

MEBSH Schools - Haiti -



PROGRAM FACTS

What is the program and where is it located? The Mission Evangelique Baptiste du Sud d'Haiti (MEBSH) sponsors 14 specialized schools located throughout Haiti's southern peninsula, for children who are behind in school.

Who do we serve? Approximately 430 of Haiti's most vulnerable children.

What is the purpose of the program? To combat a local cultural practice (known as restavek) in which children are turned over to host families to work as indentured servants.

What specifically does Cross support? Educational programs, hot meals.

THE PROJECT WE SUPPORT

General Program Support: Cross provides the necessary funding for teachers, staff, meals, supplies and facilities.

Background

Haiti's restavek problem is a complicated one. It can seem daunting to fight against decades of cultural acceptance of child servitude, but we believe it is our Christian duty to do whatever we can to prevent the practice and intervene when necessary.

It's important to understand that the parents of these children feel that a restavek situation is in the child's best interest. They feel hopeless and are convinced that by sending their children away to a host family, the kids will receive a better life and even an education. But too often the children become slaves to their host families. Some, especially the girls, are sexually or physically abused, and without exception, these children are expected to work long, hard hours. They are the first to rise in the morning and the last to go to sleep at night.

The Program

MEBSH schools offer free Christian education five days a week. Most classes are held in the afternoon, which caters to the needs of restavek children, because they don't interfere with their morning chores. In general, MEBSH schools are located in rural areas where children might be in danger of becoming restavek. This is intentional, as MEBSH not only wants to help restavek children but to discourage the practice in the first place.

Much of the MEBSH curriculum is an accelerated, government-approved program catered to older students who are behind in school. With this program, students can receive six years of education in four years. During the three or four hours of class, these vulnerable children follow Haiti's national standard curriculum, and receive free hot lunches to improve their nutrition.

Leadership

Back in the 1980s, a large group of Haitian churches — the Mission Evangelique Baptiste du Sud d'Haiti (MEBSH) — began a recreation program for restavek children. It has now become the largest program of its kind in Haiti. With the help of Cross International, MEBSH has established specialized schools across Haiti's southern peninsula where restavek children can be taught valuable skills they would never have learned otherwise. Better yet, children who are at risk of becoming restavek can also be educated, so that impoverished parents may reconsider sending their children away — thus preventing the problem before it even begins.

Haiti – Quick Facts

Population: 10,981,229

Literacy rate: 60.7% (95.5% U.S.)

Infant mortality: 48.2 deaths per 1,000 live births (7.5 in U.S.)

Poverty below poverty line: 58.5% (15.1% in U.S.)

Primary religions: Roman Catholic 54.7%, Protestant 28.5%, Vodou 2.1%, other/none 14.8% (2003 est.) Source: CIA World Factbook