

Transformational Travel to Haiti

Focusing on the Restavek System in Haiti

Dates: October 17 - 24, 2009

The Restavek Issue: Only an hour flight from the United States as many as 300,000 children are trapped in a life of slavery. About one in ten Haitian children between the ages of five and eighteen live apart from their families in unpaid domestic servitude. While their treatment varies, many are forced to work every waking hour without a break to rest, play, attend school or form friendships. Instead of receiving love and affection, they endure humiliation and rejection. Many face physical, psychological and sexual abuse. Roughly three quarters of these children are girls. (UNICEF, 2007)

The majority of these children originate in the Haitian countryside where there are few schools and life can be extremely hard. The lack of schools and other basic services and economic opportunities lead to widespread despair. Many rural parents who live in extreme poverty make this desperate gamble with the life of one or more of their children. They are sent to work in the city often because they are recruited by urban families that have connections to the rural community or by brokers who pass through looking for children of desperate families. Rural parents are often unaware of the nightmare awaiting children they send away. They are often fed false promises from the recruiting family--promises that the child will be sent to school and well cared for.

Many of these children lose all contact with their families. Most either run away or get turned out of the household they serve sometime during adolescence. While some make it back home, others end up on the street or move to other placements. Many girls end up being thrown out when they become pregnant due to rape within the household.

Program: This trip will include visits with grassroots groups who are working to combat the Haitian Restavek System. We will meet several powerful women who were themselves victims of this dire system; their stories are powerful. We will learn of the accomplishments of these women, including the strategy of speaking out to parents around the countryside, explaining

what might happen if they send their children away. We will learn how Beyond Borders and our Haitian partner Limye Lavi are working with indigenous leaders in a Campaign to end Child Servitude. (*Read more about the Campaign on our website: www.beyondborders.net.*) We are also planning a trip to the countryside where we will spend time with rural families and learn about some of the socio-economical struggles they face today.

***Travel and communication in Haiti can be difficult. We share these plans knowing that even with the best of agendas, some changes may take place.*

Cost: The cost of this trip is \$1200 per person. This covers the expenses of hosting you in Haiti for the week. It includes costs such as food & lodging, and the ever increasing cost of traveling throughout Haiti. The fee also covers your guides and interpreters (2 to 4 depending on group size). We sometimes give an honorarium to a speaker or group that we meet with. It also assists with our administrative costs of arranging these trips.

The fee does not include the costs for immunizations or airfare to and from Haiti. While in Haiti, it will not include food and beverages not on the regular menu of included meals, or any other expenses of a purely personal nature.

We ask for a refundable deposit of \$300 to be submitted along with your application. The balance is due one month before your departure to Haiti.

Group Size: The ideal group size will be 8 to 10 participants. We have had a good deal of interest in this type of trip. If you have serious interest, please get your application and deposit in to reserve your space; it will be first-come, first served.

Necessary for Travel: You will need a US Passport, and it cannot expire within 6 months of your travel dates in Haiti. If you do not have a passport, you can use the "expedited service" at this point. You do not need a Visa. It is recommended that you are current on your Tetanus and that you consider Malaria Prevention (pills). Some health care professionals do recommend Typhoid, Hepatitis and Polio. Please consult with your health care professional or local community clinic for additional information.

Preparation Packet: Once you are a registered participant for this trip (you have sent in your application and \$300 refundable deposit), we will send you our Preparation Packet. This packet includes additional information such as: What to Bring; Airport & Flight Advice; Haitian Proverbs; Basic Creole Language Tips; a few articles for you to read, and a bibliography of other reading materials.

Once I have received all applications and the full group of Transformational Travel participants have been accepted, I will send two additional memos to further prepare the group for travel.

Should you have any questions that have not been addressed, please let me know and I will attempt to get them answered right away.

Best Wishes,

Cindy Koser
Beyond Borders Associate