

Article by Erick Elian. Erick is a young Haitian who helps administrate in the school office at CHRICHA for the children of KPN and Unity House in Canaan.

Restavèk

Restavèk is a word from French Vocabulary. "Restez-avec" (one who stays with.) In Haiti people used to go in the countryside and get children from their relatives and come back to the capital with children as helper's for a new family. Step-by-step the practice grew. It became a system for families that had trouble supporting their children that were mother- or fatherless and a chance at a better life. In truth the children felt inferior to other children and were considered as slaves. In some regions in the world, restavèk is considered as a heritage of slavery although not as primitive. Restavèks are forced to do labor and are often treated like animals because many parents cannot feed, clothe, and afford to care for their children in Haiti where unemployment is high. Many young girls are abused and end up pregnant.

For me, the problem is a danger for the future of a poor country. As many as 300,00 have been restavèks. If I had a message for these children, it would be: "You are someone with great value, and you are not born by error. God has his eyes on you. Take good courage." (A few of David's children were restavèks.)