

INTERNATIONAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

PROJECT 0115



Cross International

Delivering Food, Shelter and Hope in the Name of Jesus

MEBSH School Support

Empowering vulnerable and restavek children

— Southern Peninsula, Haiti —



He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in His sight.

Psalm 72:14



We are a ministry

that mobilizes the global Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify Him in Heaven and on earth.





Project Synopsis

Description

This project will enable MEBSH schools to serve some of Haiti's most vulnerable children, providing them with both a basic education and the hope of the Gospel.

Purpose

MEBSH schools pursue three key objectives:

- To bring hope and the love of Christ into the lives of overaged children and other children whose parents have been financially unable to send them to school.
- To help the community see the potential of these neglected and forgotten children.
- To combat a local cultural practice in which children are turned over to work for host families as indentured servants called restaveks.



Cost

For **\$181,496**, Cross International can educate, feed and support 507 underprivileged children for a period of eighteen months.

Locations

Fifteen schools are located throughout the southern peninsula of Haiti.

Highlights

- MEBSH has dedicated itself to educating and empowering vulnerable and restavek children by establishing specialized schools where these children are taught to read, write and do arithmetic — all skills they would never have learned otherwise.
- At each school, children are also taught the Gospel and learn they are valued by God.
- Because these free schools meet the need for food and education, they reduce the likelihood that children of extremely impoverished families will be sent into servitude.
- Much of the 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.
- Recently, because of the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Matthew, 13 of the 15 schools were either damaged or completely destroyed.
- As of now, temporary school structures have been built, all using donated materials.
- Every student now receives emergency medication and medical consultations as part of the disaster relief initiative.
- Eventually, we hope to rebuild all of the schools that were damaged.



Meet a Child Domestic Servant

Darlene calls her host “aunt,” but the woman she lives with is not a family relation. In fact, the aunt and her family were strangers to Darlene when she went to live with them four years ago. One glance at the contrast between Darlene’s tattered clothing and the other children’s school uniforms makes another distinction clear — Darlene is a *restavek* (derived from the French phrase “to stay with”).



For restavek children like Darlene, school provides a way out of misery.

Today, instead of being another nameless illiterate Haitian, Darlene is reading, writing and doing arithmetic. She has a bright future, and prays to God every day for her improving fortunes.

“When I pray at home, I pray first that the school opens. I go to church every Sunday and I pray that the next day I’ll be able to go to school,” Darlene says.

When asked if her aunt and the family are nice to her, Darlene replies, “Not really. From time to time they hit me. They are physically violent with me.” The scar on her face will forever be a terrible reminder of that violence.

The family Darlene serves has five children ages 3 to 15, but she is the only one who sleeps on the floor. The other children sleep in beds. While they get to learn and play, it’s Darlene’s job to wash clothes, fetch water, clean the house and cook the meals. As a lowly servant, she is not allowed to play with the children, or to eat with the family. Only after the family has finished eating the meal she’s prepared may she help herself to leftovers or table scraps.

Until recently, Darlene was not allowed to attend school because the family did not want to spend money on the uniforms, supplies and registration fees required to send her to a “free” public school.

“When I lived with my mom, I went to preschool, when I was four,” Darlene says. Unfortunately, her mom was too poor to keep her in school. In fact, she was too poor to keep Darlene at all. That is why she sent Darlene to live with this family, where she might at least get enough food to eat and, if she were lucky, even go to school.

But school was out of the question — that is until MEBSH offered free education in Darlene’s neighborhood for children like her.

“School gives me a way to get out of the misery. It gives me an education,” Darlene says.



Haiti's Restavek Problem



Darlene's story is not unique. In fact, it is all too common among the poor in Haiti. Each year, hundreds of children become restaveks because their impoverished parents see no other way of providing for the most basic needs of their families.

The parents send the children to live with other families in the hope the children will have a better life and may even obtain an education. Unfortunately, many these children become little more than slaves to

Restaveks by the Numbers

- **300,000** children in Haiti are restaveks.
- **60%** of restaveks are girls.
- Haiti is in the **Top 10** in the Global Slavery Index.

the new families that take them in. Some, especially the girls, are sexually or physically abused, and all of them 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 — sometimes on a scrap of cardboard outside, like a dog.

They must cook breakfast for the family, clean the house and help with young children. Several times a day they have to fetch fresh water for the family, a task that can take hours. Little girls and boys balancing

jugs of water almost as large as they are can regularly be seen walking down the winding streets of Haiti's cities.

Without an education, these children grow up illiterate and virtually unemployable, with no hope of changing their situation. Instead they must continue living as slaves or run away to escape the abusive treatment. Those who do run away have nowhere to turn, especially because they have no skills to secure a job and cannot even read or write. They are forced to live on the streets where they continue to suffer abuse and hardship.

Without help, these children are doomed to a life of poverty and sadness. But there is hope, and it begins with providing educational opportunities for restavek children that will help them change their situation. Even better, by providing educational opportunities for overaged or desperately poor children, parents will be dissuaded from sending their children to host families in the first place.



The Solution: MEBSH Schools

Back in the 1980s, a large group of Haitian churches — the Mission Evangelique Baptiste du Sud d’Haiti (MEBSH) — began a recreation program for restaveks. It has now become the largest program for helping restavek children in Haiti. With the help of Cross and other generous benefactors, 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 restaveks can also be educated, so that impoverished parents may reconsider sending their children away — thus preventing the problem before it even begins.

These schools have truly been a blessing for these at-risk children. They offer free Christian education five days a week. Most classes are held in the afternoon, so as not to interfere with the children’s morning chores. This gives the host families more incentive to allow them to attend.

Although a few hours of education each day may seem like a meager way to address Haiti’s restavek problem, these schools are making a difference because what they provide is more than education. They instill in these children a sense of hope and empowerment.

Most of the MEBSH schools are known as “literacy centers,” yet they offer much more than just reading and writing. During the three or four hours of class, these vulnerable children follow Haiti’s national standard curriculum. They learn subjects such as math, science and history, as well as Creole and French — the language spoken in Haiti’s high schools and universities. Another important component of the program is giving the children time to play together. This gives them a great sense of belonging. As they receive the love of Christ through their dedicated teachers, the children begin to see that they are not only valuable in God’s eyes, but also in the world’s.

All children receive a hearty school meal each day, usually consisting of Vitafood — fortified rice and soy protein meals scientifically designed to reverse the effects of chronic malnutrition — which Cross International ships to the schools. A hot lunch gives them the energy to focus on school and reassures them that they deserve good, nutritious food as any other child does.



Beware that you don’t look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.

Matthew 18:10 (NLT)



The Impact of Hurricane Matthew



In Toirac, classes are back in session under a temporary canopy.

When Hurricane Matthew smashed Haiti's southern coast on October 4, 2016, local pastors and church leaders were stunned by the catastrophic damage it brought to their communities. Out of the 15 schools that are spread throughout the southern peninsula, 13 were either damaged or completely destroyed by the killer storm.

Within days of Hurricane Matthew's impact, Cross's disaster relief team began working with school officials to help those who were most affected by the storm. To date, we have been able to assist our MEBSH brothers and sisters in Haiti through a traumatic period of transition. They have been able to get their children back to school and resume classes under temporary structures, and this is an important start. But much more needs to be done.

During the next phases — with the love of Christ guiding us — compassionate relief will lead to long-term healing. We hope to eventually rebuild all of the schools that were damaged, but right now we are committed to providing temporary facilities so that the children will continue to receive the education, food and hope that they depend on.



In Bonodo, children are back in classes and once again receiving school lunches.



Locations of MEBSH Schools

DAMAGED OR DESTROYED BY HURRICANE MATTHEW

- 1 Baselais (**damaged**)
- 2 Laborde (**DESTROYED**)
- 3 Poteau (**DESTROYED**)
- 4 Chantal (**damaged**)
- 5 La Rivière (**DESTROYED**)
- 6 Chardonnière (**DESTROYED**)
- 7 Gréssier (*undamaged*)
- 8 Labattre (*undamaged*)
- 9 Cahaouane (**DESTROYED**)
- 10 Montadière (**DESTROYED**)
- 11 Melonière (**damaged**)
- 12 Pesmel (**DESTROYED**)
- 13 Bon Pas (**DESTROYED**)
- 14 Toirac (**DESTROYED; BUILDING COMPLETED**)
- 15 Bonodo (**DESTROYED; REBUILDING IN PROCESS**)

MAP OF
HAITI



AREA OF DETAIL



He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap.

Psalm 113:7



Help Now!

Haiti's restavek problem is a complicated one. It can seem daunting to fight against decades of cultural acceptance of child servitude and the poverty that spawned the restavek practice, but that is our Christian duty — to serve the poorest of the poor with love.

Funding this outreach is important because these special schools provide much more than an education. They restore dignity and hope to the poor, and serve as a model of Christ-like compassion in the communities where they are located. Most important of all, the MEBSH schools bring the love of Christ into the lives of precious children — a gift of incalculable and eternal value.



With your help, restavek children — as well as children at risk of becoming restavek — can attend school and eat a full meal each day. They can learn basic skills, gain independence and avoid being marginalized in Haitian society. Of course, this time in school also provides a blessed escape from harsh daily realities.

Beyond the obvious benefits your support provides, consider its psychological impact as well. A majority of the MEBSH schools were either severely damaged or destroyed by the destructive power of Hurricane Matthew, and the disaster left many feeling hopeless. Your compassion will show these families we care about them and are working in Christ's name to bring rapid relief.

Please — join us in this important mission. Help the schools so they can provide food, deliver educational and medical supplies, and train teachers to guide students during this traumatic period in their lives. These blessings can only be delivered with your support!

“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Mark 9:37

Our Promise to You!

Proceeds from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2018, the close of our ministry's new fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.