of protection risks and our ability to prevent the separation of children.”

**Maria-Luisa Fornara
UNICEF Haiti Representative**

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Contents

Welcome

Introduction

A Whole Haiti

Organizations working for change

A call to action



Photo: Hope Community Project

Welcome

In the years following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the number of orphanages in the country rapidly increased to over 750; ¹ most of these unregistered and unregulated. This explosion of orphanages was so widespread that it rapidly exceeded the capacity of the government to track, monitor and reunify the 30,000 children suddenly being raised in institutions instead of families. To this day, over 80% of the children living in Haitian orphanages have one or two living parents. ²

Sadly, out of a spirit of assistance, Americans played a large role in family separation. The vast majority of orphanages in Haiti are supported by American donors, with at least \$70 million annually funneled into the institutional care of children. ³

We are coming into a new era. Through the intervention of many organizations, government champions and donors, the child care system in Haiti is undergoing a massive reform. Given the overwhelming evidence that children do best in families, a tremendous shift away from the orphanage model and towards family preservation is happening. ⁴ People and organizations who moved to Haiti expressly to open an orphanage are now forging a new path towards family-based care, and bringing their supporters on the journey with them. Donors are shifting their funds towards programs that support children holistically. The government of Haiti's child welfare agency—the Institut du Bien Etre Social et des Recherches (IBESR)—along with UNICEF and organizations providing technical support are putting in place frameworks for better care practices, foster care, a moratorium on new orphanages, and donor guidelines to invest in family-based care.

Our goal is to celebrate the strength of the Haitian people, and to acknowledge the hard work that has been accomplished in care reform. We want to present to readers a glimpse of the many impactful accomplishments of a handful of organizations that are part of this movement in Haiti. This publication can in no way cover the full effort of all those involved across the wide span of programs working on behalf of family preservation. It is our hope that you as a reader will be inspired by a glimpse of case studies demonstrating what can be accomplished when dedicated individuals and organizations work individually and collectively for change.

A commitment to family for every child in Haiti

Kristi Gleason
Vice President of Global Programs
Bethany Global

Amanda Cox
Head of Programmes and Advocacy USA
Hope and Homes for Children

Dr. Delia Pop
Director of Programmes and Global Advocacy
Hope and Homes for Children



Photo: Terre des hommes

Introduction

This publication is presented in three parts. Part 1 discusses how seeing Haitian children as part of a complex and beautiful social system can inform best practices in child care reform. Part 2 highlights eight organizations working towards family-based care and the preservation of families and communities. Part 3 provides inspiration for collective action and transformation.

Child development happens within a social and ecological system.⁵ In the first section, a Whole Haiti, we consider child protection from the individual (child), family, community, Haitian, and global levels and begin to discuss the complex interplay between these factors. To see Haiti as a whole, we must consider each level and the importance of community and connection as the key factors in childhood development. Many organizations are providing services that support the whole child within this connected community context.

Organizations in Haiti working to keep families together are strengthening livelihoods and food security; providing access to education; working to get children back into a safe home; training parents to be strong leaders; ensuring maternal and child health; and creating a new story around child well-being and family-care in communities. Other organizations are working to heal the damage that has been done: reunite children with their families, create change in the child-protection and criminal-justice system, and support caregivers in being healthy and productive adults.

People, organizations, and donors do—and can continue to—work together with the government of Haiti to provide the very best care for children. Together we can lift up and support family-based care and work towards preventing family separation.

This publication highlights eight organizations working in Haiti, each with a mission to ensure children are cared for in families. A robust network of complementing organizations is active and essential to transformation. Here we highlight a sample of the excellent organizations creating positive momentum of care reform in Haiti.

Haiti Design Co
Heartline Ministries
Hope Community Project
Rapha House
Little Footprints, Big Steps
Terre des hommes
Bethany
Lumos

Haiti is establishing itself as a leader in transformative change for children within Latin America and the Caribbean. The vision of a family for every child—and the actions being taken to ensure that families are strengthened and reunified—is due to the significant efforts and collaboration of government, donors, local communities and NGOs across many areas of society. This reform in action exemplifies how much can be accomplished when work together.

**Dr. Delia Pop
Hope and Homes for Children**

a **WHOLE**
Haiti

Whole CHILDREN

Focusing on the whole child leads to healthy, stable adults able to then care for their own families. Thus increasing overall community stability for generations.

Children need education, shelter, and food, they also need love, connection, and community. There is an overwhelming body of evidence that even the best residential care—if it removes children from their families or severs the connection to family and community—has a stark negative impact on children’s long-term outcomes.⁶

Every child has needs that are best fulfilled by family. Foreign organizations should consider how they might balance the immediate needs of children while also contributing to long-term child well-being.

Family-preservation efforts keep children in loving homes within their communities, providing the best environment for child development. Stable families serve as much more than providers—they serve as protectors—as children are vulnerable to abuse, particularly when they are

outside the watchful gaze of a loving home.^{7,8} Family-preservation efforts focus on creating full-time, year-round jobs for adults and helping families grow and eat good food, access quality medical care, and afford meaningful education.

Child-protection efforts include customized services for children such as specialized education for disabled children, essential identification documents, professional counseling, and supporting friends and adults to help children heal from the trauma they have experienced.⁹ Children sometimes need, and always deserve, justice. Many organizations fight for the rights of children through policies, government task forces and the Haitian justice system.

The reality is that some children do need out-of-home care.¹⁰ In these instances, best practices necessitate approaches that care for the whole child, such as foster care and other family-based care.

Many organizations are supporting IBESR in providing temporary care for children. Foster care provides a stable, loving

“Living in a family is better than any other place. My family is not rich, but I only want to live with my family. Why? Because my family values me, and each of us as a child.”

A reunited child, Lumos

“A child separated from his family is like a body whose breath of life has been removed.”

Enel Andre
Child Protection Specialist, Sud, Haiti

family, while a child receives counseling and the family of origin receives training to prepare to be reunited with the child. And if this is not possible, the foster families may adopt the children.

Thanks to the efforts of IBESR and partners, Haiti has foster care and domestic adoption policies in place. IBESR is working with partners to make foster care and domestic adoption more available.

“We see family reunification as broader than bringing a child back to a home. Fathers are reintegrated into families to stabilize them and lower the risk of child-protection violations. We want the families to experience life, affection, and food—all together.”

Pastor Vijonet Demero
Country Director for Bethany Haiti

Children do not exist in a vacuum; they live in complex family and community systems. Focusing on children without considering the family damages normal family dynamics, robbing parents of their role in their children's lives. Addressing the needs of the entire family provides for children's immediate needs and future needs at the same time.

Many organizations focus on the mother or caregiver of the child. Pregnancy and childbirth is a risky time for Haiti's mothers as maternal mortality in Haiti is relatively high.¹¹ Maternity clinics throughout Haiti provide prenatal care, promote breastfeeding, and foster a healthy bond between mother and baby. When a mother dies in childbirth, or cannot breastfeed her child, formula programs provide the nutritional support needed to keep children with their families. Malnutrition clinics treat severe, acute malnutrition and keep children in their homes or quickly reconnect infants with families once they are stabilized.

Fathers are also an integral part of a family. A father's positive involvement in the household can lead to greater protection and provision for the family.¹² A few organizations are working to encourage men to increase their leadership and engagement in their families and communities. Some organizations are providing parenting leadership training and reuniting men

Whole **FAMILIES**

with their families, while encouraging faithfulness and responsibility.

There are a handful of organizations in Haiti providing full-time, year-round jobs for Haitian men and women. The best of these organizations build in leadership, finance, and savings programming for their employees so the families are at even less risk of separation. Some of these organizations realize that sustainable job creation means focusing on making products for Haitians that are otherwise imported—like food, technology, clothing and more. Other organizations work with Haitian parents to increase the amount of healthy food they grow and consume through farming cooperatives.

Focusing on the whole family builds strong families. Livelihoods, parenting leadership, and positive parenting all help stabilize a household. Knowledge and skill in financial stability, savings, health, and nutrition all help families raise up their own children.

Whole COMMUNITIES

“Maintaining children in their families and communities must be the first step towards social balance in Haiti.”

Enel Andre, Child Protection Specialist, Sud, Haiti

Community-based services are key to increasing community stability and family preservation. Many organizations are supporting and building the capacity of Haitian schools, medical clinics, and churches to nurture their community. Local efforts within a community are the longest lasting and most contextually appropriate services for families.¹³ Supporting these efforts helps build the community structures needed to keep families together.

Children live in families, and families live in communities. The reality is that many communities in Haiti are vulnerable, having faced significant trauma from political unrest and natural disasters. In these vulnerable moments, communities have received misinformation on the benefits of orphanages.

Throughout Haiti, child-protection organizations are working to sensitize communities to the realities of the damage of family separation; how to see, intervene in and prevent violations of child protection; and how to support children and families as they heal from separation and child protection violations. Communities who once thought orphanages were the only way they could feed and educate their children are re-establishing trust and unity with one another.

There is a growing effort to reunite the thousands of children—living as restavek, living on the streets or in orphanages, or those in conflict with the law—with their families of origin.

This is challenging, not only at the family level, but also if the family is not supported by the community. Given the high rates of stigma in Haiti, communities are quick to reject a once-separated child if there has not been adequate community sensitization. And yet, given enough support in the reunification process, it can be a joyful occasion for a community when a child who is thought to have been lost is reunited with their family.

Organizations are working with communities to change the narrative around orphanages and restavek—children sent by their parents to work in households in domestic service in return for room and board—and to help them reconcile their dreams for their children with the harsh realities they were dealt. Professional trauma care not only helps families restore themselves through the reunification process, but prevents future separation by increasing awareness and community cohesion.¹⁴

a Whole HAITI

Decisions about a child's life are best determined by the people who fully understand the context in which a child lives. Ultimately only Haitians can know what is best for their children, and only Haitians can create a future for their children. Just as parents are the leaders of their families, there are leaders in every community, and government provides leadership for the country. Foreign organizations can play a role in providing technical support and collaboration, but leadership should be the role of Haitians.

When well-intentioned visitors perceive a gap in child welfare, they sometimes step in prematurely.¹⁵ However, as outsiders, they are only able to see a fraction of the issues at play—and may simply not know the best ways to protect Haitian children within this complex and rapidly changing child-welfare system.

The organizations making the greatest long-lasting impact in Haiti are those that put Haitians first. Organizations that recognize the capacities, strate-

gies and motivations of Haitians; that lean in and ask what Haitians want; that create space for authentic Haitian leadership; and that prioritize Haitian solutions, are the true servant-leaders Haiti welcomes to contribute to a strong future for its children.

Low-resource countries are often seen as low-capacity. This is rarely the case. Seeing Haitians as full, capable humans is essential to working in right alignment. Visitors are guests and must find ways to build Haitian resources without stripping Haitians of power or dignity.

Change is possible within the child-protection system of Haiti. IBESR—with the support of UNICEF, and multiple international nongovernmental organizations—has co-created a comprehensive strategy to transform child welfare by 2030.¹⁶ The leadership, policies, and structures are ready. It is only by registering with the government, following the laws of Haiti, and supporting the strategic plans of IBESR, that sustainable impact can be achieved.

“Families are unique and as such our aid needs to be unique. Our staff are trained and then given the freedom to work alongside families to find solutions that work for everyone.”

Julie Brouwer
Co-director, Hope Community Project

A good guest learns the laws and the context; is diligent and courageous in protecting children; registers with the Haitian government; and ultimately steps aside so that Haitians are the face and true decision makers of child-protection and child-welfare efforts in their own country.

Supporting Haitian **LEADERS**

“It is important to keep Haitian staff the front of everything that we do.”

Luke Brouwer
Hope Community Project

Hope Community Project is an organization in Gonaïve with education, health, and income generating programming. Each of these programs is led by a Haitian; these leaders are front and center in interacting with the community and leading each program. Luke and Julie Brouwer provide teaching, coaching, and accountability to the leaders—training these Haitian leaders how to track progress and results for donors. Luke and Julie have learned to give up control, hand over leadership, and reflect a partnership that is truly Haitian lead.

Little Footprints, Big Steps’ founder, Morgan Weinberg, lives her commitment to putting Haitians first, as seen in her relationship with Enel. Enel is a former regional director of IBESR, now obtaining his Master of Social Work degree in the United States. He is Morgan’s mentor, teaching her what he knows and guiding her work through cultural, psychosocial, and systems knowledge and experience. Morgan’s relationship with her mentor is a powerful example of how she puts Haitians first.

“Haitians are the experts and leaders. As we try to help them, we need to do so in a way that is sustainable, that keeps families together and that’s culturally sensitive. This means asking Haitians what they think are sustainable solutions for their communities and then providing them with the resources.”

Morgan Weinberg
Little Footprints, Big Steps



Photo: Hope Community Project

“True change in the way that we, as organizations, address the needs of vulnerable children in Haiti is only going to be possible if we work together. There are so many pieces of the puzzle when it comes to evaluating and responding to the needs of children and families, and it is only through collaboration that these issues can be addressed holistically and effectively. “

**Heather Nozea
Director of Client Services, Rapha House**

Organizations
WORKING FOR
CHANGE



Photo: Haiti Design Co

“Haiti is full of creativity and imagination; I want everyone to know about the wonderful products that are designed and made here in Haiti.”

Franklin Sain Jean, Metalwork Haiti Design Co

“Our idea of success at Haiti Design Co is the advancement of our people and their families. Profit is not our end goal; our people are our end goal.”

Chandler Busby, Founder Haiti Design Co

Economic strengthening keeps families together.

Haiti Design Co is an artisan workshop helping families stay together through employment, training and creating opportunities for personal growth. Driven by excellence in design and dignity in employment, it produces high-quality, ethically-sourced leather goods, jewelry, handbags, and homewares while providing steady employment for 151 artisans.

HAITI Design Co

**Preventing
family
separation**

Chandler Busby, CEO of Haiti Design Co, started traveling to Haiti in 2010 while studying retail merchandising and fashion. She moved to Haiti in 2012 to work with Heartline Ministries’ women’s education center and sewing program. Chandler became aware of the sharp increase in economic orphans—parents relinquishing children to orphanages for lack of resources. She wanted to create jobs to keep families together. With the blessing of Heartline, Chandler and her husband, Josh, began Haiti Design Co in 2014. Chandler is passionate about family preservation.

Haiti Design Co is dedicated to creating a professional environment to support their long-term goal of promoting Haiti as a place for businesses investment. It aims to create and sell excellent products—not “sell poverty” by promoting their products based on the economic status of their artisans. Haiti Design Co focuses on designing and developing a sustainable business by focusing on the wholesale market, fulfilling custom orders from high-end, custom-wholesale clients.

Beyond employment, Haiti Design Co teaches leadership skills. The company provides holistic training for employees on topics such as nutrition, budgeting, and goal planning. A strong, incentivized savings program encourages employees to save and build resiliency against economic shocks.

In a context of high underemployment, it can be tempting to hire as many people as possible. However, Chandler is dedicated to preserving dignity in employment and makes hires based on skills, not merely need. Haiti Design Co is successful in retaining employees year to year, encouraging employee savings, and supporting employees as they make progress towards their own personal goals. In this way, Haiti Design Co has indirectly supported three hundred and twenty-four children, keeping their families together through stable employment.



Photo: Heartline Ministries

“Once you identify your direction, start small. Really small. Get really amazing at it, then get bigger. Do not compromise quality for quantity.”

Tara Livesay,
Director, Heartline Maternity Center

Healthy births keep families together.

Heartline Maternity Center is investing in Haitian families through relational maternal care and education. Dedicated to putting Haitians first, it provides thorough, quality care to all patients.

Heartline Ministries began in 1990 as a creche—a small children’s home for international adoptions. After realizing many of children in the creche had lost their mothers in childbirth, Heartline began offering prenatal visits as a means to prevent orphans. Current directors of Heartline, Troy and Tara Livesay, were drawn to the ministry’s plan to switch focus to job training and maternal health and joined in 2008. After the 2010 earthquake all the children in the creche were adopted

Heartline MINISTRIES

Preventing
family
separation

through humanitarian parole.¹⁷ This was a natural turning point and Heartline repurposed their organization to become a maternity and education center.

In a time of high maternal mortality, and low access to maternal healthcare, Heartline Maternity Center has made a challenging commitment: quality must be valued above quantity.¹⁸ Heartline accepts 30% of applicants for the maternal health program amounting to seventy-six women in the antenatal program at any given time and around thirteen births per month.

Heartline’s program ensures that their mothers are full and equal participants in their own care; with mothers committing to coming weekly for maternal education and check-ups from 8 weeks of pregnancy through 6 months postpartum. The mothers deliver at Heartline and are encouraged to stay in the center for five days to begin caring for their infant under the nurturing supervision of the center’s staff.

Heartline Maternity Center’s high-touch, relational approach has resulted in low maternal mortality rates.¹⁹ They have facilitated over 900 deliveries, and their zero maternal mortality rate includes even those high-risk births that are transferred to hospital for C-section.²⁰ Only 1 child has been relinquished to an orphanage. This small-scale, intimate approach has positive impacts on family preservation.

Heartline just released *The Starting Place: A Maternal Mortality–Prevention Initiative*. Ready for global impact, this guide—and the accompanying training—provides practitioners worldwide with comprehensive instruction on recreating the kind of care Heartline has provided. Whether through the *The Starting Place* or their 900+ surviving and thriving mothers, Heartline is providing results.

“You are your neighbor’s professor.”

Haitian Proverb



Photo: Hope Community Project

Hope Community PROJECT

Preventing
family
separation

“What does one have to do in order to continue receiving sponsorship? Stay poor. But to receive a scholarship is to strive for excellence.”

Luke Brouwer
Co-director, Hope Community Project

Strengthening community keeps families together.

After the earthquake of 2010 it was common for orphanage intermediaries to link foreigners with Haitian pastors to build and support orphanages.²¹ After several years of helping to manage from afar, Luke and Julie Brouwer, directors of Hope Community Project, moved their family to Haiti in 2014. They immediately uncovered many child-protection violations within the orphanage. Thankfully, the president of Hope Community Project, John Keane, listened intently and gave the Brouwers permission to change course.

With a passion to preserve families, Hope Community Project now provides education, healthcare, and livelihood programs in Gonaive. Lack of security in these three areas is the main cause of family separation in Haiti.²²

Hope Community Project has redefined how families access education, providing scholarships for children to attend the school of their choice. With scholarships parents are engaged in their child’s education, children perform well as attendance and progress in school are essential to maintaining the scholarship, and community is supported by pooling resources across schools. The difference between a sponsorships and a scholarship may seem like semantics, but to Hope Community Project it is the difference between dependency and dignity.

Hope Community Project provides access to local and affordable family health services through the services of a Haitian doctor and Haitian nurses. To

further reduce the potential for family separation, the clinic runs a formula program. With a high maternal-mortality rate, the high cost of formula is often a reason for relinquishing an infant. The formula program provides babies with formula through the first year of life, regular checkups, and health care of their family.

Hope Community Project is committed to establishing sustainable livelihoods with local solutions; such as investing in establishing a poultry cooperative. The cooperative is owned and operated entirely by Haitians from the local community. Hope Community Project provides some initial investment, and secures technical assistance from FIDA/pCH,²³ a cooperative development organization. With a cycle of only forty-five days from chick to sale, and grounded in a trusted partnership with FIDA/pCH, Hope Community Project see Haitian families thriving as producers of their own livelihood.



Photo: Terre des hommes

“Foster care families accept children in critical situations that other care options do not want to welcome, such as girl mothers, pregnant girls living with HIV, and children with disabilities.”

Islande Georges Cadet, Tdh

“To work outside of the state is to work without guidelines.”

Tdh Staff

Strengthening families, communities and the Haitian child protection system.

Terre des hommes (Tdh) is the leading Swiss organization for children's aid. Through their health, protection and emergency relief programs, Tdh provides assistance to over three million children and their families in more than 45 countries each year. Terre des hommes Haiti works nationally on child protection systems strengthening and has been essential in designing a foster-care system within Haiti.

Terre des HOMMES

Foster care
and family
reunification

Given the rise in orphanages following the 2010 earthquake and evidence that orphanage care does not lead to positive long-term outcomes for children, Tdh saw an opportunity to intervene by beginning a foster-care program. Tdh believes that providing social safety nets is the role of the state, while the role of foreign assistance is to guide, support, and build capacity while working within these national systems. Tdh has worked together with IBESR, the International Rescue Committee, the French Embassy, Handicap International, Delegation of the European Union, UNICEF, Bethany Global and others to develop the national policies and procedures for placing children into foster care while ensuring international standards are respected²⁴ resulting in the *Dispositif de Placement en familles d'accueil*.

Currently over 286,000 children in Haiti are living as restavek.²⁵ Given the prevalence of this cultural practice the internationally recognized practice of foster care is often misunderstood, or

seen as impossible in Haiti. And yet, Tdh has been successful in drawing a firm distinction between restavek and foster care—outside versus inside the law— and now has successfully trained and helped register 112 foster-care families across six departments.

Foster families are screened for their ability to sustain and protect the children in their care without subsidies or compensation. Nearly all children are eventually reunited with their biological immediate or extended family, according to the child's best interests and participation. Tdh takes a community sensitization, family counseling, and intensive follow-up approach to reunification. Working within the child protection system of Haiti, Tdh is creating sustainable services to support family-based alternative care options in children's own communities and when possible reunite children with parents.



Photo: Bethany Global

nien

“Bethany does not like the orphanage model because orphanages lack parenting leadership and often lack love and even basic care for children. Bethany believes children should be in families.”

Pastor Vijonet Demero
Country Director for Bethany Haiti

Loving and protecting children through foster care.

Bethany is an international faith-based organization operating in ten countries; it has been working in Haiti since 2007. With over 75 years of experience developing best-practices in child protection and welfare in the United States, Bethany focuses their work on the following Continuum of Care:²⁶ family or origin, kinship care, domestic adoption, long-term foster care, inter-country adoption, emancipation, temporary care. In Haiti, their focus is on family preservation and empowerment, foster care linked to family reunification, and domestic and international adoption.

Bethany **GLOBAL**

**Foster care
and family
reunification**

Like Tdh, Bethany has been instrumental in cultivating foster care in Haiti. Their family-based (foster care) is seen as temporary, from one week to one year; the intention is for permanent placement through reunification with the child’s first family of origin or kinship. When this is not possible, Bethany seeks to assist foster families with domestic adoption of the child. Domestic adoption exists in Haiti and is ratified through IBESR.²⁷ Bethany is working to encourage and build the capacity of IBESR to smooth and hasten the process of domestic adoptions.

Bethany equips local churches to become hubs of foster care—providing community sensitization and foster parent training within church bodies. Working within the system, Bethany partners with IBESR to certify families for foster care and to identify children in need of placement. Most of these children have come from orphanages closed by IBESR and are in need of temporary care while their families of origin are traced.

Bethany currently has thirty certified foster families. The foster parents receive educational and emotional support but not financial subsidies. Bethany believes strongly in the role of men in family preservation, reunification and family-based care. Fathers play a crucial role in the protection and provision of families in Haiti, and reuniting men with their families is also a facet of Bethany’s work.

Bethany believes through scripture and scientific evidence that God’s design for children is to be raised in family. Bethany has a refreshing capacity for partnership—able to foster relationships with faith-based and secular organizations, the state, and the local church. Grounded in faith, expressed through best-practices, and surrounded by partners, Bethany is inspiring the Haitian church to rise up and care for their children.



Photo: Rapha House

“I am most proud of seeing families reunited. Sometimes we track down a family that hasn’t seen or heard from their child in years and assumed she was dead. It is an emotional day for them to find out that their daughter is alive. The whole community celebrates when she is brought back home.”

Gerson Nozea
Haitian Director, Rapha House

Nurturing, protecting, and healing child victims.

Rapha House is a faith-based anti-trafficking organization started in Cambodia, and operating in Thailand and Haiti. Rapha House Haiti provides shelter care for girls eighteen and under who are victims of trafficking and/or sexual exploitation.

In Haiti, one in four children do not live with their biological parents.²⁸ These children are at high risk for child-protection violations, abuse, and trafficking. Rapha House Haiti began working with children living as restavek in 2013. Its work has evolved and has an increasing focus on children coming out of orphanages.

RAPHA *House*

**Shelter
care and
reunification**

Rapha House Haiti directors, Gerson—a Haitian national—and Heather Nozea, had 12 years of experience working in Haitian orphanages and community development organizations before joining Rapha House in 2013. They had seen first-hand the abuses and exploitation that exist within the orphanage system in Haiti, and the way that children were so often separated from their families for economic reasons. Gerson and Heather were attracted to Rapha House for its commitment to best-practices in child-welfare.

Rapha House provides professional counseling, safe housing, and high quality education for children as they wait to be reunited with their families of origin and excellent follow-up care for those reunited. Rapha House engages in advocacy work with an emphasis on prevention and early identification of victims.

The in-house shelter care includes individualized counseling and education services, food, shelter, and a safe space where girls can be girls. Given the level of

trauma these girls have experienced—and excellence with which Rapha House operates—providing high-quality services means the staff-to-child ratio is sustained at more than 1:1, over a period of care that averages one to two years.

Reunification is a key aim of Rapha House’s work. This includes tracing the family of each girl in their care, providing counseling for the family once identified, community sensitization to prepare for the child’s return, and support for the child, family and community following reunification. Eventually the child is reintegrated full-time with their family of origin or immediate kin. Every child, family and community then receives continued follow-up services.

Rapha House is combining excellent, comprehensive small-scale safe housing with advocacy and prevention initiatives to tackle human trafficking in Haiti.



Photo: Little Footprints, Big Steps

“Deinstitutionalization must be part of a great social movement that will change Haitian social conception of the well-being of the children. The vast majority of parents who place their children in institutions do so blindly in a perspective of well-being. The more parents and community know, the fewer children will be institutionalized.”

Enel Andre
Child Protection Specialist, Haiti

Working with communities and local government to advocate for children.

Little Footprints, Big Steps (LFBS) is an organization focused on protecting vulnerable children in Haiti. Based in Les Cayes, their work focuses on reunification of children, child well-being, family and community development, and advocacy for women and child rights. LFBS' reunification standards and collaborative spirit is transforming child welfare in the south.

LFBS director, Morgan Weinberg, began volunteering at an orphanage in Haiti at

Little footprints, **BIG STEPS**

Shelter care and reunification

age 18 in 2010. After discovering that 73 of the 75 children in the orphanage had families, she reunited some of the children with their families. Morgan relocated to Les Cayes to be near and provide support to the reunited families.

Now, LFBS is a comprehensive child-protection agency. Safe houses provide temporary shelter for street children, children who are victims of sexual violence, formerly living as restavek, and formerly living in orphanages. LFBS traces and connects children to their families of origin, or, if needed foster-care. Advocacy efforts include community training to prevent abandonment, violence against children and restavek. Advocacy work supports victims in seeking legal justice, providing children with birth certificates, and working closely with IBESR on the deinstitutionalization of orphanages.

LFBS is dedicated to creating collaborative relationships with local and national government to cultivate a culture of prevention of child-protection violations.

This includes LFBS working hand-in-hand in IBESR, providing transportation for IBESR social workers, building IBESR capacity, and ensuring IBESR is always approving of child placement.

LFBS also partners with Brigade de Protection des Mineurs for issues of child rights violations; Centre de Formation et de Recherches en Appuis Psychosocial for counseling support; Haven for income generating activities with parents; Ministry of Women's Rights for prevention of gender-based violence; Lumos for deinstitutionalization and reunification processes; Terre de hommes for foster-care placements; and Haiti Air Ambulance, St. Damiens, Bernard Mevs, and Medecins Sans Frontieres for medical support of children.

LFBS is also involved in the child-protection cluster of the south which is coordinated by IBESR and includes UNICEF and other organizations working towards child protection in the region. It is through these partnerships that child protection in the south is evolving.



Photo: Lumos

“We are living our work. It takes a lot of emotional resources and patience. But it is good work. We are acting to put smiles on the faces of the desperate; we are giving a voice to uncounted people.”

Eugene Jr Guillaume
Senior Country Manager, Lumos Haiti

Collective action for collective impact.

Lumos is an international child-protection organization that works with government and other partners to transform the child-protection system; supporting a safe shift away from institutions toward strengthening families and communities. Established in 2005 and operating in Haiti since January of 2015, Lumos is working to transform care services for vulnerable children and families in Haiti by 2030.

Lumos’ work in Haiti focuses on transforming care through policy reform,



developing models of care and providing technical support to a range of partners in government including IBESR, the Office for the Protection of Citizen, The Anti-Trafficking Committee, and the Brigade for Protection of Minors. It brings critical knowledge and skills to Haiti, and through their partnership with IBESR, seeks to strengthen the government’s capacity for effective deinstitutionalization. Lumos takes into account the close ties between trafficking and institutionalization in Haiti and works hand-in-hand with Haiti’s National Committee Against Trafficking and IBESR. Since 2016, it has assisted IBESR in closing eight orphanages and reintegrated 75% of the children in those institutions with their families of origin.

Lumos commends IBESR’s moratorium which prohibits the opening of new institutions and recommends and follows IBESR’s 30/70 policy; suggesting that 30% of funding could be allocated to good residential care until children can be reunited with families and 70%

should be allocated to family preservation of those reunited families and additional services to prevent new orphans.

Lumos sees their role in child-protection transformation in Haiti as four-fold

1. Research and documentation to uncover Haiti’s invisible children and support change.
2. Advocacy and policy change with the Government of Haiti.
3. Training and capacity building of local policy makers and child-protection practitioners.
4. Deinstitutionalization implemented alongside the government.

Lumos envisions a Haiti with no children living in institutions by 2030. It sees collective action as the only way to achieve such a large-scale vision in this short time. To end the institutionalization of children, organizations must work in strategic harmony. Lumos sees this as possible and the future of reform in Haiti.

“We (Westerners) consciously or subconsciously seem to believe that the materially poor cannot raise children the way we do. After seventeen years of experience in Haiti, I can tell you those biases are untrue.”

**Tara Livesay
Director, Heartline Maternity Center**

A call to
ACTION

The power of **COLLECTIVE ACTION**

Given the proximity to—and history with—the United States, Haiti is saturated with nonprofit organizations.²⁹ Unfortunately, the culture of development work in Haiti has become one of isolation, and sometimes even competition. The organizations highlighted in this case study are key exceptions—they are working together, across regions and services, and despite differences to transform child protection in Haiti.

For a range of reasons, many foreign organizations choose not to work in close relationship with IBESR—or the government of Haiti in general. Working in Haiti has many challenges. However, only in the presence of a true partnership with the Government of Haiti—and in partnership with each other—can sustainable and effective child protection become a reality.

The lack of unity, engagement and communication are barriers to a cohesive approach to care reform. However, we must learn to work together, lifting one another up, and recognizing our unique

strengths and niches of services. We all have something to teach, and to learn.

Faith-based organizations working deep in community have the ability to build trust and relationships with community leaders, parents, and families. They have the ability to transform Haiti at the community level.

Those working in child protection know international best-practices about trauma, healing as well as the harsh realities that Haiti's children face. We need to listen with humility and receive their message of transformation and redemption.

Those working to change policy and strengthen IBESR have patience and a strong vision for a realistic, achievable future for Haiti. They are building capacity, accompaniment, and planting seeds of change.

IBESR, the Haitian government, and Haitian leaders, know the laws of Haiti, the cultural context, and the resources available to bring about change.

When we work in isolation, we end up duplicating efforts, or working in opposition to each other. We may begin to think our way is the only way, and we reject the valuable insights and wisdom of others. It takes curiosity, patience, commitment (love), and a lot of humility to develop strong, healthy working relationships. When we all work together, we can create collective impact—and sustainably transform the lives of Haitian children.

“A family for every Haitian child can be a dream that comes true. We only have to join our strength and work hard to make it achievable.”

Staff member
Lumos Haiti

The opportunity to **TRANSFORM**

“If what we are doing is not helpful and is harmful, we have to change.”

John Keane
Board President, Hope Community Project

“We have to educate the donors and the volunteers, for all of your best intentions, if you are giving money to orphanages, if you are volunteering in orphanages, you are helping to drive trafficking in Haiti.”

Georgette Mulheir
Chief Executive Officer, Lumos

Many of us—whether board members, donors, advocates, or organization staff—have played a part in unnecessarily separating children from families. We have not paused to ask the hard questions, or to reflect on the larger context. Often, we have simply believed what we were told. We did not learn the harsh realities of child protection. We may have taken action without understanding deeply what it meant in the context of Haiti, and in the context of child welfare. We have acted in good faith, but often with unanticipated impacts. This is heart-breaking, and can be cloaked in shame, anxiety, or defensiveness.

The organizations highlighted in this case study—and many others—have roots in institutionalized care of children. It is hard to admit that we have bought into—and encouraged others to fund—a story that may not be entirely true.

But by making a renewed commitment to the future of Haiti’s children—by fully understanding and embracing the

best practices in child protection—we can find ways to redeem our actions, our financial donations, and our organizational mission. We can help build a thriving Haiti, even as we learn and partner with others.

As they have come to understand the complex nature of child welfare in Haiti and the negative impacts of the orphanage industry, many brave people have made bold decisions to change their own actions and organizational path.

Boards of long-term residential care facilities can choose to change, too. Donors to orphanages can choose to follow IBESR’s recommendation of 30% support to quality residential care and 70% support to family preservation and family-based care.

Together, we can redeem our stories, encourage one another in humility and grace, and one day see a thriving child-protection system in Haiti—a loving family for every Haitian child.



Photo: Little Footprints, Big Steps

Protecting children, TOGETHER

The need for a robust foster care system of Haiti was evident following the 2010 earthquake. IBESR, UNICEF, Terre des hommes, the International Rescue Committee, the French Embassy, Handicap International, Delegation of the European Union, Bethany Global and others together developed the national policies and procedures for placing children into foster care while ensuring international standards are respected. This resulted in the *Dispositif de Placement en familles d'accueil*.

Natural disasters often are followed by an increase in human trafficking and other child protection violations. Immediately after hurricane Matthew ravished the south department of Haiti, IBESR, Lumos, and Little Footprints, Big Steps joined efforts to visit every one of the 50 orphanages in the south department. They together rapidly assessed over 2,000 children ensuring that children were not trafficked in the wake of the emergency.

“Deinstitutionalization is a silent revolution in Haiti, it tackles many structural issues at the same time. It is an essential step towards the creation of a better Haiti for our children.”

Eugene Jr Guillaume
Senior Country Manager, Lumos Haiti

Working TOGETHER

In March of 2019, IBESR, UNICEF, and Hope and Homes for Children (HHC) collaborated to deliver a three-day workshop on care reform in Port au Prince, Haiti.

IBESR Director, Madame Arielle Villedrouin, and Deputy Director, Diem Pierre, 60 representatives from IBESR and other government ministries, as well as representatives from 10 nongovernmental organizations spent these three days together building on the vision of a family for every child in Haiti. This successful collaboration was made possible due to the hard work of the government, donor and NGO partners who have spent the past several years building momentum, frameworks and relationships necessary for change.

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“Orphanages have become a culturally acceptable solution to poverty issues, but what if even a portion of the resources that are currently poured into orphanages in Haiti were used instead for family strengthening and community development efforts? Imagine the impact that would have for thousands of children who, instead of being separated from their families and raised in institutions, would grow up within their homes and their communities because their families had been empowered to care for them.”

**Gerson Nozea
Haitian Director, Rapha House**

In Gratitude

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And finally, no acknowledgement would be complete without recognizing the organizations large and small who work day in and day out with children, families and communities across Haiti. We wish we could include each and every one here.

Resources for change

Bethany Global

bethany.org/global

Better Care Network

bettercarenetwork.org

Changing the Way We Care

changingthewaywecare.org

Faith to Action Initiative

faithtoaction.org

Hope and Homes for Children

hopeandhomes.org

Rethink Orphanages

rethinkorphanages.org



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