

# Human Trafficking Spikes in Post-Quake Haiti

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund recently released a disturbing report indicating that an ongoing problem in Haiti is getting worse.

Experts say there's been a spike in Haiti's post-quake child trafficking.

Desperate parents, faced with their inability to feed, clothe or educate their children, are selling them for as little as \$ to the traffickers who promise a better life for the kids.

But the reality is quite different. Some wind up in prostitution, but UNICEF's report indicates that the trafficked children are also feeding an illegal adoption market.

Ron Sparks with Baptist Haiti Mission explains, "The tragedy is only magnified because of the earthquake and so many more children being on the street and being vulnerable to predators."

One way to cut down on the trafficking is to reduce the vulnerable population. That's done when BHM can "continue providing a support group for the families and the children themselves through our churches, our schools and the whole Baptist Haiti Mission organization."

A support community means the families are known by name and children can't disappear without accountability. It also means "that people know they have a place to turn to when they are desperate, and they can get help."

Sparks notes that at \$25 a month, "One of the best things that people can do if they want to help out would be to do a child

sponsorship where they can make a difference—not only in the physical well-being of a child, but perhaps in their life as well.”

The parents who have sold their children to traffickers are without hope. BHM is dedicated to countering that message with the Gospel. “That’s what Baptist Haiti Mission has been doing—spreading that message, and then providing day-to-day help and encouragement and resources to allow people to open their ears to that message.”

What’s more, Sparks says Christ placed a high value on children, citing Matthew 19:14 where Jesus says, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Could they do any less? Sparks says there’s still a long road ahead to recovery. There are a number of ways to respond. “Be praying for the Haitian people that they would be strong and able to resist the attractions of voodooism and the easy solution, which would be to sell their children for a dollar or two to be able to exist.”