

**Orphan Relief and Rescue  
Annual Programs Report  
September 2019 – August 2020**

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## Benin

### Summary:

The program year of 2019/20 in Benin was managed by our team of three anti-trafficking staff members. Oversight and direction were provided by Rebecca Pratt, Orphan Relief and Rescue President and up until December 2019 Stefan Lako, Programs Director

The numerous anti-trafficking projects outlined as: Intervention, Rescue, Restoration, and Empowerment continue to grow and thrive, with 626 direct beneficiaries this year.

The partnership with the leadership of an Orphanage Safe Home for Children also continues to be mutually beneficial.

We had quite a challenge with COVID 19 hitting our world beginning in March. All schools were closed down and food and work were scarce for our friends in Benin. We worked to keep our feeding programs going with social distancing and masks, to ensure our children would not starve during this crisis. Most of the children on our program would not have eaten had we not continued to provide food for them. Most kids on our feeding and school program are ones who had been intercepted from becoming trafficked at one time in the not so distant past, so not having food, these children would have become at risk to be sold once again. We could not allow that to happen.

Project	Number Served This Year
Intervention	260
Rescue	105
Restoration	6
Empowerment	276
<b>Total</b>	<b>647</b>

### Anti-Trafficking Initiative (ATI):

Orphan Relief and Rescue’s strategy is comprehensive and addresses the many aspects driving child exploitation and trafficking. It is imperative to realize the complexities of the issue in Benin. There are two key elements that create a supply-driven environment. The first, and most prominent is the extreme poverty in the region. The second is a devaluation of life, especially in members of society that do not contribute to the aggregate good. These elements create abundant supply for traffickers, which keeps the overall costs of purchasing a child low, and often times free. Traffickers are able to find enough people who are willing to agree to these terms, mainly because the women/families are unable to provide food, clothes, or education for their children.

With these elements in mind, the four-pronged approach to addressing the issue of trafficking. Without addressing poverty, and its causes, as well as the value of life, there will be no real change. Beyond the goal of ending trafficking in the region, the Initiative also works to bring children who have already been sold, or given away, back to a safe living situation. **The four elements of ATI are, intervention, rescue, restoration, and empowerment.**



### **Intervention:**

The Intervention Project aims to remove the barriers that guardians face in keeping their children home. Through providing food and the ability to pursue an education, guardians have little motivation to sell their children. The Intervention Project depends on collaboration with local leaders, so that ATI team members can identify children at a high risk of being trafficked and engage intentionally to prevent those children from being sold. This is done through first signing a contract with parents stating that the child will not be sold into slavery, then purchasing a birth certificate (when necessary), enrolling the child in school, providing two meals a day while the child is at school, provision of school related expenses, and follow-up to ensure on-going safety.

To ensure that the children receive food and proper schooling, ORR employs 4 cooks for food preparation and 2 drivers for distribution. The ATI Team Leader facilitates purchasing school uniforms, shoes, and supplies for all the children in the program. The team also regularly visit the schools to ensure proper care is given to the children, food is properly distributed, and that education is taking place.

To date, we helped 494 children who were intercepted from becoming trafficked, or who were at the highest risk to be trafficked through our Intervention Program.

## **Rescue:**

Orphan Relief and Rescue works diligently to identify and bring back children who have been sold into a life of slavery. When possible, these children are placed with their families and are re-enrolled in school and placed in our Intervention Project. However, for many of these children there are no safe options, either their family members have died, or the child is at risk of being sold again. In these instances, the child is placed in foster care or placed in the ORR safe-home. If the child is unable to attend school, because of their age or situation, they are placed in an apprenticeship program.

We have also counted over fifty children who have been brought back from slavery by parents on our micro finance program, who are encouraged to find their children and to rescue them out of a life of slavery if they know where their child was sold to.

### Safe-home

ORR operates a small safe-home apartment to provide a safe and clean home for young girls who had no place to return after being freed from slavery. The safe-home is in its fourth year of operation. At the start of the year we had five girls. One girl was reunified with relatives this year, when it was found that she would be safe back in her village. Another girl this year, around the age of 17 or 18 (She does not know how old she is), choose to leave the home to live on her own. We paid apprenticeship fee's for her to attend a sewing program, so she could be learning a trade while on her own. We currently have 3 girls in this home, and due to COVID 19 this year, we have not brought in new girls this year.

### Orphanage Safe Home for Children

This home remains a partner in the pursuit of rescuing children. Children in the home receive safe living conditions, three meals a day, education, and psychological care. There are numerous extracurricular projects at the home, including a computer school, hotelerie school, animal husbandry, and sports. There is a total of 56 children at this home.

We also have young adults who have aged out of this orphanage safe home who were rescued from very abusive situations who we provide finances for apprenticeships, trade schools, and University. We have 16 young adults currently on this program, and 21 children who have graduated from their training and have contract or full-time jobs.

In February of 2020 our USA based staff member, Jenine hosted a Professional Development and Life Skills Workshop for 10 young adults. This workshop was for young adults who were raised in the orphanage safe home and are now living on their own. They loved it! She will be doing a workshop similar to this at that home in February of 2020 for the older children getting ready to leave the home, and for the young adults who were not able to attend this first one.

### Foster Care

To date, three children are in foster care through the program. The home provides safe and clean housing for children who have been rescued from trafficking and can no longer live with their parent's due to safety conditions, or their parents have died or live far away. Children are currently being fostered by the Country Director and his wife.

Number of Children in trade school, Apprenticeship or University programs who were raised in Orphanage Safe Home	Number of Children at Orphanage Safe Home	Number of children at Girls Safe Home	Number of Children in foster situations	Number of girls in Restoration Program who were rescued out of slavery	Total	Young adults who have graduated from programs and have contract or full-time jobs
16	56	3	3	6	84 + 21 graduated from programs	<b>21</b>

**Restoration:**

Many of the children who have been rescued from slavery are too old to return or begin school. Without an education, there is little hope for a future. With this in mind, ORR offers apprenticeships for six girls in this category. The girls are taught sewing, tailoring, or hair dressing and are also provided two meals a day.

**Empowerment:**

The Empowerment Project directly addresses the issue of poverty, providing community members with the opportunity to improve their situation through provision of micro-loans and basic business training and introduction to the savings and loans program. One of the primary challenges of rural Beninese is the lack of access to capital to invest in small businesses. Access to capital provides an external solution while combatting the dangers of dependency. While these small loans will not likely pull someone out of poverty, it does provide enough to sustain the necessities of life and allow parents to provide for their children and not sell them into slavery.

**Microfinance Recipients:**



**We currently have 50 members on the micro finance loan program. An average loan is 5,000 CFA which is equal to 5,000 CFA. We have a 98 % pay back rate**

#### **Saving and Loans Recipients:**

**We have 226 members on the savings and loan program. These loans are between 15,000 – 20,000 CFA which equals \$27.27 to \$36.36 USD**

**Total number of recipients on this program this year: 276**

**To date we have had over 500 parents go through our micro finance and savings and loan program.**

## **Liberia**

### **Summary:**

The program year of 2019/20 was managed by Stefan Lako and Stephen Pasinski until Dec. 2019. Rebecca then took over management with Stephen Pasinski. Mr. Pasinski ended his contract as the Liberian Country Director in June of 2020. Mr. Pasinski did an excellent job managing programs and growing ORR's partnerships with government offices and other non-governmental organizations.

Over the past year Orphan Relief and Rescue continued the implementation of the Break the Silence Program, until COVID 19 hit mid-March of 2020. The teaching part of this program was put on hold until the new school year will begin sometime between Sept to December of 2020. The hotline connected to this program continued even through the COVID pandemic. We also provided educational assistance and mentoring for children in partner orphanages and scholarships for university students until March 2020.

The Greater Opportunity mentorship and scholarship program ran normally until March 2020 due to COVID 19.

The pandemic brought on immediate dire hunger challenges for our Liberian friends, and we were super thankful that we were given a grant by God's Kids International to start a four-month feeding program at two orphanages where we have kids on our scholarship program. 39 children at the Danny Feeney Orphanage, and 32 children at the Frances Gaskins Children's home. Kids in these homes received monthly food donations to keep them fed through the pandemic crisis. This was a miraculous gift for them.

### **Committee Partnerships:**

#### **Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Task Force**

**Chair:** Ministry of Labor

**Key Members:** US Embassy Political Officer, LNP, Liberia Immigration Service, DCI-Liberia, Ministry of Gender, IDLO

**Synopsis:** The TIP task force meets once a month to discuss cases, and updates on what is the latest on trafficking in Liberia. Through efforts that our Country Director, Stephen Paskinski, and other NGO's and governmental members put into place, Liberia showed the US Embassy the "increased" efforts to combat trafficking this year. This ensured the country was not downgraded to Tier 3. This downgrade would have resulted in the suspension of all non-humanitarian funding from the US government, which was approximately \$40 million last year. They are at Tier 2 now. Our Liberian Country Director had a big part to play in the administration of this.

#### **Child Protection Network:**

**Chair:** Ministry of Gender

**Key Members:** US Embassy Political Officer

**Synopsis:** The CPN meets monthly to discuss child protection issues in Liberia. No meetings have been held since COVID 19 came in March of 2020. ORR is a member of this group and has been an important voice for the protection of children in these meetings.

#### **Child Rights Coalition:**

**Chair:** Defense for Children International

**Key Members:** UNICEF, Plan International, Save the Children, ANPPCAN

**Synopsis:** A group of child protection NGO's funded by the Global Council for Human Rights, had taken on two important tasks this last year. One is writing the shadow report to the government's report the UN on Child Rights in Liberia., The second which ORR was the lead on, was the push to have the government ratify the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption.

The push on the Hague Convention stalled out and did not happen for numerous reasons. We did however present to the international delegation from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child through the child rights coalition. We were able to encourage change to the government on different issues through our presentation to the delegation, mainly that orphanage homes needed to be inspected, which did begin before COVID, how far they got we are not really sure. We co-wrote a report that went to the UN on the Rights and Welfare of the Child through the Child Rights Coalition, we were the chair for the presentation committee.

**Break the Silence (BTS):**

**Prevention: The Flipchart and Awareness**

ORR, with partners in the Liberian government and NGOs, uses a child friendly tool, a flipchart, that imparts awareness raising, prevention education, and aftercare training. With this flipchart, ORR raises children’s awareness of their personal rights, as well as connects them to the resource of an anti-trafficking and abuse hotline number should they find themselves vulnerable to trafficking and/or exploitation. The tool also acts as a deterrent to would be perpetrators. Our staff had to take a break from these teaching times since March 2020 because of COVID 19. They will resume again when the new school year begins.

Projected Number of children reached	Actual number of children reached
15,000	5,497



From this flip chart training program, the public outcry has now become a big one. Our staff shares story after story of children who no longer feel like victims. After hearing our Break the Silence teaching in school, some children told our staff that two teachers were making them have sex for grades. Our staff then met with the principal to share this information and those two

teachers were immediately fired.

In another story, a young girl informed one of our staff members that her stepfather was raping her every night. Because of the Break the Silence program at school, she realized what he was doing to her was illegal. She never knew she had rights to fight for her protection. She then went home and told her mother what her stepfather was doing to her. Her mother moved her to the safety of her aunt's house. The girl thanked our staff for teaching her about abuse and telling her how to get help. She said she is so relieved now that she is away from her stepfather, because he cannot hurt her anymore.

On a side note, we just got this flip chart translated into French, so we will be implementing this training with children on our programs in Benin as well.

### **Training Workshops:**

ORR training workshops inform and improve the skills of caregivers and/or those working with vulnerable children. It gives the trainees a practical tool to teach children about their value, rights, the dangers of sexual abuse and trafficking, and a means to get help. The partners trained in these workshops will continue to help us grow the number of implementations and children reached with the Flipchart.

- **223 Implementors were trained this year**

In January of 2020 we were approved for a US Embassy grant for 23,860, that was going to take us six months to implement. COVID 19 put this on halt two months into fulfilling this grant commitment. We get the funding in increments, so we have not received all the finances. The US Embassy agreed to extend these grant terms with our partnership with World Hope. This is where we are so far.

To date ORR has received \$8,355 out of the \$23,860 awarded. There is a remaining \$15,505 that ORR can request. The remaining budget items that can be requested for are as follows:

We committed to Create the flip chart, do 4 trainings with trainers, including gov. officials and police officers, promote the hotline through radio ads and distribute 6,000 worth of flip charts to the trainers.

We have completed all but the training and distributing of flip charts.

Flipchart Implementers: \$6,240

Implementer Workshops: \$2,000

Awareness Raising Workshops: \$1,000

Printing for Flyers Brochures, Packets: \$2,400

Radio Ads: \$960

Radio Ad Production: \$480

Vehicle Fuel and Maintenance: \$2,280 (\$300 per month was allowed with the grant to World Hope, 3 months receipts already been used (\$750) (Jan, Feb, March 2020)

### **Assistance: The Hotline**

The hotline is funded and overseen by ORR, but hosted and operated by the Ministry of Labor’s office. World Hope International will take over this oversight in December. This hotline serves two significant roles. Firstly, it is the only government-run anti-trafficking hotline in the nation and is a critical portion of the government’s strategic roadmap to combat human trafficking. Secondly, the hotline provides abused victims with an outlet to get help from trained social workers and government officials. This hotline has continued to stay up and running even through the pandemic, but we only have statistics from Sept 2019 to Feb 2020.

Radio spots (1 minute spots)	Total calls	Case referrals
864	2075	19

Every caller to the hotline that reported a serious case of rape, trafficking or abuse from Sept 2019 to March 2020 heard about the hotline through the radio jingles that are played weekly.

**15 of these callers were trafficking cases.**

**2 callers were abuse cases**

**2 callers were rape cases**

**4 of these cases resulted in prosecution and jail time.**

### **Greater Opportunity (G.O.):**

The Greater Opportunity Project provides education and mentoring for children from the partner orphanages of Frances Gaskins, Danny Feeney, and Macdella Cooper, and mentoring at Rock of Divine. Children who do not have access to education are given an opportunity to receive a quality education through the provision of tuition costs and school supplies.



Children who are in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade are enrolled in private schools and are given the tools necessary to succeed. They also received weekly mentoring sessions and the “Liberia Reads to Learn” curriculum up until COVID 19 hit in March 2020. This is a reading program developed by two former Peace Corps Volunteers who served in Liberia in the 1970’s and continue to work in the country today. The program is designed to improve children’s vocabulary and reading ability while also educating them about different topics.

MacDella Boarding school was closed down in December, so 7 children who came from a closed down orphanage, were reunified with relatives, or put into foster care if relatives were abusive. These children remain on our child sponsorship educational program.

University students in the program received the above-mentioned assistance and mentorship, as well as housing, a food stipend, and transport costs.

### **Jr. and Sr. High School Assistance and Mentorship:**

ORR provides school fees, school supplies, uniforms, and healthcare costs for 31 **qualified children** at Frances Gaskins, Danny Feeney, Macdella Copper/now foster children, as well as children of local ORR staff.

Child Development Managers, Rosetta Cummings and Teah Toe, provided weekly classes for **51 children** that addressed issues of health, safety, life skills, and self-esteem at Rock of Divine, Frances Gaskins, Danny Feeney, and Macdella Cooper up until COVID 19 hit in March.

### **University School Assistance:**

Provision of housing expenses, food, school supplies (including laptop computer and cell phone), tuition, testing fees, and healthcare for **3 University students**.

## **Provisions and Special Projects**

Monthly provisions (food, mosquito nets, sheets, etc.) were purchased when a need was observed by a Child Development Manager.

- Christmas bundles
- Monthly food provisions for partner orphanages were provided for four months through the worst of the COVID 19 crisis, from April to July 2020.
- Emergency food charity was distributed to needy families during this crisis.
- ORR staff were given two weeks of extra pay, and given their full salaries each week, even though they were only working at a minimum during the four months of quarantine and pandemic work restrictions.

