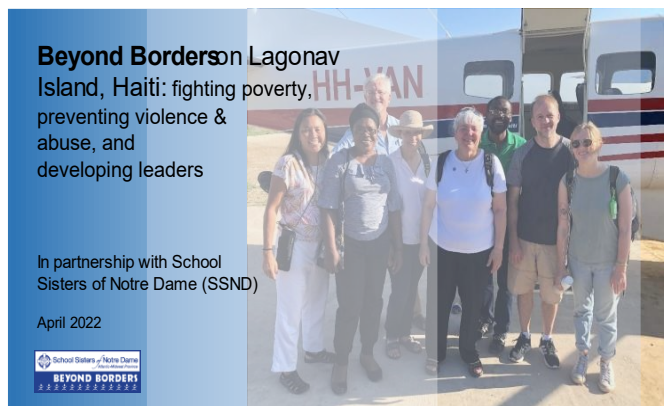


## ***Report from the Annual Haiti Partnership Meeting, April 8, 2022***

***Arlene Flaherty, OP and Brian John Stevens.***

***SSND and Beyond Borders Liaisons to the AMSSND- Beyond Borders Partnership in Haiti***

*“The moment I see a child enslaved, as I was, I’ll do everything in my power to free that child. I know that if someone had done that for me and said “no, this can’t happen,” like we do in the Adult Survivors Network, I wouldn’t have suffered as I did. I found Caitlin when she was 11 years old. Her parents sent her to the city to live with a woman there. Her father didn’t know where she was living. This woman never fed Caitlin and she survived on the cold food others left on their plates. She made Caitlin sleep outside on the porch with nothing. She had nowhere to go, she didn’t know anyone here and had no choice but to stay in the situation she was in. Finally, after being cut with a knife, Caitlin couldn’t take the abuse anymore and ran away. While she was wandering the streets, she found a man who took her in but wanted to make her a prostitute. I found Caitlin with him, and I saw how much she had been abused. I contacted Beyond Borders and, together with the Adult Survivors Network, we did everything to help Caitlin escape the situation she was in. We removed her from the house she was staying in, and after locating her family, she was reunited with them. I feel proud every time I see how she is doing. She has become a child like every other child and now I feel strong, and I feel capable. I feel even stronger so we can go even further, so that no child will ever be a slave again.”* **Mirielle, Survivor, and Child Protection Advocate, Lagonav, Haiti.**



This powerful testimony of a survivor of child trafficking was shared by Grace Sciamanna, SSND, co-chair of the Province Haiti Collaboration Committee, during the annual AMSSND-Beyond Borders partnership review meeting on April 8. Mirielle, who has been trained by Beyond Borders as a Child Protection Team Member, continues to overcome the trauma of her own exploitation, and uses

her experience to bring children today back from exploitation, and into the fullness of their rights and dignity. Mirielle is one of many Haitian women whose lives have been changed by Beyond Borders, our partner in Haiti.

The entire three-hour 2022 annual partnership review on April 8<sup>th</sup>, facilitated by Barbara Valuckas, SSND, was packed with hope-filled evidence of how the Haitian people of Lagonav are, despite significant challenges, and daunting obstacles are embracing their human rights and living into the fullness of their God-given potential. Many representatives of the “village

*that it takes*” to nurture and develop the SSND-Beyond Borders Haiti partnership contributed to making the partnership review the success that it was.

**The Haiti Collaboration Committee’s reflections** on the past year’s work illustrated the commitment of the group to keep the province and our wider network engaged in the partnership through zooms, reflection resources, and Friday newsletter updates. In addition to

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Caroline Center Student,  
Baltimore, MD.

ongoing education of the province and its wider network about the Haiti partnership, we were especially proud of the response of Baltimore’s Caroline Center women whose engagement with the women in Haiti offered these reflections. The Haiti presentation “lets us know about what is going on in another part of the world. We as women are strong. Let’s get together and let the women of Haiti know that we support them.” This expressed solidarity is a beautiful illustration of the SSND focus on oneness, and how it is being nurtured through this partnership.

In his report on the past year’s work, **David Diggs, the Executive Director and co-founder of Beyond Borders**, explained that efforts to advance the movement to end child slavery have so far this year focused on continuing to build the capacity of local leaders and local government to replicate the child protection model that the Beyond Borders team on Lagonav pioneered. Most of this work takes place across nearly 40 rural communities on the Island. But, with SSND partnership support, we’ve also expanded work into two new neighborhoods of Lagonav’s provincial capital, Ansagale, so that roughly half of the urban population is now included in our work as well.

### **Key Achievements: Child Protection**

**Partnership sponsored efforts have led to the publication of a new, ground-breaking Anti-Child Trafficking Decree on Lagonav.** Local authorities, with significant technical support from BB staff, published what is believed to be the first-ever municipal decree to combat child trafficking or child slavery. The decree is giving a lot of visibility to this issue—with local media broadcasting Public Service Announcements on the decree, and public gatherings focused on the decree.

**The Scale-Up-Scale-Out Strategy** launched a couple of years ago, continues to gain momentum. The foundation of this movement is built by, first, gathering community members in child rights dialogue groups. The powerful six-month curriculum that is core to this leads to the growth of a critical mass of the local community members radically rethinking the needs and rights of children and organizing to protect them. Beyond Borders’ staff on Lagonav used to implement all this work directly in communities. Now our team works to support the implementation of this work through local leaders, volunteers, and local government, which has allowed us to greatly expand the work to more communities, and for the work to be more broadly embraced by local leaders and institutions that can help ensure that gains are sustained.



**Newly trained community residents and local authorities are taking their roles as child rights advocates seriously.**

They are seeing situations in their communities that before they might have thought were normal but now recognize as abuse and exploitation. For example, in one

community, two ESK (Education is a conversation) graduates intervened when they witnessed a parent abusing their 9-year-old child. They took the child to safety and called local authorities who arrested the parent. The Mayor of Ansagale himself intervened in a case he discovered of a child living in restavèk, (child domestic slavery). He contacted the child's parents on the mainland, made arrangements to have the child reunited, and provided financial support for the family. Two weeks ago, activists discovered a case of a 15-year-old girl who had been raped and is now pregnant. The activists, with other stakeholders and Beyond Borders, took action. The accused rapist was arrested, and Beyond Borders is collaborating with a legal partner in Port au Prince to get the case transferred there, and providing free legal and psychosocial services to the victim and her family.

**Key Achievements: Education**

**This past year, seven new schools Joined the Matènwa Teacher Training Program.** The schools are rounding the corner to complete the first year of a two-year program that includes the Ministry of Education. This is becoming much more active in enforcing non-violent classroom management, thanks to the leadership of the Matenwa Community Learning Center. This is really revolutionary for Haiti.

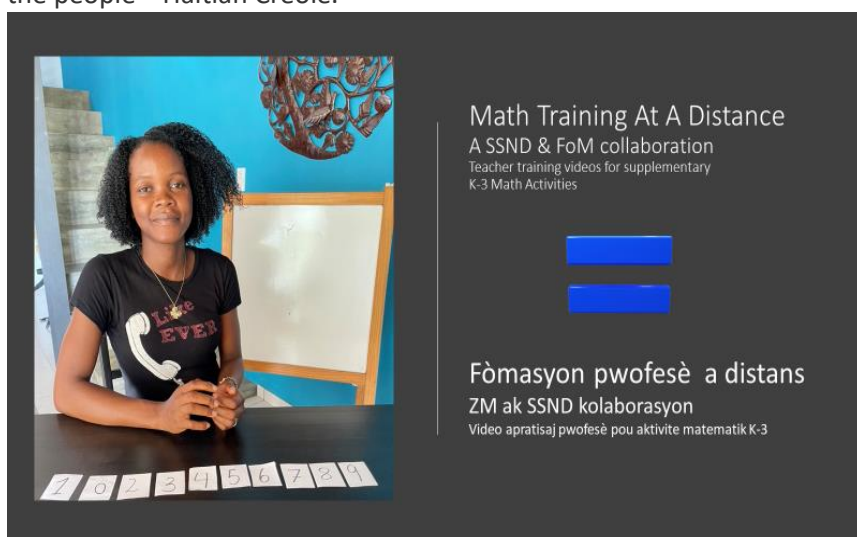
**Beyond Borders is taking the lead in addressing the question of access to education.** With the hiring of Amos, our Education Officer on Lagonav, and the work of the Education Platform, we are bringing education stakeholders together in the communities to problem solve and work together to increase access to education for all children.

**Key Highlights: Sustainable Livelihoods and Economic Justice**

With our partner AAPLAG, (Association of Peasant Famers of Lagonav), Beyond Borders celebrated the graduation of Cohort 4 in October, with 107 out of 110 women/families successfully completing the program. As the metrics indicate, the outcomes of the "Family Graduation Program," represent the movement of families from subsistence existence to a way of life that fosters thriving and sustainable economic development.

## SSND Teacher Training: Matenwa and NDMU

In Sister Sharon Slear’s presentation on the SSND Teacher Training program on Lagonav, she emphasized how this initiative is a response to the SSND mission to serve persons who are poor, providing access to education that transforms. In collaboration with the Matenwa Community Learning Center, (MCLC) SSND uses a *Train the Trainer* model which provides ongoing training for elementary teachers in the Matenwa school’s network. The objectives of this training include methods to help teachers assess the skill level of students, learning strategies for learners with varied abilities, research-based strategies to meet learning needs of students, growth in awareness and ability to meet the needs of learners with special needs, training of other teachers in utilizing the presented skills and teaching in the language of the people—Haitian Creole.



Since the summer of 2017, the SSND-Matenwa Teacher Training Program on Lagonav has been ongoing. Due to COVID and social unrest in Haiti, in-person training has not been possible, but as teachers are ever creative and innovative, a way of going forward has been imagined. Videos presenting teaching calendars and skills for teaching Math in grades K-3

have been created by the SSND team and sent for translation to Haiti, where they are being used to keep the training going on Lagonav. As we carefully monitor the security situation in Haiti, we are looking forward to the next in-person training by the SSND team on Lagonav.

According to Chris Low, the Matenwa Community Learning Center co-founder, “SSNDs are invested, and it is relationships like these that are vital to the continued development and success of MCLC.”

### Catholic Sisters Haiti Collaborative for Community Empowerment

Over a year ago the Hilton N. Conrad Foundation for Sisters contacted LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) with a request to connect with congregations working in Haiti. Shortly after this, the SSND-Beyond Borders partnership was invited to a meeting of several congregations working there.

Hilton asked us to talk with one another and consider forming a collaborative. The goal would be to find ways we could work together and build each other’s capacity for the sake of the work we were doing in Haiti. Hilton also encouraged us to apply for a grant for our collaborative’s work.



Over the past year, six religious congregations have formed the **Catholic Sisters Haiti Collaborative for Community Empowerment**. The six congregations are: The Religious of Jesus and Mary, Sisters of Holy Cross, Sisters of Mercy /Mercy Focus on Haiti, Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth New Jersey, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice, The AMSSND-Beyond Borders partnership in Haiti. To date, the work of the Collaborative has included:

securing a USD 100,000 planning grant to prepare for our two-year Collaborative’s proposal to Hilton, the hiring of a consultant to lead us through the steps of the Hilton process, the design of a two-year project proposal, with a corresponding budget for approximately two million dollars.

We have recently submitted all of the above to the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and we expect to hear its decision sometime in May. The work of the Collaborative has four specific objectives:

1. Improve access to and quality of education and health care in rural Haitian communities.
2. Improve the livelihoods and food security of families living in extreme poverty.
3. Equip and mobilize communities to ensure that children experience their full rights, including the right to have a family, to be healthy, to acquire a basic education, and to live in security.
4. Strengthen networking and collaboration among member congregations of the Collaborative, in order to build capacity and foster collective action for greater impact.

In the course of our yearlong commitment and weekly meetings, we have grown from a group into a community—a collaborative where dialogue, shared learning, common values, and various strengths and capacities are shared. We are convinced that our work to become ONE will bear fruit in the lives of the Haitian people. For SSND, this experience has been a way of living YAS C # 20, on the vow of obedience, for surely “together we work to promote unity while witnessing to the good news of God’s unconditional love for all.”

At the conclusion of our meeting, Sr. Charmaine Krohe bestowed a blessing on the SSND-Beyond Borders partnership, and on all those who have worked to make this a meaningful and effective initiative in support of the Haitian people.



## Attendees

### **Beyond Borders Leadership, Staff and Board Member:**

David Diggs, Kristie van de Wetering, Brian Stevens, Kits Sarther, Rachelle Martinez

### **SSND Leadership:**

Charmaine Krohe, Mary Roy Weiss, Paula Dukehart, Nancy Gilchrist, Margaret Malone, Mary Fitzgerald

### **Province Haiti Collaboration Committee:**

Mary Gunning, Limeteze Pierre Gilles, Grace Sciamanna, Kathy Sylvester, Laurie Molner, Bernie Ballasty, Kay O'Connell, Carleen Cekal, Leonora Tucker, Cathy Bonfield, Arlene Flaherty

### **SSND-Matenwa Teacher Training:**

Sharon Slear, Kathleen Sipes, (ab), Chris Low, Kody Emmanuel, Lisa Pallet (ab)

### **SSND Staff:**

Laura Lang, Mary Lennon

### **SSND Generalate:**

Roxanne Schares, Ines Camiran, Carolyn Anyega, Julie Lattner, Martina Radez

### **Facilitator**

Barbara Valuckas

