Beatrice Brinus’ world began to unravel when she was still too young to understand what was happening. In 2014, Beatrice’s father walked out on her family, and her mother sent Beatrice to live with a woman who promised to provide for her and send her to school. Instead, it was the start of a year-long ordeal of forced labor, abuse, and neglect for the eight-year-old.

In Haiti, approximately two-thirds of the estimated 400,000 children enslaved are girls, and among all Haitian girls, one in six becomes enslaved.

Each day before dawn Beatrice rose to fetch water and kindling, light the fire over which she cooked breakfast, wash dishes, sweep and mop, and prepare the other children for school. Often she was sent alone to the bustling local market to buy provisions and carry them home.

Ensuring No Girl Suffers Like Beatrice Did

Jacqueline Bunke can’t stand to think that another child might suffer like Beatrice did.

“I am sure that Beatrice has many friends,” Jacqueline said, “and none of them should ever be treated like she was.”

Her determination to do something for girls in Haiti led Jacqueline to join Beyond Borders’ Girl Power Haiti! campaign.

“I’m going to pray, I’m going to give, and I’m going to help put an end to violence against girls in Haiti,” she said.

As the Girl Power Haiti! campaign launches, Jacqueline is inviting family, friends, and members of her church to support the cause of freedom and equality for girls in Haiti.

“No girl should ever be sent into slavery,” Jacqueline said. “Every girl should be treated with respect and love, and have the same opportunities as boys.”

Equality for women and girls is a long-held article of faith for Jacqueline, who has volunteered at a domestic violence shelter and advocated for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

On her first trip to Haiti in 1998, Jacqueline and members of her church – Sulphur Grove United Methodist in Huber Springs –

“I’m going to pray, I’m going to give, and I’m going to help put an end to violence against girls in Haiti.”

— Jacqueline Bunke
In 2010, Beyond Borders launched Rethinking Power to prevent violence against women and girls in five communities in southeastern Haiti.

Today, Rethinking Power programming has reached 25 urban and rural communities throughout Haiti. These communities are becoming places where the voices of women and girls are heard and violence against them is no longer tolerated.

This spring’s Girl Power Haiti! campaign will help Beyond Borders expand the Rethinking Power program to even more communities where we are already working.

These testimonies tell of the kind of community-level and personal transformation that is taking place thanks to the work of Rethinking Power.

ROSELINE PANTALEON
Domestic violence counselor from the community of Kapwouj

“In this community, women used to think they were nothing without a man. Sexual and physical violence against women and girls was common, and husbands routinely beat their wives. Now, thanks to Rethinking Power and other response organizations, incidents of violence and rape in Kapwouj have dropped dramatically, women and girls are no longer afraid to seek help, women have come to see that their worth isn’t conditional, and men have learned that women have the same rights as men. There’s more work to be done here so that everyone understands what it means to prevent violence against women, but it’s a pleasure to see the change that’s happened already because of Rethinking Power.”

MRS. DUVERT HERMANCE
Wife of a pastor in the community of Jacmel

“I am a mother of 10 children. I didn’t use violence when I raised them, but I also didn’t understand the concept of balancing power between women and men. In fact, in my church women would come forward with complaints of abuse: their husbands hit them, they had swollen eyes – and I didn’t know what to do. In the neighborhood where I live, I heard the stories of women and girls who were suffering sexual and physical abuse from a spouse, a parent, or a teacher, and it’s only after the presence of Rethinking Power in our community that all of us now know how to respond. We aren’t afraid anymore to speak up if abuse happens, and violence against women in our community is down because of it.”

— Mrs. Duvert Hermance

RICHARD SINOL
Teacher and pastor of a church in the community of Meno

“I’ve experienced many changes in my personal life since I took part in Rethinking Power training. I used to yell at children and hit both my own kids and my students. Now, I can’t even remember the last time I laid a hand on any child. As a church leader, I tell people, Rethinking Power has changed the way my wife and I interact. We make decisions about managing our household together now. And I’ve seen the changes in my community too. Men don’t beat their wives like they used to, and instances of rape are rare. Women participate in community meetings and aren’t afraid to speak up. They know they have the right to be full participants in the community. Husbands and wives attend Rethinking Power trainings together. Meno is a changed community since Rethinking Power began.”

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Port-au-Prince, Haiti –

Girls have special hidden powers to transform our world. That’s why this spring, Beyond Borders is launching the second annual Girl Power Haiti! campaign with a goal of raising $150,000 to support work in 103 communities that unleashes the power of girls.

Research from across the developing world shows that investing in the safety, education, and equality of girls is the most effective way to improve the quality of life for everyone in a community.

But in Haiti, girls are far less likely than boys to complete high school. Girls are nearly twice as likely as boys to become enslaved, are exposed to more physical and sexual violence than boys, and are denied opportunities afforded boys.

Right now, you can come together in an act of solidarity with girls in Haiti to change this.

Each spring the skies in Haiti fill with colorful homemade kites. The concentration on the faces of children making these kites turns to wonder and joy as they see their creations rise and twirl in the sky.

Look closely, though, and you will notice that these children are all boys. Girls in Haiti are simply not supposed to make or fly kites.

While their brothers are playing, girls are far more likely to be cooking, cleaning, and carrying water.

Perhaps it is a small injustice to deny girls this joy, but it is emblematic of the discrimination that robs them of opportunities and freedoms granted boys.

This discrimination – that persists into adulthood – not only excludes girls and women from opportunities, it makes them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

This spring Beyond Borders will give girls the chance to engage in a joyful act of defiance.

In schools and girls clubs, they will organize themselves to make and fly kites and use this activity to challenge others to consider the many kinds of discrimination girls face.

We will also invite girls outside Haiti to come together to make and fly their own kites, both to raise awareness of the struggle of girls here and to raise funds for the Girl Power Haiti! campaign that supports work to free, educate, protect, and give voice to girls.

JOIN US! Visit www.GirlsFlyingKites.org to watch a video of girls making and flying kites in Haiti and to learn how you can organize a kite flying event in your community.
Beyond Borders is honored to establish a new partnership with the School Sisters of Notre Dame to transform some of the most isolated and impoverished communities in Haiti. “Through this partnership, the School Sisters of Notre Dame are playing an integral role in helping communities in Haiti become places where no child is enslaved, every child is in school, every woman and girl lives free of violence, and every family can earn a dignified living,” said Beyond Borders’ Executive Director David Diggs.

As Beyond Borders’ Schools Not Slavery initiative expands from nine to 14 communities on the island of Lagonav, the School Sisters of Notre Dame will partner with two new communities: Tipalmis and Nan Mango. “Among the many points of intersection between our missions is our shared commitment to the protection of vulnerable women and children...” said Sister Charmaine Krohe, SSND, provincial leader for the Atlantic-Midwest Province.

SSND high schools, universities, and sisters raised $40,000 for Beyond Borders’ hurricane recovery efforts on Lagonav Island and made an initial pledge of $65,000 to support the work in Tipalmis and Nan Mango. This summer the SSND will send a delegation of teacher trainers to Lagonav from Notre Dame of Maryland University. “It is a huge gift to have this partnership and to be connected to a community of religious women whose mission is so much in alignment with ours,” David said.

Visit http://ssndschoolsnoslawerypartnership.org/ to learn more about this new partnership.

Peter Graeff: A Model of Solidarity

Ansgale, Haiti –

Peter Graeff, a dear friend who was present at the founding of Beyond Borders, died in January at a tiny missionary hospital here. Peter lived with and served the “poorest of the poor” in Haiti for nearly four decades, and died, according to his wishes, with the people who had adopted him as their own.

Peter’s compassion wasn’t a sentimental or spiritualized thing. He served without ever seeming conscious that he was serving. He was simply just very interested in everyone having what they needed.

He lived right among those who were left behind. And even when he’d given all his money and food away, he still took time to listen and empathize and strategize with those who were dealing with some hardship.

Peter had the gift of being deeply present to whomever he was with. He exemplified a model of solidarity that continues to inspire us.

We miss Peter, though we still find his presence in the profound ways he shaped the lives of so many.

We trust that if anyone hears these words from Matthew 25, Peter will: “I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a foreigner, and you took me in. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me...”

Peter Graeff: A Model of Solidarity
16 New Girls’ Clubs Launch with a Priority to Empower the Most Vulnerable Girls

In February, Beyond Borders’ Rethinking Power program launched 16 new girls’ clubs in southeastern Haiti. These clubs give priority to the most vulnerable girls in each community.

Led by Program Coordinator Emanuela Paul, and Program Specialist Sara Siebert, the Rethinking Power team spent more than a year developing a four-part guide to creating, launching, and running the girls’ clubs.

Here’s a Q & A with Emanuela:

**Why did Rethinking Power create the girls clubs?**

Girls are at greater risk for violence, so many parents keep their girls at home, and that limits their contact with friends and their ability to develop social networks. Creating public spaces for girls – without the presence of boys – increases the security of girls, gives them voice, and helps empower and encourage them to create positive change in their community. We want to create spaces that are danger-free spaces where girls can feel safe to organize.

**What do you mean by ‘danger-free spaces’?**

A danger-free space is a place girls can call their own, where they can gather regularly without fear or risk. It’s a space where girls won’t be harassed or face violence, where they can talk openly, without any pushback or judgement. A danger-free space can be someone’s home, or a room that is reserved especially for a girls’ club. A school, church, youth center, or private outdoor space can fit the bill too – but the space must have a fixed, regular time that is reserved for girls to gather as a club.

**What types of girls will you focus on recruiting for these inaugural 16 clubs?**

We want to focus on the most vulnerable girls in the community, including girls who live apart from both parents and may be trapped in domestic servitude, school-aged girls who are not in school, girls who have a handicap, and girls who are living with a single parent.

**What do you hope to achieve through the girls’ clubs in the coming year?**

We want these girls’ clubs to help girls to:

— Advocate for youth and women’s programs that meet the unique needs of girls,

— be educated about their bodies and reproductive health,

— believe that girls are equally intelligent and capable of learning as boys,

— express their opinions and be heard,

— regularly participate in community activities (clubs, groups, church activities, sports, etc.),

— correctly identify community and school resources for reporting sexual abuse if they experience or observe it.

Visit www.GirlPowerHaiti.org/blog/girls-clubs to learn more.

“Creating public spaces for girls – without the presence of boys – increases the security of girls, gives them voice, and helps empower and encourage them to create positive change in their community.”

— Emanuela Paul, Rethinking Power Program Coordinator

Below, Rethinking Power’s Marie Isnise Romelus, center, with a girls’ club at the Center for the Arts. Photo: Nadia Todres.
accompanying the youngest children to the bathroom and wiping them fell to Beatrice.

“Her caretaker did everything she could to humiliate Beatrice and to break her,” said Alfrèd Rose, past president of the Nan Kafe Child Protection Brigade.

For a brief time, Beatrice – a gentle child who loves mathematics – tried to go to school and keep up with all the work. But it soon became impossible for her to attend even the substandard afternoon school that her caretaker sent her to.

“We are here to stop this kind of abuse, to free boys and girls like Beatrice from slavery, and get them in school,” Rose said, adding, “and to prevent any more children from being sent away.”

Beyond Borders’ Girl Power Haiti! campaign supports the creation of Child Protection Brigades like Rose’s. Since 2010, 82 brigades have been launched nationwide in Haiti. Girl Power Haiti! also supports a six-month Child Rights Training and Rethinking Power to her village of Nan Kafe.

Beatrice’s mom Chrisla joined both, learning about the dangers of sending children away, and about how balancing power between women and men reduces violence and increases prosperity for all.

“Chrisla felt this push to go and bring her daughter home,” said Freda Catheus, who coordinates the Child Rights Training program on Lagonav Island.

With help from the Child Protection Brigade, Chrisla brought Beatrice home and enrolled her as a fourth-grader at the Vizyon Fred School – part of Beyond Borders’ Schools Not Slavery network.

Chrisla and her husband Obenson decided to reconcile, and now both regularly attend Rethinking Power trainings to encourage gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls.

Life is still not easy for the family, but last fall they joined an 18-month Beyond Borders’ program* to help struggling families lift themselves out of poverty and maintain a steady income.

Beatrice – now 11 – is happy to be home, and says she has one wish for children everywhere: “I would like every child who is in slavery like I was to return to their family and to be free, so that no child suffers like I did.”

*See Beyond Borders’ Fall 2016 Newsletter for more on this program.

Jacqueline Bunke Continued from page 1

Heights, Ohio – helped to build a new girls’ club.

They witnessed firsthand the impact it had on the girls in the community.

Now, Jacqueline hopes her support for the Girl Power Haiti! campaign will mean freedom from violence and discrimination, and equality of opportunity for more girls like Beatrice.

“You can make a difference in people’s lives,” Jacqueline said, “and to be a part of something like that is really special.”

CONNECT WITH US!

BEYOND BORDERS helps people build movements to liberate themselves from oppression and isolation. In Haiti and the United States, we are bringing people together for just and lasting change. We support movements in Haiti to:

-END child slavery
- Guarantee universal access to education
- End violence against women and girls
- Replace systems that oppress the poor with systems that support dignified work and sustainable livelihoods

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