

# Child Protection Policy



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## Child Protection Policy



## Background

Haiti Now centers around educating and protecting children, many of whom have come from backgrounds of abuse and exploitation. Haiti Now is committed to creating a learning environment that safeguards the Rights of the Child and expects its employees and volunteers to work within the best interests of the child. Haiti Now will take active measures to ensure that this is realized.

This Child Protection Policy is Haiti Now's Statement of Intent illustrating our determination to protect children from harm. It makes clear to everyone within the organization, and all who come in contact with us, that any form of child abuse will not be tolerated and outlines their obligations in protecting the children that Haiti Now work with.

Haiti Now promises to create a 'child-safe' environment which supports the respect, empowerment, education and protection of children to fulfill their potential, alongside Staff who are competent, skilled and understanding of this.

Haiti Now is committed to ensuring a child friendly space, free of harm, abuse and neglect. We strenuously uphold a workplace whose values are underpinned by the Rights of the Child, and will take positive action against any child abusers from being involved in Haiti Now.

Any Haiti Now Staff or Associate who has had claims brought against them of any child abuse will be investigated. Our decision of any investigation will be based on the guideline of being 'in the best interests of the Child'.

## Definitions under the Child Protection Policy

1. A Child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years old.
2. Child Abuse is defined as all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that result in actual or potential harm to a child. Child abuse may be a deliberate act or it may be failing to act to prevent harm. Child abuse consists of anything which individuals, institutions or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood.

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3. Child Protection within the scope of this policy is defined as the responsibilities, measures and activities that Haiti Now undertakes to safeguard children from both intentional and unintentional harm.

## Keeping records

Keep a record for each child. When a child comes into the home, learn what you can, and write it in his or her record. You will add more when you have assessed the child's condition (learned more through observing, listening with attention, and considering his or her condition.)

To learn from children, in the first interview:

- be warm and sympathetic
- ask questions gently
- let the child take time to answer, or not, as she wishes
- do not make the child feel shame (a feeling of having done something terrible and being blamed by oneself and others)
- try not to retraumatize (harming a child by forcing him or her to remember and live through the pain, shame and fear of past experiences again)

Be very careful. Unless you are a trained professional counselor (someone specially trained in mental health who can help people with their emotions) do not ask children about sexual experiences or other terrible violence. Such questions can retraumatize the child.

You can give healing care without knowing how a child was exploited.

Children who are not ready to talk should be given time – perhaps days or weeks. They need to become used to the home and to develop trust in its staff. Give special attention to what children say when they go beyond answering questions.

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### Outline of a child's record:

Early information, such as

- full name
- area or place that they came from
- where the girl worked as a Restavek and what she was doing
- what the hosting family had promised
- how the hosting family treated the child

Assessment and care, such as

- information on health and nutrition
- psychosocial assessment, recommendations (what should be done), and progress notes
- education and training needs, and how they are being met

Notes on other subjects, such as

- the child's own needs and wants, for the present and for the future
- the child's skills and what she enjoys learning
- anything that is being done to help the child, such as help from lawyers (professionals in the practice of law) getting
- official papers

The responsibilities of a guardian

- To be sure that all matters are decided in the child's best interests
- To be sure that the child Restavek has the right kind of care, place to stay, health care, psychosocial support, education and language support
- To be sure that the child victim has legal and other advocates where necessary

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- To talk with, advise and give the child victim information on her rights
- To be part of finding a durable solution in the child's best interests
- To provide a link between the child victim and different organizations that may provide services to the child

A durable solution is a long-term plan for the child, giving the child the best chance of a good future life. Helping staff to deal with emotions Rehabilitating Restavek children may be unlike anything that staff members have done before. It is not easy to work day after day with children who are depressed, feeling anxiety (worries and fears) and experiencing many other emotions. Children can be holding a lot of anger from their experiences in the Restavek system. They may become very angry at staff members or at anyone who seems to have power. They may act out (express their feelings by doing things that cause trouble in the group).

Or they may simply not join in anything that other children are doing.

Staff members have their own emotions. They may sometimes look down upon children who were sexually exploited. Some may discriminate against (treat unequally and badly) people from a different place. Discrimination prevents a child from trusting the staff.

### **Train staff to give every child equal respect and care.**

Provide staff with training that helps them understand their children better. Discuss about how to treat all children gently. Give staff members chances to talk about their own feelings and difficulties. To help staff members learn how to deal with anger, depression, and other common problems, use role plays (short exercises in which people act like someone else). When a child is so angry and violent that she is putting other children or staff in danger, get help from a trained professional counselor.

### **Protection against abuse**

A policy against exploitation and abuse for all staff, volunteers and visitors of our program:

- Rehabilitation staff and all others should never physically, sexually or emotionally abuse any client in any manner.

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- Staff and others must respect and protect the rights of children.
- The program has a system to prevent abuse, and to report abuse by children and by staff members.
- The program has a system to be sure the right kind of action is taken if abuse happens.

Each rehabilitation staff member is responsible to make sure that their own behavior and that of all others follows an agreed Code of Conduct.

Staff members have some power, and children may feel that they have little or no power. This means that a risk of exploitation and abuse exists in any rehabilitation program. Abuse includes:

- physical injury
- sexual actions or comments with a child
- emotional injury including damaging comments and discrimination
- threats to a child
- neglect (not doing what is needed, and so causing harm)
- failing to protect a child from danger or illness

Former Restavek may be retraumatized by any experience of abuse. Have a written policy that protects all children against abuse in the rehabilitation program. Be sure that all staff members understand the policy well – including staff who cannot read.

### Agree on a code of conduct

Have a written code of conduct (list of behaviors) that is based on the policy. This code says exactly and clearly what is permitted or not permitted in the program. Staff members need to agree on these clear rules of behavior. Others such as teachers, lawyers, and volunteers who work with our children also need to know the code of conduct.

Following a clear agreed code of conduct protects everyone.

Dismiss any staff member who violates the policy and code of conduct. Consider taking legal action against any person who uses his or her power to exploit children.

Protect children from each other if necessary



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Children are vulnerable (at high risk of harm) when a program is not well controlled. Even when staff themselves follows the code of conduct and are careful to treat everyone equally, some children may discriminate against others. Older or stronger children may expect to make younger or weaker ones obey them by bullying (violent abuse and control of weaker children by stronger ones).

### To protect everyone:

- Teach all children to treat others with respect.
- Do not allow violence or verbal abuse (strong words or comments that cause fear, shame and anger).
- Do not allow bullying.

**If a child starts to bully others, be alert and separate them. Talk quietly with each child. With staff members, discuss how to teach the bullying child more self control, without ever permitting him or her to harm others.**

## Code of Conduct

### What to do

- Affirm the dignity of children, listening to them and valuing them even where society generally might not do so on account of their age, gender, class, ethnic group, or past history.
- Treat all children as equal in their human rights, and prevent any exploitation.
- Become aware of potential abuse by listening to children, asking them about their interactions with rehabilitation staff, other workers, and other children.
- Inform children of their right to be free from abuse and exploitation.
- Describe physical, sexual and emotional abuse so they can recognize it, including inappropriate behavior that would lead toward abuse.
- Encourage rehabilitation staff and children to report any abuse and inappropriate behavior, by explaining whom they should talk to

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- Tell children of their right to confidentiality\* and how they will be protected from any retaliation.
- Support anyone who reports abuse, investigate without delay and take decisive action to eliminate it and prevent it happening again.
- Organize and plan workplace spaces and activities to minimize risks of activities that could contribute to exploitation and abuse between rehabilitation staff and children, or among children themselves.
- Balance the privacy needed for one-on-one counseling with the need to have some openness to the sight of others.
- Use touch to reassure and comfort only as culturally approved, usually only between rehabilitation staff and children of the same gender.
- Provide warm attention to all children, demonstrating daily that each one is valued.
- Ensure (be sure) that no child will be endangered or stigmatized by publication of their picture or story, and request their specific permission to use it.
- Respect a child's decision not to be interviewed or photographed.

## What not to do

- Do not hit or otherwise physically abuse children.
- Do not exclude children from the group as punishment
- Do not force them to take part in any activities, including religious observances.
- Do not use touch or physical one-on-one contact that could lead toward sexual or exploitative relations with a child.
- Do not use language or gestures that are inappropriate, sexually suggestive, humiliating or offensive. Do not respond to such language or gestures if used by children.
- Do not threaten a child or place them in a risky situation.
- Do not spend time alone and out of sight with a child, or share a bed or room with them.
- Do not provide personal care for children that they can do for themselves.
- Do not have favorites, give extra privileges to some children, or exclude some.
- Do not make promises to children that you will not fulfill.

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### Shared space

- Do all that is possible to have good light
- enough heat or coolness, and fresh air
- a bed or sleeping area for each child
- clean washrooms and toilets

#### **Our home exists to give our children security and safety.**

For normal development, children must have space to play. Both boys and girls need to climb, run, jump and move freely, to play games, sing, and dance and make noise, to use their hands for catching and throwing, drawing and making things. Play also helps children to develop their language and thinking skills. Provide girls and boys with as much space as possible to move freely and play. Help children to make the home their own. Provide places where they can show their handcrafts (things made by hand), or put up their pictures on the walls.

## IMMEDIATE CARE

### Treat sickness and injuries

As soon as possible, look for sickness and injuries, and treat them. Write the information in the child's record, with a note if more treatment is needed. Before a new child has a complete physical examination, wait a few days. She needs to become calmer and start to trust the staff.

For children under age 12, if possible give an immediate immunization (an injection that protects against a disease) against measles (a serious disease of children). In a group, measles can quickly spread and be very serious. Consider whether this risk is important enough for you to do something to new children that they will not like.

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### Help children to keep clean

- Keep the home itself clean, and provide what children need.
- soap and water for washing themselves
- appropriate toilets
- a way to wash hands after using toilets and before meals
- a way to wash and dry dishes and cooking utensils
- clean bedding (mattresses or mats, sheets, blankets)
- monthly supplies for young women

**Restavek often were not able keep clean as they would like. When youths (aged 14 to 17) have toilets and washing water, they are likely to use them well. If necessary, show children how to keep clean, now that they have soap and water.**

Some children may wet their beds, because in slavery there was nothing else they could do safely. Anxiety, sadness, and fear are connected to bedwetting. Children have those feelings from their experiences, and may continue to wet their beds for a long time. Give kindness and understanding to children who wet their beds. Do not make any child feel shame, or that she is bad. Quietly give the child clean bedding. Wake the child up and take him or her to the toilet at night before going to bed oneself.

### Clothes

Provide clean clothes. New clothes can help children to feel cared for, and to know that they are starting a new life. But do not take away anything that they value. Favorite shirts or caps, or all of their usual clothes, may be important to children who have nothing else of their own.

THE FOLLOWING WEEKS AND MONTHS

### Plan a physical examination

The child will need a physical examination by a doctor. Explain that a friendly person can stay with the child if she wishes the child does not have to take off clothes unless she agrees the child can stop the examination at any time.

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If the child is very anxious (full of anxiety), put off the examination until she feels safe enough to agree. If possible, choose doctors who are gentle and show respect for all children. They help to make a child feel safe, and will also learn more from the child. Girls and women usually prefer a female doctor. During medical tests and treatments, male health workers sometimes touch or talk to vulnerable girls in ways that shame or frighten them. This must not happen to our children. Provide a friendly woman to be with each child during medical care, unless the child wants to be alone.

### Physical problems to look for in Restaveks

- Be sure that the doctor finds and records problems that are connected to Restaveks.
- injuries from beatings, bruises, broken bones
- cuts, burns, rashes
- headaches, dizziness, fainting
- stomach problems, pain in the abdomen, vomiting, diarrhea
- breathing problems, TB (tuberculosis) and other infections, pains in the chest
- general pain and weakness, being tired or sleepy all the time, conditions caused by very poor diets
- strains and back pains, bent body shape due to long time spent in one position
- repetitive motion injuries (harm from doing the same action again and again)
- poisoning by chemicals or pesticides(chemicals used to kill insects)

### The doctor's statement for the child's record should

- list all physical problems
- sign the report
- describe immediate treatment
- suggest future treatment plans
- This evidence will be needed in any prosecution (court process against someone accused of a crime) against a slaveholder.

**Wherever possible, only a trained professional counselor should talk with children about sexual experiences – and only as much as the child chooses.**

### Check eyesight, hearing and teeth

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Working to small objects in poor light causes eye problems. Any child may not be seeing clearly, or have bad headaches that are connected to eye problems. Untreated ear infections, noise in factories, and beatings around the head can cause loss of hearing. Children may have mouth injuries and bad teeth.

Have appropriate professionals examine children for:

- eye problems and how well they can see
- ear and hearing problems
- problems with their teeth, or pain when eating
- Record problems in the child's file, and provide treatment.

### Age and development of children

Most children will not know exactly how old they are. Keep in mind that many Restavek children are short for their age. To estimate age, a child's motor development (what she can do with his or her body, arms, legs and hands) may help. Do not use tests of language and understanding to estimate children's' age. Restavek will not speak or think as well as other children of their age. During rehabilitation, they will start to catch up in speaking and thinking. Most children get their second permanent back teeth at about 12 years old. If a child does not have all four of the second back teeth, probably she is not yet 14 years old. And even if a child does have all four of these teeth, she may still be less than 14 years old.

**If you cannot learn a child's real age, try to estimate it fairly.**

## Immunizations

Children probably have not had immunizations. Immunize all children against measles, if this was not done immediately, and give BCG vaccine against tuberculosis. Provide other immunizations as recommended by the national health system.

## MOVING TOWARD REINTEGRATION

**Skills for daily life:**

**A clean home**

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- Give all children experience in being responsible to put things in order
- clean rooms and outdoor spaces
- wash and dry clothes and bedding
- clean toilets
- get rid of human wastes in other ways (where homes lack toilets)
- get rid of trash, including recycling (using materials again)

## Home health

Children and youths will have their own families in a few years. This may be their best chance of health education. If clients are youths (children from 14 through 17 years old) discuss family planning and STDs. Choose a trusted female staff member or female health worker. Methods of family planning that are acceptable to all religious traditions now exist. Consult local health workers to learn what methods are used. Invite children's questions. Correct any mistaken beliefs that are dangerous to health.

## Community health services

### Teach what a health service should do for a community

- be open often, and be staffed with trained health workers
- give quick care at any time after accidents
- provide family planning methods that people can accept
- give care to pregnant women so their babies will be healthy
- give children immunizations against common diseases
- provide treatment for sickness

### Discuss when it is helpful to

- buy pills and medicines in the market
- use traditional medicines (herbs, teas, etc.)
- get help from a traditional healer (ayurvedic physician, bonesetter, massage woman, healer who uses local plants, traditional birth attendant, etc.)

### Discuss when it is dangerous to

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- buy pills and medicines in the market
- get injections from someone who is not a doctor
- use treatments that cause harm
- wait too long to get professional help for a sick person

## Provide a good simple diet

### Estimate the food that each child needs each day:

- 400 g (weight before cooking) of grains (such as rice, millet, maize, wheat)
- 40 g of fatty food giving plenty of energy (such as oil, groundnut butter, shea butter)
- 50 g (weight before cooking) of food giving plenty of protein (such as beans, lentils, chickpeas).

**Protein is necessary to build bodies and give strength. Children need less of the grain foods and need fatty foods that give plenty of energy, as well as food giving plenty of protein.**

When possible, every day provide some food from animals – eggs, milk products, meat, chicken or fish. These are high in protein.

Build health with other good foods

Whenever possible, add

- dark green leafy vegetables (such as spinach, wild greens, collards)
- red, orange and yellow vegetables (such as tomatoes, carrots, pumpkins)
- any other vegetables (such as onions, cucumbers, potatoes, okra)
- fruits
- the spices that our children like (such as chilies, cumin, mustard)
- Use only iodized salt.
- Continue to be sure that clean water is always available for drinking. Hot drinks are part of many traditions, but not usually necessary for health and growth.
- Bottles of soda, fruit squashes, sweet cakes and candies do not build health.
- Between meals or on special days, a home can offer traditional foods without sugar such as
- roasted nuts

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- roasted or boiled maize
- fried bean cakes and patties
- cassava chips
- fruits

### Watch the growth of children

With more food, children may become taller. But the change is slow, and they may always remain short. You will see changes in weight more quickly. Record them. Be careful that sad children do not refuse to eat for a long time, and so lose weight. Children who are sick need to eat, but often they do not want to eat much for a few days. Give them extra food as they recover, so they will get back the lost weight.

### Signs of lack of micronutrients

Sign of a Problem – Probably needed

- extreme tiredness; tongue and inside eyelids pale – iron-folate (pills)
- difficulty seeing at night, foamy pale spots on eye – vitamin A (capsules)
- back and other body pains, never being in sunlight – more sunlight

### Teach rights to food

Hosting families use anxiety about food to control what children do. In our home, be sure that everyone gets the food and water that they need

### Teach children that everyone has a basic right to food and water.

- Give everyone a fair share.
- Give the same food to everyone – children, visitors, all levels of staff –unless someone needs a special diet. Find other ways to show respect to visitors, instead of giving them extra or special food.
- Do not take away food to punish someone.

### Everyone has the same right to food.

How a person thinks and feels, and how she is a part of groups of other people combine to make up his or her psychosocial experience. Former Restavek's can have serious and complex

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psychosocial problems. In a perfect world, rehabilitation programs would include mental health professionals who could help children through counseling.

### **Counseling includes:**

- listening to a child express his or her experiences and emotions,
- accepting all that she feels, without judging or criticizing,
- showing care and understanding, and
- helping the child toward more self-confidence and a sense of self (knowing oneself as a person).

## **When mental health professionals are not available to do counseling.**

### **People who are not professionals can help mostly by active listening:**

- allowing a child to speak and express feelings in his or her own way
- listening with complete attention
- showing that you understand, by body language and small sounds, and
- not giving opinions or advising.

Staff members also need to know some ways to assess newcomers (to form an idea of their psychosocial condition through observing and listening to them with attention). Assessing children permits staff members to plan the care that each one needs. This may include a need for professional mental health help. Needs differ from one child to another. The age and gender of the children, the form of Restavek and how long it went on, their relations with the hosting family, their experience of violence, how they got out of the Restavek system and many other things will affect their needs for psychosocial care.

### IMMEDIATE CARE

**Newcomers are beginning a long process of learning to feel safe. It is most important in the first days to**

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- give a warm welcome
- establish safety
- let the newcomer know what to expect
- provide food and water, health care, and rest
- keep children together with others from similar situations

**Abuse that was longer, lonelier, and more severe usually has worse psychosocial effects on the victims.**

## Sexually exploited children need mental health professionals

Children coming out of prostitution are a minority among the total number of children in the Restavek system. But they need special consideration. They have deep psychological and social problems that the rehabilitation program must deal with carefully. There are very risky areas in dealing with these children that are not as common in children removed from other situations of abuse.

Should organizations without professional mental health training and experience attempt their rehabilitation? They should not, because the behavior problems and the trauma, as well as stigmatization and sometimes violence upon reintegration, are often too severe. Helping appropriately requires specialized counseling and social work skills. For example, inviting children who were sexually exploited to express emotions is a definite no-no for anyone who is not a fully trained professional. It is easy to get the emotions out. But after they are out, it may take far more skill, understanding and experience to help the child deal with those expressed emotions. At the same time, these human resources don't drop off the trees to us. Few organizations have such highly trained professional staff. Active listening and showing care and understanding are not counseling. They can surely be done by anyone. We must give care as best we can, without fear.

## Assess newcomers

When newcomers arrive, staff begins to assess their condition and needs. This is especially important with children. The staff may do an intake interview (quiet talk with a new child about his or her experiences, problems, needs and wishes). Explain why you are gathering information,

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and do not hurry or put pressure on the child. Children often cannot give the information needed for their record.

Do not urge anyone to talk more than they want to. Allow time for trust to develop.

Remembering pain, fear and shame may become terrible, and retraumatize the newcomer. If any interview becomes too difficult for the child, offer to wait until another time.

Suggestions for interviewing a child

Children will react in different ways. Try more than one way to gain their trust, and see what makes them comfortable (feeling warmly accepted, at ease, not having anxiety).

In order to get the fullest answers, make a child as comfortable as possible before inviting him or her to speak. Use a gentle, calm, soft voice. Sit down with your head at the level of the child's head, not above it. Do not hurry or urge the child to talk. Try doing something that does not need any words from the child. You could show a picture book, or show how something works. Or you could explain a little about other children and their experience in the home. Take time. Some children have a lot of fear and shame. These emotions keep them quiet, and they may not speak in the first chat. You may need to wait until another time, even for weeks, before a child is ready to speak freely. Usually asking a series of questions does not help people to express themselves. When the child is comfortable and feels safe, she may tell you a lot without your having to ask many questions. Use active listening to show that you are paying attention and understanding what you hear. If you must ask questions, give the child a way of understanding why you are asking them. For example, you can say:

**“Sometimes children who come to the home tell me how they feel.**

**Putting their feelings in words helps them to feel better.**

**That’s why I am asking you about yourself.”**

Invite the child to talk by explaining some of the things that other children have told you. (Do not name those children.) Say that you wonder if the same sort of things are also true for the child you are talking with.

“Last week a boy told me he is afraid at night.

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He has bad dreams about what happened to him.

I wonder if sometimes it is like that for you....”

If the child asks questions, answer them honestly. After the interview, write down as many notes as possible. These should go into the child’s confidential record. It is helpful to read the notes before the next interview or quiet talk with a child.

### **Psychosocial conditions to look for in newcomers**

#### **The psychological condition of a child could include**

- levels of fear, anxiety, sadness, anger, shame, and other emotions
- whether she is agitated (not able to be quiet, moving all the time, shaking, reacting very suddenly, very anxious)
- whether she is very inhibited (very silent, closed in, not able to express any feelings)
- problems with paying attention
- problems with bad memories being always present, often in dreams
- speaking that is disorganized (not making sense, out of order, mixed up)

#### **Social situations will also show how the child relates to (connects with) other people.**

- relating to others very slowly, or perhaps not at all
- being full of fear and anxiety with other people
- using force, angry words or bullying
- seeking too much touch in ways that are not appropriate

**If they do not agree with someone, they may not know any way to respond except by violence. If fighting helped children to survive in the Restavek system, they may also expect to fight in our home.**

Understand the experiences that make some children difficult, acting out their anger and fear. You may need to set limits on any behavior or expression of feelings that is not good for the newcomer or for the other children.

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### Case management planning

As soon as possible, hold a meeting of the staff who are important for this child. In this meeting discuss what staff members have learned by paying attention, observing, and listening to the child decide which of a child's psychosocial problems are most important exchange ideas, and develop a plan for the child's care in the coming weeks write it down with the names of the staff members who are responsible for each part of the plan.

For example:

**Stephanie** (the child) has stomach pains. She also suffers from a lot of shame and anxiety, and is very agitated. But she is not fighting, trying to run away, or threatening to harm herself.

Roseline, the teacher, will take her to a doctor this week to have the stomach pains assessed and treated. Roseline will stay with her all through that experience.

Farah, the house mother, will find calming activities for Stephanie to try. She will ask Mariam, one of the more settled children, to stay near her for a few days.

Esther, an older child, will find time to sit with Stephanie every day in these next two weeks and talk quietly with her, using active listening.

Everyone will pay attention to **Stephanie** for two weeks and consider how she is doing. Then we will decide whether we need to get more help for her.

#### THE FOLLOWING WEEKS AND MONTHS

##### **Continue active listening**

Provide quiet times for actively listening to each child. Find a space that is private, but not completely away from everyone.

**A center uses a small open building for private counseling. Grass mats hang around the sides, but the child can see out.**

Other people can see that someone is talking inside there. But they cannot watch and cannot hear what is being said. (Hyde, "Physical and Mental Health")

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### **All staff members can learn to do active listening.**

If you want children to talk freely, avoid asking questions that can be answered with yes, no, or just one word. Use open questions (questions that encourage a person to talk freely and give him/her more control over what she talks about). Usually open questions are not questions about facts and do not have correct answers. They are like gentle invitations to speak, such as:

- How was it for you when you were there?
- What happened after that?
- Why do you think that happened?
- I'd like you to tell me more, if you want to.
- How do you feel about being with us here?

**Accept whatever the child says. If you think it is wrong, do not say so. Avoid giving advice or criticisms. The basic (very necessary) aim is to listen to the child.**

Feeling listened to and understood is basic in any process of healing.

But if the child says things that are wrong about her or others, you can gently give correct information.

For example:

Child: They all hate me, because I'm different. They don't talk to me.

Staff member: Yesterday I saw Yolanda and Tamara ask you to play a game with them.

And did I hear Fabiola say something good to you today about the new food?

If a child starts to cry, remember that she has a lifetime of pain inside. Being able to express emotions may be part of the healing process. A child does not need to feel shame about crying. The active listener lets the child cry, and quietly stays with him or her.

Active listening is to help the child, not to seek facts. But child stories will come out, little by little in their own words. Later, make a note of any new facts and evidence about what they experienced in their confidential records.

Overall psychosocial aims

Create a healing environment for child.

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- Most children need to develop trust in other people
- self-confidence
- a sense of self
- a feeling that they have personal power and control

### Many children also need help in

- learning how to relate to other people
- understanding their own feelings and problems

Some children will understand their difficult feelings better when they can name them. They think more clearly when they can use words such as anger, sadness, anxiety, being agitated, not relating to other people, being afraid, or going out of control. Talking and being listened to may be helpful, but it also brings up painful memories. If you need to end a meeting but the child is still full of strong feelings, take a few minutes. Help the child to put away the pain of the past for now, and come back into the present time. Very simple methods of calming emotions can be tried, like breathing deeply, or counting from ten to one.

When people are deeply traumatized, be careful not to go too far into feelings that the child is not ready and able to deal with. For girls traumatized by sexual exploitation, staff without professional training should not try to give counseling.

## Be careful not to retraumatize any child.

### Trauma

Trauma is a psychological condition coming from terrible experiences that people see as a threat to their lives. Most Restavek children experienced violence, were threatened with violence, and saw violence against others. Other common causes of trauma are severe hunger, serious abuse as a child, sexual abuse such as rape, serious injuries, being abducted (suddenly and secretly taken away with violence).

Not all people who go through terrible experiences show signs of trauma. But many do, especially after repeated and long-term traumatic experiences. Among our children, signs of trauma will appear in their feelings, behavior and mental and physical health. They are listed here in groups, but any of these can appear at any time, and many of them can appear together.

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## Signs of trauma to watch for in children

### At first, children may

- be very anxious, worried about danger all the time
- have flashbacks (memories and feelings that keep coming back to someone, making them live through past terrible experiences and trauma again)
- be agitated, too active, very restless
- have frightening dreams and difficulty sleeping,
- show very sudden changes in emotions (loud, strong anger, or sudden crying)
- feel great shame
- feel that they have no value, believe that they are “nothing”

### A little later, children may

- suffer panic attacks (sudden extreme fear), anxiety, phobias (severe fears of particular things such as going outside, or animals, or high places)
- experience mental emptiness
- show avoidant behavior (ways of acting that prevent a person from relating to others because she is protecting himself or herself)
- have no feeling of connection to the world
- seek dangerous situations
- completely forget the past and who they are, or forget many things
- not be able to connect with and relate to others
- fear death or fear they will have only a short life

### Severe signs of trauma take longer to develop and are more and more complex.

- Severely traumatized children may
- almost never talk, not look at other people, or hide away in fear
- react to other people and situations with very little feeling or emotion
- be very tired all the time
- have health problems of the immune system, be sick very often
- experience pain that continues on and on
- have problems with their digestive system

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- suffer from depression (silence, passive behavior, not being able to act, not being able to relate well to others, very deep sadness)

## Red flags: signs that professional help is urgently needed

**For children who show signs of severe or increasing problems, do all that is possible to**

- find a mental health professional and get the child into their care. Professional help is urgent when a child
- seems to be getting worse in some way, such as continuing to lose weight, becoming more disorganized in speech,
- thinking or behavior, becoming more depressed, silent and passive, seeming almost to freeze
- talks about killing himself or herself
- is harming himself or herself
- has strong anger that she cannot control
- seems not to connect with real life, hears voices or sees things that are not there
- uses physical force and verbal abuse to hurt others

**Delays are dangerous. Urgent professional care saves lives.**

## How a professional helps a traumatized person

**Counseling children who are suffering from severe trauma is a special skill. Do whatever is possible to find a mental health professional who will work with the traumatized child. The professional will:**

- make the child feel safe
- develop a connection of care and understanding
- help the child become able to trust
- decrease the child's feeling of being passive and having no control
- work with a child's anger and other strong emotions
- lead the child to understand himself or herself better
- help the child to develop self-confidence and a sense of self

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- help the child to value himself or herself and have a sense of personal power

### Group discussions

For older children who are not suffering from severe emotional problems, organize group meetings. In these meetings, children share their ideas and feelings. Half an hour to 45 minutes is usually plenty. A staff member leads the group, to make sure that it is helpful to the children. Good group discussions can build children's self-confidence and their trust in others. The aim is to help children to feel better, so they can go forward with their lives.

Group counseling is not a class or teaching session. The children do most of the talking. A skilled leader asks only enough questions to keep the discussion active and going in a good direction.

#### The leader works hard. she

- starts the discussion
- keeps it from going too far away from the subject
- may make some rules, such as "No telling people what to do" or "No criticizing"
- gives everyone a chance to speak
- keeps everyone feeling safe and able to speak freely
- gives comments on how members of the group are relating to each other

**In good group discussions, the children talk a lot and the leader talks much less.**

**Two advantages of group discussions are that they include more children and increase their social skills. Everyone in a group can be a helper as well as the receiver of help, which improves the way they value themselves.**

Group sessions, reported by nearly all programs [in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Haiti and India] may be a more powerful form of therapy than individual counseling because the stories of others' experiences serve to diminish the sense of isolation, reduce the stigma attached to low status and exploitation, and provide perspective. In the group, children are also encouraged to think of ways to prevent child abuse and exploitation, such as reporting suspected traffickers to the

## Child Protection Policy



police. Children develop ties to one another through this process, which adds to their feeling of belonging, security and support. (Hyde, “Physical and Mental Health”)

**Some groups plan the subjects they will talk about. The children may choose the subjects, or the leader may decide.**

Other groups do not have a fixed subject for a meeting. Instead, everyone says

- what is on their mind
- how they are feeling
- what problems they are struggling with

**Other group members may listen with attention and give support. They may also make suggestions, if the leader thinks such comments will be useful to that group.**

Good effects of other groups

Other kinds of groups can provide a time and place for children to be together in good relationships, to learn new ideas and skills, and to know that they belong. Belonging to community groups may be especially important. Aims of such groups include education, service, and cultural or spiritual practices.

## MOVING TOWARD REINTEGRATION

### Learn what psychosocial care the child needs

- Through quiet talks and active listening, the leader learns
- what the child wants to have happen, now that she is safe
- what continued psychosocial problems the child needs help with
- what questions she has
- how much understanding she has of how the world works

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The appropriate balance between individual and group psychosocial rehabilitation is different in different cultures, and from one person to another. A mix of activities can help children of all ages to feel better in themselves, to connect with others in a friendly way, to relate better to a group.

Money, special spaces and equipment are not necessary. For ECPAT in Thailand, Colin Cotterill developed an Ideas Bank of activities for programs that do not have much money.

Use all of the home's staff to lead activities that calm and heal children. Only few of these activities require the leader to have any special training.

### IMMEDIATE CARE

## Knowing what will happen

An organized routine can help children to feel less anxiety. Include free time in the timetable (list of what will happen when).

Explain any changes before they happen.

Establish a sense of order, so children know what to expect.

A friendly welcome to the group for children who were isolated (kept away from others, very lonely, treated as an outsider), getting close to others of the same age is especially important. Everyone, young or old, needs friends. But new children may have lost the social skills of connecting with others. They may be inhibited and avoidant. Some others may mostly use force, anger and abuse in relating to others. Notice when children make friends. When friends choose each other, keep them together in activities.

Developing good social skills is even more important for a child's future than learning to read and write.

### THE FOLLOWING WEEKS AND MONTHS

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### Touching

Closeness and touching may be part of ordinary life. However, think carefully before giving the same kind of touching. Touching, even from someone of the same gender, can threaten or retraumatize a child who has suffered abuse.

Before touching a child

- put out a hand toward the child and see if she takes it ask if she wants to be touched and will let you touch
- limit touching to hands and lower arms
- touch without moving your hands

If in doubt, don't touch children. Show them care in other ways. Do not allow any touching that a child does not want.

Massage (touching people with moving hands) can be powerful in healing people who want it. But even in cultures where massage is a custom, if it is given by someone who does not understand trauma, the experience may retraumatize a vulnerable child. Many young children feel a strong hunger to be touched and held. Pay attention to how they react, and learn the kind of touching that they like. Some children who were sexually abused may try sexual touching of others. Be aware that this behavior is possible. If it happens, gently teach what is appropriate, and what the limits are. Do not make any child feel guilty or shamed.

Be sure that every staff member follows the center's Code of Conduct. Be especially careful to avoid touch or physical one-on-one contact that could suggest or lead toward sexual exploitation of a child.

Any touching that requires hiding from others must not happen in a rehabilitation program. Show and teach respect for everyone.

Require and expect respect in all relationships among children and staff. This is not always easy. Many children lived where struggle and abuse were part of every day. They had to fight to survive. In the home, fighting and bullying behavior is not needed. However, some children may continue to use it for some time.

Work with staff and children to

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- keep everyone feeling safe
- set limits to threatening behavior
- help all children to learn calmer ways to get along in a group

## Calming oneself

**Meditation** (sitting quietly, breathing, calming the mind and spirit) helps some children to recover. Many forms of yoga (a system of many different exercises to balance the body and mind) also give strength and calm.

But for some children, to sit still and be guided through a meditation is not helpful. The mental pictures and memories that come up can make a child anxious, fearful or angry. Be aware that some children may be psychologically vulnerable (at risk due to past trauma) and should not try this activity.

### **Music**, singing and quiet

Music that children make for themselves can build their self-confidence. Singing increases children's language and can bring a group together. Singing can also express emotions that people cannot put into their own words. Consider the effects of recorded music. Some music calms and heals children, but some recordings are full of anger and violence. Discuss with staff what music, and how much quiet, is most appropriate to create a healing environment. The music that vulnerable children need to have around them may not be what the staff would choose. Children may also need more quiet.

At our home, the children's needs come first.

### **Movement** and dancing

Physical activity is very important to children. Plan physical activities every day, and give them a choice if possible. Simply taking walks together may help ill or depressed children who do not yet have the energy for more activity. Dancing has special value. Local traditions often include special songs and dances for girls and women.

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We are huge fans of dance therapy and have witnessed newly arrived children/young women with horrendous backgrounds make their first steps into peer bonding (connecting with others), first smiles, etc. in dance class.

### **Games**

Remember that children may be very vulnerable in their feelings. Team games that include everyone may build self-confidence better than games that name winners and can make losers feel shame. If everyone is active and laughing, that is a good sign. If some children are left out or feeling isolated, offer different activities that will meet their needs better. Have some sitting-down games available for two or more people to play. Many traditional games encourage (give good conditions for) thinking and also help children relate to each other. Checkers (draughts, a game played on squares of black and white) is one of these games. If a child does not yet want to talk much, encourage her or him to play such games with others.

### **Practicing relaxation**

Our home practices relaxation (making their bodies less tense, more at ease and comfortable). Staff teaches children to stretch, breathe deeply, and move gently. Relaxation helps children to let go of the trauma and fear that may be stored in the body as pain.

### **Drama: role plays and puppets**

Developing small role plays helps children to share their own painful experience and also find some emotional distance from it. They choose the subjects.

When children do not speak with ease, give them hand puppets (cloth figures of people or animals that are put on one's hand). Puppets can be made from a sock (foot covering) with eyes drawn on. Puppets give a child a safe way to express anger, fear and other feelings that they sometimes do not talk about freely.

### **Making pictures and handcrafts**

Art materials that cost a lot of money are not necessary. Pencils and any old paper are enough, until colors can be provided. Through pictures, children express feelings that cannot be put into words.

Invite children to talk about their pictures if they want, but do not urge them. Many children do not like to explain what they have put into a picture.



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Some children like to make art from clay (special kind of earth). If there is no clay, provide anything else that will make shapes, such as a dough (a mixture of salt, water and flour). Some children will know how to use wire, wood and plastic to make things like small cars and people. Encourage children to use all materials freely in their own way, instead of doing just what someone else does. This is their chance to create what they want. They need to have their work recognized. Provide places where children can show their handcrafts with their names, so as to build their sense of self.

Support traditional handcrafts. Wherever appropriate in the culture, teach children to make baskets, sew clothes, or paint designs on things – and to put their names on the work. If a child's work is sold, she should get and keep the money. Teach handcrafts as a way of calming and expressing oneself, but not as the only way to earn a livelihood (enough money or other resources to live on).

## Children have the same rights as adults, and more.

Restavek children need to learn that they have rights, and that servitude violated their rights. Children have as many rights as any other person. A child sent into servitude by someone in the family has rights of his or her own – even if tradition gives parents power over their children.

For newcomers, our program sets an example by being careful to respect their rights. In the next weeks and months, the program can empower children to name and claim their rights.

### IMMEDIATE CARE

### Use children names

For each child, use the name she wants you to use. Children may need help in remembering their full names. Tell new children the names of staff members. Encourage all children to use

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those names, with respect, rather than using words like sir, aunty or teacher. Everyone has the right to know and use the names of people in power.

The added rights of children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child lists added rights of everyone under 18 years old.

### Every child has the right to

- say what s/he thinks
- have his or her ideas listened to and considered in any decisions
- be in contact with parents and family, if s/he wants the contact
- receive primary schooling (the first 6-8 years), and appropriate added education and training
- play
- rest
- Every child coming out of servitude also has a right to a guardian all through the process of rehabilitation

**If staff members feel that they must put some limits on a young child's rights, the child's guardian must make that decision.**

**The best interests of a child must be the main thing that is considered in all decisions.**

**Rights are learned through examples, teaching, and plenty of practice in using them.**

**Teach children to name their rights**

**At first, children may not have language to understand what has happened to them. They need to learn the words that name their rights.**

**Working with Indian youths in rehabilitation, the Bal Vikas Ashram finds it helpful to have them chant simple messages, like "Children have a right to school."**

## Child Protection Policy



### Children need to know

- the right to free movement (going where one chooses)
- the right to free association (choosing whom to be with, making groups)
- the right to free expression (saying or writing whatever one wants)
- the right to receive equal treatment under national laws
- the right to protection from all forms of discrimination because of gender, ethnic group, physical or mental difficulties, or other differences

#### **Discuss the subject of gender. Bring up questions such as**

- What is happening to girls and women?
- Are they discriminated against?
- What are women's and girls' rights?
- Do men believe that they have some rights that women do not have?
- What needs to change?
- Who can make changes happen?
- Ensure that all boys and men discuss violence

**Discuss violence toward women. Help them to see that a woman who suffered in servitude should not beat and abuse her own children. Discuss other ways of settling conflicts.**

### Teach children to claim and use their rights

#### **Rights die when they are not used.**

In the Restavek condition, children probably were safest when they were quiet or passive. Many girls and women also have learned from childhood to let men speak and make decisions for them. Children of both sexes may start servitude so young that they have never decided anything for themselves. But now children have the right to free expression, to information, to have their ideas listened to, and so on. By encouraging children to claim and use all of their rights, the staff gets them ready for the real world. Use role-playing, in which children practice what to say, in order to increase their self-confidence.

**Children start by learning a few sentences and acting out that situation. After that they can go on to role play the same situation with their own words. Role play many different situations in**

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which a child is vulnerable to exploitation unless she demands her rights. Have the child name the rights that are being used.

Sample role plays on rights

### Saying no and being listened to

**Teacher:** I want to take pictures of this class for the newspaper.

**Girl:** I don't want my family to see my picture here.

**Teacher:** But this newspaper does not go to your home country.

**Other youths:** (all talking together) Let's have the picture. What is the harm?

We will all be in it together. Why are you keeping out of it?

**Girl:** (She looks sad and frightened.) I just don't want to.

**Teacher:** Is there anyone else who does not want to be in the picture?

**Three more girls:** (finding their voices) We don't want to.

**Teacher:** All right, you don't have to. We can take the picture without you.

\*An employer is someone who pays a person to work.

Ask children to think of situations where they have trouble using their rights. Then they can make up their own role plays.

Continue attention to children's added rights

The child should know the name of his or her guardian, and see the guardian often. The guardian gives him or her information in language that she can easily understand. The guardian should listen to the child's ideas carefully and consider them in deciding what to do. For example:

Guardian: Tomorrow we have a police officer coming to talk with you.

Child: (looks away, no answer)

Guardian: How does that sound to you?

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Child: I don't want to see him....I'm afraid.

Guardian: He wants to know about who broke your arm.

You don't have to say anything that you don't want to.

Child: (looking down) Is the policeman going to shout at me?

Guardian: We will not let him do that. You have not done anything wrong.

Would you like me to stay with you when the policeman is here?

Child: Yes, please.

Guardian: All right. I will make sure you are safe.

## Added protections for working children

International conventions and rules say that children must be protected from work that can harm them. Clients going home to their own communities may have to explain these limits to others.

### Limits on the work of children

#### From 5 to 11 years old

- Children should not work for someone's economic profit\* outside their family.
- Their work for their own family should not prevent their attending primary school.
- The work must not be dangerous to their safety, health, or moral development.

#### From 12 to 14 years old

- Children can work for no more than 14 hours a week for someone's economic profit outside their family.
- The work must not be dangerous to their safety, health, or moral development.

#### From 15 to 17 years old

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- Children may work outside the family but not in the worst forms of child labor. These include slavery, prostitution, being a soldier, criminal activities, and any work that is dangerous to the child's safety, health or moral development.

\*Economic profit here means producing whatever could be sold for money, like things made in a factory or crops grown on a farm. It also includes services like domestic work or working in a shop or restaurant.

Having skills (knowing how to do things) is very important to children's' future. Give attention and time to teaching the skills that are needed for daily life. Be sure that they practice these skills. You do not want the children to become too dependent (depending too much on being taken care of by others, being passive).

### **IMMEDIATE CARE**

## **Build trust through full communication**

**As Restaveks, children probably could not ask questions or talk freely to hosting families.**

Encourage every child to talk with and ask questions of anyone on the staff.

**Discuss and explain everything that interests children.**

If all the people in a group have their heads at the same level, free discussion is often easier. Try to get away from customs where differences in power are shown by who is standing up and who is sitting down.

Also try to change any traditions that older people speak while younger ones keep quiet. Create an environment where everyone is equally valued. Always tell children the truth. This shows respect and helps them to develop trust again. Knowing that some people can be trusted, and deciding whom to trust, are important steps in rehabilitation.

**Honest and full sharing of information helps children to develop trust.**

### **THE FOLLOWING WEEKS AND MONTHS**



# Teach basic knowledge for survival

Every staff member knows and uses the skills for daily life, so everyone on the staff is a teacher. Children can also teach each other. Have them practice the skills both in and out of our home, for example buying food at a market. This practice prevents them from becoming too dependent.

People learn best by doing things for themselves

More skills for daily life:

## Money

- Counting money and knowing if the money given back is correct
- Bargaining (talking with a seller to bring a price down)
- Receiving wages, getting correct pay for work
- Saving money, avoiding loans and debts
- Getting receipts (signed papers proving that money was paid)

## More skills for daily life: Household work

- Producing food at home
- Growing vegetables and grains, and storing them
- Caring for animals, chickens, etc
- Fishing and catching wild animals

## Clothes

- Choosing clothes for long use
- Fixing them when they tear or get holes



### More skills for daily life: Getting around

- Finding one's way in a new place
- Whom it is safest to ask for help and directions
- Traveling alone on buses, (and other ways, as appropriate)
- Riding and repairing a bicycle

### The skill of speaking; finding one's voice

Restaveks often had to keep quiet, or were isolated without friends. Because talking with ease is an important skill for daily life, encourage children to talk with each other as much as possible. Everyone needs practice in saying what they think. Encourage children to express their ideas. Gently encourage quiet children to speak loudly enough so everyone can hear.

#### Use open questions that invite children to speak

Open questions are questions that encourage a person to talk freely.\* They invite someone to speak freely. The speaker has control over what to say and how to say it. Open questions are not questions about facts, and cannot be answered just yes or no. Open questions have many possible answers; they have no right or wrong answers. For example:

- What do you think?
- How is this going for you?
- What would be some good ideas?
- What was it like for you, before you came here?
- What more could we talk about for a while?
- What else would you like to tell us?
- There is no need to stop discussion with the first answer. Encourage many different answers, and welcome everything that the children say. Listen with attention.

**\*It is not easy to learn to ask open questions instead of asking yes/no questions. It is also not easy to learn to wait for and accept many different answers. Staff may need to practice these skills in role plays.**



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Help Restaveks to find their voices.

### The skill of deciding for oneself

As soon as possible, avoid telling children what to do, so they become skilled at making decisions (deciding about something) for themselves. Each day a child should be able to decide at least

#### What to do with free time

#### Whom to be with

Children need to learn how to trust themselves. They may have become very anxious and dependent, and question whether they can make good decisions. Being responsible for small decisions that go well may reduce their fear of making decisions in the future.

#### Making decisions develops a person's sense of self

Just like every other area in the brain, the regions involved in developing a sense of self grow or fail to grow depending upon how often they are exercised (used many times). To develop a self, one must exercise choice and learn from the results of those choices. If the only thing you are taught is to do what you are told, or to follow a rule, you have little way of knowing what you like and want.

**Tell children stories that show what people can do. Teach a seven-step process for making decisions. A group can practice the process together. Then a child can also use it for his or her own decisions.**

#### Seven steps for making decisions

1. Agree in simple language: What is the problem or question that you need to decide?
1. Think of all the possible ways to respond (to react, to act in answer to a situation). Make a list of them.
2. Discuss what will probably be the consequences of each response. These results might be good or bad, or both.

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3. Think about what is important to you, your basic values and beliefs. For example, these might include respecting yourself, caring for others, keeping yourself safe, telling the truth, respecting your family, being loyal to friends, etc.
4. Thinking about the expected results of each response, and remembering your basic values and beliefs, choose one response.
5. Do what you have decided. If it is going to take a long time, perhaps make a step-by-step plan first. But act on your decision; do not stop with planning.
6. After you have acted on your decision, look back at how it worked out for you. Even a good decision may not have worked out very well. You can repeat the steps to make a new decision.

## The skill of protecting oneself

**Discuss and role play situations where clients struggle with fear and anger. Practice:**

- how to recognize people who could be dangerous
- how to get out of any bad situation
- when it is important to fight back, to get angry, or to shout for help
- how to avoid or escape people who are sexually dangerous
- Training in physical and mental self-protection through arts such as karate and taekwondo. In the simple form of these arts, physical strength is not so important as self-control and knowing how to move. When girls and women learn how to protect themselves if they are attacked, they have more self-confidence. But be sure that if children get training in these arts, they do not use them for fighting and bullying.

## Rewards for new ideas and progress

Most Restaveks are not rewarded for having new ideas. But to be successful in life, children need to act for themselves and do new things. Warm attention and words can be used to reward a child's good acts and ideas.

**General praise like "You're a good girl" is not the most helpful. Each day, look for something new or good that each child does. Name exactly what they did, and say how it was good.**

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In giving praise, say exactly what was done well.

A very shy child comes to you without being asked, and tells you he saw a big airplane. Staff member: You came over here to tell me what you saw. I'm glad you told me. Let's look for it again tomorrow.

**Another child calls a girl a bad name. She shouts "Leave me alone!" but does not hit her.**

Staff member: You showed her how angry you are, but you did not hit her. That took a lot of self-control. Good for you!

**Some children sing together as they study.**

**Staff member: It's very good to have music in this house!**

An older child welcomes a newcomer and stays close to her all day.

Staff member: You stayed with our new girl all through her first day. Thank you for making her feel that she has a friend here.

Staff members also become empowered when their good work is noticed and named.

Director: You are listening actively to those two frightened newcomers. You are giving them attention in a very warm way. That's exactly what they need. Thank you

How much contact does the child want?

Restavek have a right to contact with their families. They also have a right to protection from contact. Perhaps they fear the family will not welcome them. They may fear some relatives, especially if they were given away by a family member. There may be a risk of verbal abuse or physical abuse. There may also be sexual exploitation at home or in that community.



# Is the person who claims a child the real parent?

Children are in danger of being made into a Restavek again if they are given to the wrong person. Before they meet, test what a person knows about the child. APPLE, an organization that rescues children in Ghana, has some suggestions.

- Show a photo of several children, and have the parents point out their own child.
- Ask the parents to name any special marks on the child – scars etc.
- Ask them the age of their child.
- Ask them to name the hosting family who had the child.

### Also ask the person who claims a child whatever you have learned from the child

- names of siblings and other relatives
- age of the child
- names of hills, rivers, where water is collected, markets
- what the family does to make a living

### In some situations, the parent can be asked to bring documents that name or picture the child, such as

- a family photo showing both the child and the parents
- birth registration or the child's vaccination card

### Observe the child's reaction to someone who claims him or her

Let the child see the person from a distance, without being seen. Or show the child a photo of the claimant (person who is claiming him or her).

- How does the child respond?
- Does he recognize that person?
- Is the child feeling pleasure or fear?

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If you decide to let a child meet the claimant, observe whether the child is happy and comfortable, or not.

## Things to learn about a child's family

### What is their economic situation?

- Does the family have enough food and appropriate shelter?
- How many working adults are there?
- How do they make their livelihood?
- Do they owe landowners or money lenders (people who make loans)?
- Is anyone in the family always sick, or not able to work for some reason?

### How are the children?

- Are the children in the home getting enough food and health care?
- Are the children going to school?
- Have other children been sent away to work, perhaps trafficked?
- Do any of the children show signs of neglect or abuse?

### What is the level of danger?

- Are any family members using alcohol or drugs?
- Do any family members use violence to control or abuse others?
- Is there a risk that traffickers will attack the child or family?
- Do local officials protect people by enforcing the laws fairly?

## IMMEDIATE CARE

No hurry with reading and writing. Allow time for a child to become calmer, watch lessons, listen and develop trust. Observe to see when she is ready to join in.

## THE FOLLOWING WEEKS AND MONTHS

Understanding and speaking freely are even more important than reading and writing. Help all children to express themselves well in their home language. As Restaveks, they perhaps heard

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mostly rude words and commands. Even ordinary words may not have been learned because a Restavek was cut off, and was just surviving day-to-day in isolation and confusion.

### **Add to children's' understanding of their language. Especially if they were given as children, they may need to learn**

- language that is respectful (showing respect, appropriate for the age of the person they are talking with)
- language for speaking about the past and the future
- words for their feelings
- words for complex linked thoughts (such as if/then, although, because)
- words for social problems (such as servitude, corruption, poverty)
- words for their own rights (such as education, decisions)

## Helpful schooling

Having a timetable and a chance to learn helps many children to feel more settled. Calling themselves pupils (school children) gives them a good new picture of themselves, and a new sense of purpose and progress.

Punishment (being punished with damaging words or physical violence) is not good for any pupil. Punishment is especially terrible for anxious or traumatized children. In local schools, some pupils or staff members may be abusive (doing or saying things that abuse others).

### **Training that is useful for our children will**

- be of high value in the market
- contribute to economic development
- have minimal chances of becoming out of date, not useful anymore
- be learnable by students with primary education

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- build on their individual interests and talents
- be available at local training centers
- be affordable, something we can find enough money to pay for
- fill an identified local need
- provide job opportunities in the community
- be unlikely to cause saturation in the area

### Teach how to be a good student

In servitude, many children had to lie and steal in order to survive. They may have worked hard only when the hosting family was watching or threatening them. Now that they are starting a new life, help them learn what to do in order to be a student.