

Changing the Way We Care in Haiti

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN SOUTHERN HAITI

As a result of compounding political, social, and climate stresses, poverty has increased in the Sud (southern) Haiti over the last several years. As a result, many parents and caregivers struggle to meet their children's needs and send them to residential care centers (RCCs), or more commonly known as 'orphanages.' But decades of research tells us that these centers cannot satisfy children's development and wellbeing needs.

According to the Haitian government's lead agency for child protection, L'Institut du Bien-Être Social et de Recherches (IBESR), southern Haiti has more than 2,000 children living in at least 48 RCCs.

Recognizing that family separation affects children throughout the world, Catholic Relief Services and Maestral International have come together with other partners to form a global initiative called Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC). CTWWC promotes safe, nurturing, family care for children by reintegrating children from RCCs into families and preventing child-family separation whenever it is safe to do so. CTWWC works to strengthen families and reform national systems of care for children through family reintegration and promoting all forms of family-based care. This includes ensuring families have access to the necessary

support systems to raise their children. CTWWC has been operating in Haiti since 2017 and, with support from Vista Hermosa Foundation and the IBESR (Haiti's institute of social well-being and research), has been building on the primary program objective: children remain in, or return to, safe and nurturing family care.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS THROUGH:



COMMUNITY-BASED CHILD PROTECTION

Child protection is a cornerstone of CTWWC's approach. With support from Vista Hermosa Foundation, CTWWC Haiti establishes community-based child protection committees and raises awareness of community leaders and RCC staff about the importance of family-based care. CTWWC also works with foster families, connects them to child protection committees and offers referrals for community resources. CTWWC ensures that child protection principles are

MEET OUR PARTNER



Vista Hermosa Foundation is an initiative of Broetje Family Trust, which stewards a family legacy of "bearing fruit that will last" through servant leadership, community building, and philanthropy. Vista Hermosa Foundation partners with organizations committed to community-led development that promotes healing and reconciliation for both people and the planet.



integrated into its education programming, both in southern Haiti and other areas of the country.



FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Preventing child-family separation and ensuring children are protected often requires strengthening the family. CTWWC Haiti's approach includes implementing a positive parenting curriculum to vulnerable families. This includes offering training for those families with children living with disabilities, as their care requires specific resources for which caregivers may not be fully equipped. CTWWC helps families map out services and find referrals to these resources. Because child-family separation is sometimes exacerbated by financial difficulties in a household, CTWWC Haiti also offers training and support for families to improve household income and savings. Families have the opportunity to participate in Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC).

1,360

caregivers, children, care-leavers, and RCC facility staff in southern Haiti are engaged in CTWWC support.



CASE MANAGEMENT

Because Changing the Way We Care's ultimate goal is the successful and permanent reunification of children with their families, it is necessary to work with families, children and affected youth on an individual basis, in addition to community-level activities. This case management supports children and families who have the potential to be reunited, families and children at risk of separation, and young adults who are in the process of leaving RCCs (known as care-leavers) as they reach adulthood. The CTWWC team works with RCCs to identify children who are ready to be reunited with their families and begins the process of assessment

and family tracing. The team creates a reunification plan for each child, which involves counseling and support groups for both family members and children. Follow-ups on children and families are conducted for a minimum of 18 months. CTWWC also identifies, assesses and creates a plan for families at-risk of separation.



FACILITATING TRANSITION SERVICES FOR RCCs

Changing the Way We Care identifies RCCs that would like to change their model to family- and community-based services, rather than focusing on residential care. In order to develop transition or closure plans and create customized business models for their services, the CTWWC Haiti team assesses the RCC's capacity and infrastructure. Because care reform requires a paradigm shift, the project also facilitates events for RCCs that are transitioning to share learning.

ALTA VISITA: TRANSFORMING CARE IN HAITI

Alta Visita is an organization in Haiti that once operated as a RCC. Many families felt they had no choice but to place their children, including those with disability, in the center. For many years, Alta Visita provided live-in care, education and disability services for these children. Then, Alta Visita met Changing the Way We Care. They began to learn the benefits of family-based care and the long-term risks institutional care poses on children (such as increased risk of mental health challenges, substance abuse and unemployment). When Alta Visita decided to transition their care services and return the children to families, CTWWC connected them to resources and providing trainings to support this transition. Thanks to dedicated partners, staff, service organizations, and community members they successfully reintegrated 26 children back into families, and they now operate as a community center that offers support and resources for vulnerable children and families.