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## Author Bios

*Sean M. M. McMahon* studied Political Economy with a self-designed concentration in inequality, graduating in Spring 2013 with high honors and distinction in general scholarship. Prior to attending Berkeley as a returning student he worked as a special educator in a middle school, as a bookseller, as a bartender, as the accountant for a small Buddhist temple, and put himself through school working the night shift at a Tiburon hotel. He has spent his time since graduation finishing his first novel, *The Liberation Theologies*, which he hopes to publish soon.

*Stephanie Petrillo* is an undergraduate English major at UC Berkeley and will graduate in May 2014. Under the guidance of English Professor George A. Starr, Stephanie conducted research for “Moral Theories and Cloning in Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*” in the Fall of 2013 for an English Seminar on dystopian and utopian literature taught by Professor Starr. Stephanie transferred to UC Berkeley in the fall of 2012, after receiving her Associate of Arts degree in Philosophy from Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz, CA. Stephanie is particularly interested in the intersection of science and the law, and the ethical implications of governmental policies related to scientific and technological advancements.

*James Piacentini* is a recent graduate of the College of Environmental Design, where he majored in Architecture, and minored in the History of the Built Environment and City and Regional Planning. Throughout his studies in architecture, James sought to engage the broader critical and theoretical discourses surrounding the field of environmental design into the studio environment, and found himself deeply invested in the study and exploration of science, technology, and sociology as they relate to design and urbanism.



# THE OWNERS OF HUMANITARIANISM

## The Role of Nongovernmental Organizations in Haitian Underdevelopment

By: Sean McMahon

Haiti is still recovering from the effects of the massive 2010 earthquake that destroyed much of its infrastructure. Although a large international humanitarian response was mounted to save lives and rebuild the country, international nongovernmental organizations have failed to meet many of their most important and relevant objectives in the last four years. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operate within a precise set of legal, economic, and political restrictions that have variously been described as too lenient or too obstructive. This paper examines how a specific combination of limitations and liberties have resulted in organizational imperatives that obfuscate the economic origins of humanitarian financiers, limit aid transparency, reduce NGO accountability to both donors and recipients, and lead to poor overall development outcomes. To demonstrate these outcomes this paper uses detailed case studies of three large nonprofit organizations operating in Haiti: Partners in Health (PiH), Save the Children (StC), and the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE). The objective is not to assume that these organizations are perfectly representative outcomes of aid, but rather to show a variety of development outcomes that the aid apparatus either allowed for or failed to prevent.

## I. Methodology

The goal of this paper is to assess the effectiveness of the U.S foreign aid apparatus as a tool of development and a conduit for philanthropy in relief and reconstruction efforts following the January 12, 2010 Haitian earthquake. This paper operates under the hypothesis that the organizational structure of foreign aid encourages poor development outcomes. The unregulated nature of the aid apparatus appears to give wide control and independence to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but simultaneously makes them dependent on donors with their own political agendas and economic concerns. As many aid workers contend, this allows for good results in honest, farsighted NGOs by enabling them to do their work unrestricted by excessive government oversight or legal regulation. However, an overall lack of accountability and transparency also allows for extensive fraud, economic manipulation by private interests, and the execution of soft power by foreign states with interests in recipient countries.

In order to show the kinds of outcomes aid makes possible this paper will examine three major NGOs operating in Haiti since 2010 that are representative of the different outcomes made possible by the humanitarian apparatus. The first, Partners in Health (PiH), has gained prominence in Haiti since the earthquake for its effective use of funds and emergency response personnel. Partners in Health is also actively working to make its role in Haiti obsolete, a goal that must be a component of any serious NGO mission to avoid the growing hazard of turning the delivery of aid into a career and a self-sustaining complex. Its current major project is a combination hospital and education center to train Haitians how to perform the health sector jobs for which PiH personnel have been responsible.<sup>1</sup> The second organization, the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), was funded for two decades by monetized food aid, a program that has been labeled inefficient by the US Government Accountability Office and has helped to drive Haitian farmers out of business and into low wage manufacturing jobs.<sup>2</sup> CARE recently made a move away from monetized food aid, which, after decades of flooding Haitian markets with surplus agriculture, it now agrees is harmful. CARE receives enough money from the United States via USAID to question its defined role as a “non-governmental” organization.<sup>3</sup> The third NGO, Save the Children, has been controversial for its fundraising tactics, especially for the use of child sponsorship. Its reporting practices demonstrate deep problems with NGO transparency and accountability.

### A. Case Study Methodology

The case studies used in this paper will be examined in the following order: first, a general history and introduction to the organization, focused on Haiti but including major events outside Haiti that may have affected an organization’s goals and methods; second, an analysis of the NGO’s transparency and use or misuse of information; third, a financial overview and analysis of the organization within Haiti, including both the NGO’s largest projects in Haiti and its broader finances; and finally, a conclusive analysis that places the organization’s successes, failures, and

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1 Partners in Health, “Hôpital Universitaire De Mirebalais,” <http://www.pih.org/mirebalais>

2 Eric Muñoz, “Never Mind the Waste...Here are the Benefits of Food Aid Monetization,” *Oxfam America*, November 30, 2010, <http://politicsofpoverty.oxfamamerica.org/2012/11/30/never-mind-the-waste/>

Timothy Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti: A True Account of Christian Missions, Orphanages, Fraud, Food Aid and Drug Trafficking* (Charleston: Booksurge Publishing, 2008), 94-100.

3 Schwartz, *Travesty*, 148.

methods in the broader context of Haitian development and within the aid apparatus.

### *B. Access to Information*

In a self-reporting system that collects and spends money on behalf of foreign citizens in a foreign country, transparency is a prerequisite to good outcomes: it is necessary to prevent fraud, but not sufficient to produce positive results. Fully examining an NGO's transparency requires an analysis of both the information provided by an organization and the way that information is presented. An examination of an NGO's honesty in its representation of its own work cannot be limited to, for example, a list of yes-no questions as to whether or not an organization has published aggregate data on its revenues and expenses, or whether or not it made its Form 990 available online.<sup>4</sup> Such an examination must include an analysis of the type of data presented by each organization, the accuracy of the data itself, and the ways in which that data is presented.

### *C. Financial Review*

A financial review of each NGO will include analysis of the organization's expenses and revenues. Revenues are relevant for the types of donors contributing to a specific cause: a foreign state contributing a majority of a single NGO's budget, for example, will have broad influence over that NGO's goals and behavior. Expenses generally fall into two categories: program expenses, which must be analyzed individually for their effectiveness, and administrative and development costs, including payroll and fundraising.

### *D. Context and Conclusion*

Each case study is intended to show how a particular NGO exemplifies a series of outcomes that are made possible by the structure of the foreign aid apparatus. With over 10,000 NGOs operating in Haiti, the scope of the project makes a detailed study of the goals and results of every humanitarian organization impossible. Instead, these examples are meant to demonstrate what possibilities exist in Haiti as the result of specific humanitarian interventions. By showing the potential development outcomes under aid, it is possible to draw conclusions as to why and how aid has failed in Haiti, and what kind of policy changes are needed to make humanitarian interventions fulfill their promise.

## **II. Introduction**

### *A. The Aid Framework*

A legal, political, and economic framework governs NGOs. The precise combination of organizational freedoms and constraints this apparatus places on NGOs obfuscates their origins, encourages a lack of transparency, and reduces NGO accountability to both donors and recipients

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<sup>4</sup> Charity Navigator, "Charity Navigator Rating – Save the Children," *Charity Navigator*, <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.summary&orgid=4438>

of charity. As a result of this framework, NGOs simultaneously contain organizational elements normally associated with civil society organizations, private firms, and state-run agencies, but lack many of the important limitations usually associated with each sector.

NGOs are generally assumed to originate in civil society, and many NGOs and charitable organizations describe themselves as independent from corporate or state influences. Sauveur Pierre Étienne, in *Haiti: Invasion des ONG*, describes NGOs as being the direct offspring of developed states, going so far as to describe them as the “iron of the spear of neo-liberal policies that certain Western governments use to weaken the states of Southern countries.”<sup>5</sup> Many Haitians, on the other hand, see NGOs as motivated exclusively by profits.

### B. *NGOs as Civil Society Organizations: Humanitarian Doctrine and Discourse*

Humanitarian aid workers generally see themselves as part of civil society. All three of the NGOs examined in the following case studies clearly originated in civil society, outside the realm of the state or the private sector: Partners in Health began as a student-led medical expedition to Haiti; Eglantyne Jebb founded Save the Children as a way to help children affected by the British blockade at the end of World War I in opposition to state policy; CARE began as a service for sending food to European friends and family in the aftermath of World War II.<sup>6</sup>

All three organizations explicitly define themselves as humanitarian. The content, logic, and assumptions of humanitarianism must be examined to contextualize the role of NGOs. Humanitarianism, while seldom defined clearly, implies goodwill and a desire to reduce human suffering. In the context of international development it usually includes a claim of political neutrality. Save the Children states this explicitly as part of its mission and vision: “We work with other organizations, governments, non-profits and a variety of local partners while maintaining our own independence without political agenda.”<sup>7</sup> The US legal framework regulating NGOs implies limited political neutrality: NGOs are allowed to engage in restricted lobbying for policy changes that support their development goals, but are restricted from supporting specific political parties or candidates.<sup>8</sup> Article Five of the Haitian constitution outlines NGO neutrality explicitly within the Haitian legal framework by defining an NGO as a “private, apolitical, not-for-profit institution or organization that pursues the objectives of development at the national, departmental, or communal level, and uses resources to realize them.”<sup>9</sup> This doctrine of apolitical humanitarianism forms the justification for humanitarian interventions in Haiti and elsewhere.

The logic of neutral humanitarianism requires that humanitarian interventions be understood as essentially technical: humanitarians, in this description of their work, enter

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5 Sauveur Pierre Étienne, *Haiti: L'invasion Des ONG* (Port-au-Prince: CIDIHCA, 1997), 236. Author's translation: “ONG qui sont le fer de lance de la politique néo-libérale de certains gouvernements occidentaux visant a affaiblir l'État dans les pays du Sud.”

6 Partners in Health, “Partners in Health History,” *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/partners-in-health-history>  
 Save the Children, “History: Save the Children UK” *savethechildren.org.uk*, <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/history>  
 CARE, “History of Care,” *care.org*, <http://www.care.org/about/history.asp>

7 Save the Children, “About Us” *savethechildren.org*, [http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6146405/k.C7E9/About\\_Us.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6146405/k.C7E9/About_Us.htm)

8 IRS, “Exemption Requirements: 501(c)(3) organizations,” *irs.gov*, [http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Charitable-Organizations/Exemption-Requirements-Section-501\(c\)\(3\)-Organizations](http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Charitable-Organizations/Exemption-Requirements-Section-501(c)(3)-Organizations)

9 Haitian Constitution, Chapitre Premier, Article 1, 1989. Author's translation. Original: “Toutes Institutions ou Organisations privées, apolitiques, sans but lucrative, poursuivant des objectifs de Développement aux niveaux national, départementale ou communal et disposant de ressources pour les concrétiser.”

underdeveloped countries to solve development “problems” for the good of all, without meddling in local or international politics. Only by defining humanitarian action as the technical effort to reduce human suffering are humanitarians able to further define their work as politically neutral.

This reasoning has several problems. First, economic capital and political capital are interconnected, and in a weaker state (Haiti’s is a perfect example) are easily interchangeable. Second, altering the economic structure of an underdeveloped nation changes the local power dynamics. If the 10,000 NGOs operating in Haiti suddenly find that their development mission has managed to promote economic growth in Haiti that unevenly favors the poor, the country will be completely restructured politically. Financially, Haiti is extremely unequal: it has one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world (the most recent data available places it as the 7th highest coefficient worldwide, at 59.2), and dramatically reducing inequality would have a profound effect on its politics.<sup>10</sup> As another example of how economic change involves political restructuring, the Mirebalais hospital being constructed by Partners in Health is a political project in that it empowers underprivileged, impoverished Haitians who could otherwise not afford health care. NGOs cannot intervene in Haiti’s economy while somehow having no effect on its political system. Third, the creation of a “developed” Haitian economy protected by a state powerful enough to defend its interests would alter international power dynamics. Defining Haitian development as politically neutral ignores the fact that many international actors benefit from Haitian underdevelopment. A recent example highlights this, as well as the interconnectedness of political and economic capital: the Obama administration has yet to even release the 2014 fiscal year budget, but is already being lobbied by NGOs, US agribusinesses, and shipping companies to change its plan to end both gift-in-kind and monetized food aid.<sup>11</sup> This is proof positive of the exact groups benefitting from these programs, which rely on a Haitian agricultural sector unable to compete with US agribusiness. Complaints to the Obama administration have been focused on potential job losses from the decision, not on detrimental effects to food aid recipients.<sup>12</sup>

The goal of Haitian development requires nothing less than a global shift in both political and economic power. The mission of reducing global poverty is inherently political, and denying this conceals the political relationships within development. The doctrine of neutral humanitarianism allows NGOs to describe themselves as apolitical, independent civil society organizations even when their funding comes from political organisms and they are engaged in work that will inevitably change the political structure of countries targeted by aid. In Haiti, these assumptions have allowed the many failures of the aid apparatus to be described as technical failures of NGOs rather than as the predictable outcomes of a self-perpetuating complex promoted by powerful international actors who benefit from a weak and dependent Haitian state.

Humanitarians do not see themselves as tools of private or state interests, but as independent members of civil society operating outside the political sphere. Refusing to acknowledge or failing to comprehend the inherent political dimension of their work prevents humanitarians from seeing the ways in which large donors, especially corporations and states, can manipulate humanitarian institutions through political and economic power.

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10 CIA, “CIA – The World Factbook,” *CIA.gov*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2172rank.html>

11 Ron Nixon, “Obama Administration Seeks to Overhaul International Food Aid,” *The New York Times*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/05/us/politics/white-house-seeks-to-change-international-food-aid.html?pagewanted=1&r=2&hp&>

12 Nixon, “Obama Administration Seeks to Overhaul International Food Aid,” *The New York Times*, April 4, 2013.

### C. *NGOs as Private Firms: Economic Constraints*

The economic dimension of the aid apparatus creates the most serious constraint on NGOs. Because NGOs need money to operate and implement their projects, they require donors—if they wish to grow, they must either compete with other nonprofits for current donors or seek out new ones. Both are accomplished via fundraising, the nonprofit equivalent of advertising. Competition, fundraising, and the need for financial resources to influence development lead NGOs to behave like private firms within the financial sphere.

Like private firms, charitable organizations need a certain amount of business, the equivalent of the idea of “dollar votes” for private sector products, to survive. Each seeks out various niches to this end: its focus may be geographical; it may focus on certain vulnerable groups such as women or children (as with Save the Children); it may focus on certain issues such as health (as with Partners in Health); agriculture (one of CARE’s major interests); or sanitation (a common cause among most NGOs operating in Haiti, including StC and CARE). And like private firms, NGOs compete with other organizations that manufacture similar products. Traditional private firms, however, need to produce a product and then sell it to a consumer, and their survival is dependent on that consumer’s satisfaction. A consumer spends money in order to receive a service or product, and a firm that produces defective products will eventually go out of business. But this is not a limiting factor for NGOs that do work in developing nations: the purchaser and the consumer of an international NGO’s “product” are two different people who generally cannot communicate. Individuals and organizations in developed countries spend money so that the citizens of developing countries can consume a product. Rather than seeking untapped niches as private firms motivated by recipient demand for goods and services do, this leads NGOs to focus on donorship niches, seeking the perceived interests of their benefactors and preferring high profile programs. This helps explain duplicated efforts, frequently cited as a major failure of aid in Haiti.<sup>13</sup>

This explains why NGOs often focus on relatable narratives or “stories” of how their products are consumed: these narratives are, essentially, their products. Harsher analysis of development projects may occur internally, but publicizing negative findings would only serve to drive away donors. There is no legal requirement that NGOs ensure their advertising is representative of their actual project work. NGOs are required to report on themselves but are not required to produce any form of impact analysis more detailed than a basic financial audit and Form 990. Subsequently, they are able to increase their donor “sales” by selling an effective narrative that avoids clear data or a more thorough impact analysis that might drive donations elsewhere by admitting to failures and shortcomings.<sup>14</sup> Thus the economic framework governing NGOs effectively incentivizes a lack of transparency and causes NGOs to behave like private firms within the financial sphere, though they are not subject to market regulation the way private firms are.

This also helps to contextualize “donor sovereignty,” often cited as a major problem and potential conflict of interest in foreign aid. NGOs still employing monetized food aid cater to the demands of the US state, not developing countries. To the extent that an NGO behaves like a private sector firm, its donors are its “clients” rather than the consumers of its goods. An NGO’s survival is dependent on the perceptions of its donors, not on the degree of satisfaction experienced by the recipients of its development programs. William Easterly’s suggestion that

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13 Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012), 368.

14 IRS, “Exemption Requirements.”

private firms driven by profit would create better outcomes than state and NGO “planners” demonstrates this disconnect.<sup>15</sup> While Easterly sees poor development outcomes as the result of public sector inefficiency, a more specific critique is that NGOs have organizational elements of both private firms and traditional charities: they are split between donors and recipients, and while they can survive without the approval of recipients, they can never survive without the support of donors.

#### D. *NGOs as State-Run Agencies: Humanitarian Interventions*

This economic constraint—the need for funds in order to survive—allows states to influence NGOs to the extent that they provide for their operational budgets. Aid dollars channeled through USAID are not given out as if they were part of a blanket subsidy. Instead, money is paid out and can be revoked at any time, for any reason, and thus more closely resembles a form of payroll. In this way, NGOs paid by the state are partly state-run agencies. By not entirely funding these organizations the state maintains a level of control over them, but simultaneously avoids responsibility for their actions. If every project administered in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake had been seen as the direct responsibility of the US government, for example, the image of US intervention in Haiti would be very different politically.

NGOs seeking to reduce poverty and facilitate development in Haiti are political organizations. By paying for their work, foreign states (especially the US) and corporations are able to limit the ability of NGOs to legitimately engage with and question political forces that maintain Haitian poverty and underdevelopment. Indirect power can be achieved by financially co-opting organizations that might otherwise present critical views of developed states whose policies contribute directly to Haitian poverty and underdevelopment. NGOs that receive the bulk of their financing from USAID are free to lobby the US government, but risk being shut down if they openly criticize US foreign policy.

Haitian underdevelopment, including the weak condition of the Haitian state, is partly a product of repeated interventions from the developed world. Structural adjustment in the 1980s destroyed the Haitian agricultural sector; US military forces removed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide from power in 2004; and in 2011, under US pressure, Haiti’s Provisional Electoral Council prevented Aristide’s *Fanmi Lavalas* Party from participating in national elections.<sup>16</sup> NGOs funded by the American state are not able to comment on any of these political developments, or their role in Haitian underdevelopment, without risking the subsequent withdrawal of state funding. Being unable to critique political processes that helped create Haiti’s current condition sharply limits the ability of NGOs to address development issues.

The capacity of developed states to manipulate NGOs is especially problematic because contemporary humanitarianism has become the discourse used to justify any intervention into foreign states. The misclassification of NGOs as independent civil society organizations allows modern interventions to be described as goodwill missions, while many (but not all) of the

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15 William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done so Much Ill and so Little Good* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 5-7.

16 Isabeau Doucet, “The Nation: NGOs Have Failed Haiti,” *NPR*, January 13, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/13/132884795/the-nation-how-ngos-have-failed-haiti>; Paul Farmer, “Who Removed Aristide?” *London Review of Books* 26 (2004): 28-31, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n08/paul-farmer/who-removed-aristide>; Jake Johnston & Mark Weisbrot, “Haiti’s Fatally Flawed Election,” *Center for Economic Policy and Research*, January, 2011, [www.cepr.net/documents/publications/haiti-2011-01.pdf](http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/haiti-2011-01.pdf)

goodwill ambassadors are indirectly controlled by foreign states. Didier Fassin, in *Contemporary States of Emergency*, suggests that humanitarian and military interventions both operate on the same “justification for extralegal action,” and are not inherently morally different.<sup>17</sup> As Fassin says, “it is always easier to criticize those whom one can cast on the side of the politics of death (the military) than those who present themselves as promoters of politics of life (the humanitarians).”<sup>18</sup> Fassin divides humanitarianism into a “humanitarian emotion” and a “humanitarian reason”—in this model, aid workers can be assumed to have sympathy for the targets of aid, but “it is essential that both elements are combined.”<sup>19</sup> Sympathy for the underprivileged can be exploited without an awareness of the realpolitik of international state relationships. If self-defined humanitarians do not understand their role in politics, humanitarian reasoning is deeply flawed.

The humanitarian mission to Haiti, undertaken by 10,000 NGOs, is supported by an unpopular military invasion, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which similarly justifies itself on humanitarian grounds.<sup>20</sup> Both have been made possible by the weakening of the Haitian state via American economic, political, and military interventions over the last three decades. The humanitarian intervention in Haiti, then, is conditionally financed by the same political powers that helped create the need for humanitarian intervention, and it is supported by a military occupation that justifies itself as the defender of humanitarianism.

### E. *Project-Based Development*

Each of the three case studies presented in this work suggests a common tactic in using individual projects to pursue the goal of Haitian development. This strategy to eventually create a “developed” Haitian state no longer in need of the services of 10,000 NGOs assumes a model of linear, independently developing states associated with 1950s and 1960s development thinkers like Walt W. Rostow.<sup>21</sup> If individual projects taken on en masse by thousands of independent charitable organizations are thought to eventually produce a developed state out of an underdeveloped one, the underlying assumption must be that injections of capital are sufficient for Haiti to evolve and eventually become “developed.” This, again, reflects an understanding of development as being essentially technical rather than the complex result of interconnected political and economic variables. Projects focused on education, like the Village Savings and Loan Association, CARE’s financial education program, are injections into Haiti’s human capital; PiH’s Mirebalais hospital is an outside injection of physical capital, as is work in areas like sanitation, housing, and infrastructure.<sup>22</sup> Partners in Health partially avoids this pitfall because its mission is more service-based and is focused on providing immediate health care to Haitians who could not otherwise afford it; thus, the Mirebalais hospital is motivated to address a clear and immediate human rights issue. However, it only marginally serves the long-term goal of developing the Haitian state and economy to a point where outside injections are no longer necessary: PiH wants to give the hospital over to the Haitian state, but the state does not have the resources to run it. Even an

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17 Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfia, eds. *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* (New York: Zone, 2010), 13.

18 Fassin and Pandolfia, *Contemporary States of Emergency*, 286.

19 Fassin and Pandolfia, *Contemporary States of Emergency*, 269.

20 United Nations, “United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH),” *un.org*, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minustah>

21 Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 4-7.

22 Partners in Health, “Mirebalais Hospital in Mirebalais Haiti,” *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/mirebalais>

ideal project is unable to transcend the limits imposed by the extent of Haiti's underdevelopment.

Project-based development ignores the ways in which Haitian underdevelopment has come about both simultaneously with and as a component of comparative “overdevelopment” in other states. Modern Haiti began as a plantation-based slave economy for the benefit of more developed foreign states; it suffered for generations under the weight of a massive indemnity to a more developed state. After its dictators fell, it suffered under 1980s structural adjustment programs that compelled it to remove its protective agricultural tariffs, and subjected its important agricultural sector to impossible competition with the vastly more developed American agricultural industry.<sup>23</sup> Project-based development ignores the international relationships that have produced and sustained Haiti's underdevelopment, and assumes quality of life in Haiti can be improved across a broad set of metrics through domestic capital injections. NGOs in Haiti are themselves evidence of these dynamics: the US has sustained numerous natural disasters in the years since the Haitian earthquake, such as Hurricane Sandy, but Haiti is not capable of sending 10,000 NGOs onto US soil to pursue whatever objectives their financial supporters deem most important for US development.

## F. Conclusion

NGOs are criticized for being unregulated, but this is only partly the case. A more nuanced and directed critique is that NGOs are not legally well regulated, but are highly restrained by their need for capital to initiate and maintain development projects. This creates an economic constraint on NGOs that forces them to negotiate their policies and projects with more powerful actors who can provide them with resources—actors who, by definition, have benefitted from the status quo political economy. The way in which NGOs become conduits for soft power or corporate interests, then, is an indirect process that depends on forcing certain limitations on NGOs while allowing them enough freedom to maintain their image as independent bodies. This framework allows holders of political or economic capital to channel their resources into a less regulated environment, thereby removing capital from sectors where it would face greater scrutiny or restrictions.

## III. Partners in Health

### A. Introduction and History

In 1987, Paul Farmer, Jim Yong Kim, Ophelia Dahl, Thomas J. White, and Todd McCormack founded Partners in Health (PiH) to help facilitate the work they were already doing in Haiti. The original Haitian arm of PiH, called *Zanmi Lasante* (ZL) in Haitian, began as a way to provide health care to residents of Cange, a village in Central Haiti. Cange's history is representative of Haiti's complex relationship with aid and development: in 1956 its residents, most of whom were subsistence farmers, were forcibly relocated from their farms to make room for a dam on the Artibonite River.<sup>24</sup> The dam, funded by international NGOs in the name of Haitian development,

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales, eds. *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2012), 25.

<sup>24</sup> Partners in Health, “Partners in Health History,” *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/partners-in-health-history>

provided electrical power to Port-au-Prince at the cost of the livelihood and independence of Cange's farmers. When Farmer and Dahl arrived in 1983, according to PiH, conditions in Cange were some of the worst in the world. When in 1993 PiH opened an inpatient facility and began screening for HIV, they found that more than 40% of local residents were HIV-positive, and more than half of these patients also suffered from tuberculosis.<sup>25</sup>

PiH cites three primary goals that resulted from this experience: "to care for our patients, to alleviate the root causes of disease, and to share lessons learned with other countries and NGOs."<sup>26</sup> PiH explicitly connects health care to poverty and recognizes primary health care as essential to development. PiH tries to alleviate poverty by providing primary health care to those otherwise too poor to afford it, and simultaneously tries to reduce poverty by providing health care jobs and education. Pursuing PiH's third goal, Farmer used the proceeds from his 1993 MacArthur Foundation genius grant to set up an advocacy based arm of PiH, the Institute for Health and Social Justice (IHSJ), to focus on research and advocate for legislative change representative of PiH's experience in the field.<sup>27</sup>

Haiti is PiH's flagship project, but the model developed in Cange has been duplicated in twelve other countries. PiH's first major expansion brought them to Peru in 1994, where PiH workers discovered a new drug resistant strain of TB. The World Health Organization later placed Kim and Farmer in charge of the international response to multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB).<sup>28</sup> Tuberculosis and HIV treatment in particular have been major imperatives for PiH in Haiti.

## B. *Financial Review*

In 2010, after the Haitian earthquake, PiH saw its revenues increase dramatically, and is today still working to spend the windfall of donations it received in that year.<sup>29</sup> 53% of PiH's expenses in 2011 went to its projects in Haiti and 94% of its donations went to program expenses, while only 6% went to administration costs and development of the organization.<sup>30</sup> PiH claims that health-focused nonprofits allocate on average 79% of revenues for program activities, and 21% toward administration costs.<sup>31</sup>

All data on PiH's program expenses has been independently audited, and the yearly audits are openly available to the public on PiH's website.<sup>32</sup> These numbers show efficient and ethical use of donations, but this is only half the story of PiH's success.

### i. *Accompagnateurs*

The real success story is in the NGO's unique model, created in Cange and then exported to other countries: rather than hiring large numbers of expensive American experts to fly to Haiti,

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25 Partners in Health, "Zanmi Lasante Project History," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/Haiti-history>

26 Partners in Health, "What We Do," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/what-we-do>

27 Partners in Health, "Advocacy & Policy," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/advocacy>

28 Partners in Health, "Partners in Health History," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/partners-in-health-history>

29 Partners in Health, "2011 Annual Report," *pih.org*, 2011, [http://parthealth.3cdn.net/283c794b2e83589919\\_b4m62spy6.pdf](http://parthealth.3cdn.net/283c794b2e83589919_b4m62spy6.pdf), 31.

30 Partners in Health, "2011 Annual Report," 32.

31 Partners in Health, "Frequently Asked Questions," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/faq>.

32 Partners in Health, "Annual Reports," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/annual-reports>.

PiH focuses on training locals to administer care. According to PiH, 98% of their approximately 14,500-member staff comes from the country in which PiH is working.<sup>33</sup> PiH's annual report for 2011 explains, "The use of community health workers (CHWs) is widespread. Systems for training, supporting and supervising, and paying them, however, are not."<sup>34</sup> This means PiH is able to solve two problems simultaneously: while providing health care, they can also provide jobs to CHWs (called *accompagnateurs* in Haiti). "Before joining us," Farmer says, "the majority of PIH's 15,000 employees never held a salaried job in what economists term the 'formal sector.'"<sup>35</sup>

This avoids one of the major pitfalls with foreign aid: careers. As the aid apparatus grows in size it can be seen increasingly as a complex, one that provides jobs for tens of thousands of American and other international experts, some of whom are paid hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. This kind of financial incentive poses a clear conflict of interest, where the absence of underdeveloped nations with weak states—such as Haiti—could mean huge financial losses for experts, private firms, and NGOs that rely on contracts paid out in aid dollars. A solution that takes ten years is more profitable to foreign actors than one resolved over ten months. Humanitarians must be accountable for the money they make through humanitarianism. The standard aid model pays foreign firms and NGOs to provide aid to local actors in an underdeveloped area; under the PiH model, the primary beneficiaries of both care and financial reward are local.

## ii. Mirebalais Hospital

Just short of \$35 million of PiH's \$61.79 million spent on program costs for Haiti went toward the construction of the Hôpital Universitaire de Mirebalais (HUM).<sup>36</sup> Consistent with the goals and development model utilized by PiH, the new hospital will provide primary care to an estimated 185,000 Haitians in the area around Mirebalais while simultaneously acting as a training center to educate Haitian doctors and nurses.<sup>37</sup> Construction on the hospital is complete as of November 2012.<sup>38</sup>

One potential issue with this model is that it relies so heavily on yearly international donations. In the HUM, the salaries of Haitian workers will be paid in exact proportion to the PiH donors list and are therefore dependent on foreign individuals, states, corporations, and multilateral institutions. This is an inevitable problem of civil society taking on the unfulfilled responsibilities of the state, but a potentially temporary problem that can be solved by eventually turning over both the control and the expenses of the hospital to the Haitian state. Farmer is conscious of this problem: in 2003, he testified before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and condemned US policies that prevent aid money from going through the Haitian Ministry of Health.<sup>39</sup>

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33 Partners in Health, "Partners in Health 2011 Annual Report," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/your-support>.

34 Partners in Health, "2011 Annual Report," 5.

35 James Hamblin, "The Moral Medical Mission: Partners In Health, 25 Years On," *The Atlantic*, October 1, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/10/the-moral-medical-mission-partners-in-health-25-years-on/262974>.

36 Partners in Health, "2011 Annual Report," 32-35.

37 Partners in Health, "Mirebalais Hospital in Mirebalais Haiti," *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/mirebalais>.

38 Partners in Health, "World Bank President Jim Yong Kim Celebrates Hospital Construction," *pih.org*, November 8, 2012, <http://www.pih.org/news/entry/world-bank-president-jim-yong-kim-celebrates-hospital-construction>.

39 Paul Farmer, "Testimony of Doctor Paul Farmer," Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, July 15, 2003, <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FarmerTestimony030715.pdf>, 5.

This suggests a unique dynamic between Partners in Health and the Haitian state. While other NGOs are subject to some evaluation of their “non-governmental” label due to their use of state funding, gift-in-kind donations, and well-paid foreign experts, PiH is firmly rooted in civil society. Because the personnel of ZL is 98% Haitian (though its funding is international), ZL is most appropriately seen as a part of *Haitian* civil society.<sup>40</sup> In this way, PiH and ZL avoid concerns about American or international “experts” collecting money, and then spending that money, on behalf of the Haitian people.

ZL still faces a moral hazard. The success of ZL means it is effectively doing a significant part of the job of the Haitian Ministry of Health, and this contains risks. The more than 10,000 NGOs present in Haiti have effectively created a parallel government to the Haitian state. Though ZL is not an exception to this, it can again be credited for its local *accompagnateur*-centered model, which has at least avoided much of the animosity other large organizations receive from a Haitian state increasingly concerned about its sovereignty. Farmer is aware that the Haitian state must eventually take responsibility for health care. Taking over the health care responsibilities of the state risks disincentivizing state investment in health by removing a political vulnerability that otherwise might lead to Haitian citizens demanding their rights from their government. This is not to suggest that ZL was wrong to treat sick Haitians—Farmer and PiH are correct in believing that granting Haitian citizens their right to health care is more important than formal arguments over whose responsibility it is. It only suggests that all humanitarian interventions carry broader risks and implications, and humanitarians must be accountable for the hidden costs implicit in the changes they create. Conscious of these risks, Farmer should be credited for forming the IHSJ at personal expense to help advocate for changes in aid policy toward Haiti.

### C. *Access to Information*

There is no evidence in PiH’s website or annual reports of aggregations or misleading data, nor is there information in their Form 990 that conflicts with more publicly visible data. PiH’s public image is simple and the quantitative data used across their website and literature is easy to verify (for example, the percent of revenues going to program expenses, or the ratio of American to Haitian employees). Their annual reports give detailed breakdowns of their revenue sources and expenses. While deeper details are not public (it is possible to see PiH’s overall expenditures on constructing the MUH, for example, but more specific information as to how the money was spent is not visible), this is less of a problem for PiH than for other NGOs simply due to its model in Haiti: employing an overwhelmingly Haitian workforce eliminates any suspicion of overpaying American contractors or experts, for example.

PiH lists its form 990s and their respective audits on its website, alongside annual reports with graphs and charts detailing its revenue and expenses.<sup>41</sup> Providing an exhaustive form 990 that may contain deeply buried information can be seen as a strategy for creating the appearance of transparency while hiding embarrassing data in plain sight. This is a problem for organizations that misrepresent themselves, but PiH makes no clear effort to do so. In fact, a deeper search into PiH’s financial documents shows even deeper dedication and benevolence than their outward face: Paul Farmer apparently works an average of 35 hours per week for PiH, and receives no compensation whatsoever.<sup>42</sup> A well-known medical anthropologist with Farmer’s history could

40 Partners in Health, “Our Work in Haiti,” *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/where/haiti>.

41 Partners in Health, “Partners in Health Annual Reports,” *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/pages/annual-reports/>

42 Internal Revenue Service, “2010 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Partners in

easily become one of the top paid experts in his or her field; instead, Farmer works a full time job for free. Ophelia Dahl, CEO and President of PiH, received a salary of \$90,620 in 2010 for working approximately sixty hours per week.<sup>43</sup> If this is her only income, the US census places her in the fourth income quintile (between the top 60% and 80% of US earners) despite managing an organization that collected \$151.9 million in 2010 and \$87.5 million in 2011.<sup>44</sup>

Dahl, despite being CEO, is not the best-paid member of PiH—Donella Rapier, the Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer of PiH, was paid \$163,980 in 2011.<sup>45</sup> Three other employees make over \$100,00 per year.

#### D. Context and Conclusion

The success of PiH in no way justifies the aid apparatus or suggests that foreign aid, as it presently exists, works to achieve desirable effects in underdeveloped nations such as Haiti. The goal of crafting good public policy in the area of development is not to allow for optimal social outcomes if and only if the right combination of minds and ethics come together to craft solutions to development problems—it is to simultaneously enable and promote optimal outcomes while completely preventing disastrous ones. The aid apparatus has done nothing to promote organizations like PiH; it has only allowed for it. The fact that PiH began its work in Cange—a village destroyed by an international development project—is an indication of the range of results under aid.

PiH has avoided many of the potential pitfalls of humanitarian aid by largely sidestepping the typical model of an international aid-based institution: specifically, it avoids the ethically problematic act of collecting and spending money on behalf of foreigners in an underdeveloped nation because PiH consists almost entirely of local actors. Zanmi Lasante, in many ways, is actually a Haitian organization: counting accompagnateurs, 98% of ZL's personnel are Haitian.<sup>46</sup> Self-reporting is still an issue, but is made simpler for ZL in Haiti because its direction, policies, and projects are straightforward, and its finances and fundraising are honest. As a consequence, PiH fits the label of “Non-Governmental Organization” better than many of its contemporaries: it is a nonprofit organization rooted in the civil society of the country where it operates, designed to solve a specific set of problems and advocate for policy change that will make the organization itself obsolete.

In seeking to help Haiti reconstruct, the Mirebalais Hospital project has provided PiH a way to spend their increased revenues quickly while maintaining the model that allows them to leverage donations against two reciprocal development problems simultaneously: primary health care and employment.

The Cange model developed by PiH should be considered the new model for development. Farmer told the Atlantic, “We’re trying to envision: What would an NGO look like if every service project were fully leveraged by a training effort for local people?”<sup>47</sup> A better question might be: what would development look like if every NGO utilized this model?

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Health,” *pih.org*, 2011, [http://parthealth.3cdn.net/1051d53541ac65de4a\\_02om6ckqx.pdf](http://parthealth.3cdn.net/1051d53541ac65de4a_02om6ckqx.pdf), 7.

43 IRS, “2010 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Partners in Health,” 7.

44 David Johnson, “Income Gap: Is it Widening?” *US Census Bureau Blogs*, October 15, 2011, <http://blogs.census.gov/2011/09/15/income-gap-is-it-widening>; Partners in Health, “2011 Annual Report.”

45 IRS, “2010 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Partners in Health,” 8.

46 Partners in Health, “Our Work in Haiti,” *pih.org*, <http://www.pih.org/where/haiti>.

47 Hamblin, “The Moral Medical Mission: Partners In Health, 25 Years On.”

## IV. Save the Children

### A. *Introduction and History*

The Save the Children Fund began in England, in 1919.<sup>48</sup> Eglantyne Jebb and her sister Dorothy Buxton sought a way to limit the suffering of children in Germany and Austria-Hungary after the end of World War I, when food was scarce due to the continuing British naval blockade.<sup>49</sup> The Fund collected money to provide gift-in-kind aid with a focus on the needs of children. In 1923, Jebb authored a series of five statements titled the “Declaration of the Rights of the Child” focusing on the need to prioritize the needs of children.<sup>50</sup> The Declaration was published in StC’s magazine and then, in 1924, the League of Nations adopted it as guiding principles for the treatment of children. This became the basis for the United Nations 1959 statement of the same name, which is still in use today.<sup>51</sup>

Within two years of its founding in 1919, Save the Children had been endorsed by the Pope and had developed new fundraising techniques that made use of the media, such as full-page newspaper advertisements, film footage, and later on, child sponsorship. StC was originally conceived as a temporary organization to protect and feed children endangered by the British blockade, but repeated humanitarian crises through the 1920s convinced Jebb and Buxton that it needed to become permanent.<sup>52</sup>

StC is an umbrella organization, including 30 different member organizations and one international organization.<sup>53</sup> The US branch of StC was founded in 1932, four years after Jebb’s death. StC has worked in Haiti since 1978.<sup>54</sup> This report will focus on StC’s USA branch and its work in Haiti since the 2010 earthquake.

### B. *Access to Information*

#### i. *Telling Stories*

A Red Cross worker in Haiti, Julie Sell, explained to NPR in January 2012 that it was difficult to tell donors exactly how their money was spent: “One way we can show that impact is by telling the stories of Haitians and the people that we helped . . . here is a life that you have helped to change.”<sup>55</sup> These stories are, principally, narratives that describe a way in which one NGO project affected a single life in its target area. Stories are problematic in that they appear to communicate something about the impact of an NGO’s work but, by nature of being narratives written about single events from a single perspective, they contain no complete or detailed information that

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48 Save the Children UK, “History: Save the Children UK” *savethechildren.org.uk*, <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/history>

49 Save the Children UK, “History: Save the Children UK” *savethechildren.org.uk*.

50 Save the Children Norway, “Save the Children: History,” *scnorway.ru*, <http://www.scnorway.ru/eng/history/>

51 Save the Children Norway, “Save the Children: History.”

52 Save the Children, “History: Save the Children UK” *savethechildren.org.uk*.

53 Save the Children International, “Trustees’ Report and financial statements 2011,” *savethechildren.net*, 2011, [http://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/SCI%20trustee%20report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/SCI%20trustee%20report_Final.pdf), 2.

54 Save the Children, “Haiti – Save the Children,” *savethechildren.org*, <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6151435/k.B1C9/Haiti.htm>

55 Marisa Peñaloza and Carrie Kahn, “The Challenge of Measuring Relief Aid to Haiti,” NPR, January 17, 2012, <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/17/144962313/the-challenge-of-measuring-relief-aid-to-haiti>

could be used to analyze specific projects or to draw larger conclusions about an NGO's effect on development outcomes. As with other types of NGO reporting, stories also require that observers trust NGOs to accurately report on their own behavior. The stories appearing on an NGO's website or in its literature are written by the organization itself, and even if these stories are factually true, they may obscure important details or shortcomings of projects in order to focus on the successful elements of a single case.

StC utilizes stories as one form of communication to current and potential donors about the ways it spends money. CEO & President Carolyn Miles' travel blog, "Logging Miles," is prominently featured on StC's website and provides many examples of using stories as a means to communicate StC's impact.<sup>56</sup> "Logging Miles," which describes Miles as "a champion for children," is representative of these same types of "stories." It mostly consists of brief anecdotal experiences from the CEO's visits to developing countries where StC is active.<sup>57</sup> One recent (February 8, 2013) entry is on Haiti: "There was a very different feeling, a palpable sense of hope in the air this time—especially from Haitians themselves." It stresses how important Haiti is "for Save the Children."<sup>58</sup> The blog entry tells an unverifiable, subjective story of "hope in the air" at a time when other major news sources are still publishing stories about increasing animosity in Haiti toward NGOs, dwindling funds, and stalled recovery efforts. There is no clear information in the entry about StC projects in Haiti, or to what extent StC has contributed to Haitian reconstruction. One entry describes Miles meeting a woman in a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan. This entry does allude to a specific StC program, which reportedly helped this pregnant mother with food and medical care for her new baby, but does not give any substantive information on the program.<sup>59</sup> The only clear information put forth by the story is that StC assisted a single woman and her newborn, though even the nature of this assistance is vague. Another entry shows Miles in Mali holding a malnourished child named "Moussa."<sup>60</sup> It continues to describe how an StC worker had reported the child in ill health, and StC sent out a car to collect the baby and his eighteen-year-old mother. They were then shipped ten kilometers away to a facility where StC and UNICEF workers could treat the child's respiratory infection and malnutrition. The blog entry gives no data that could contribute to an analysis of StC programs in Mali, nor does it clarify whether or not Moussa was found and cared for as part of any normal StC project in the area. Even as a story it is inconsistent: it conflicts with another version also written by Miles for USAID, where she says Moussa's mother was the one who transported him to a care facility.<sup>61</sup>

StC operates across 120 different countries.<sup>62</sup> Even a completely accurate, thorough story on a single success represents the experience of one aid recipient, in one place, at one time. Fully analyzing an organization's transparency requires an examination of the way that information is presented rather than just whether or not information is available at all. In this model, stories

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56 Carolyn Miles, "Logging Miles," savethechildren.org, <http://loggingcarolynmiles.savethechildren.org/>

57 Save the Children, "Where's Carolyn?" savethechildren.org, <http://loggingcarolynmiles.savethechildren.org/2011/08/31/wheres-carolyn/>

58 Carolyn Miles, "Finding Hope in Haiti," savethechildren.org, February 8, 2013, <http://loggingcarolynmiles.savethechildren.org/2013/02/08/finding-hope-in-haiti/>

59 Carolyn Miles, "In Refugee Camps, Basics Become Luxuries," savethechildren.org, April 4, 2013, <http://loggingcarolynmiles.savethechildren.org/2013/04/04/in-refugee-camps-basics-become-luxuries/>

60 Carolyn Miles, "Moussa's story," savethechildren.org, August 28, 2012, <http://loggingcarolynmiles.savethechildren.org/2012/08/28/moussas-story/>

61 Carolyn Miles, "Helping Families Build Resilience and a Better Future for Kids," *usaid.gov*, December 4, 2012 <http://blog.usaid.gov/2012/12/helping-families-build-resilience-and-a-better-future-for-kids/>

62 Save the Children, "Where We Work," savethechildren.org, <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6146359/>

are superfluous information that can be used to buttress an NGO's public face with information that highlights the organization's success, expertise, and importance. Personal stories create the appearance of having provided evidence for an organization's effectiveness. Stories, then, can actually reduce transparency by diluting more comprehensive information, even when such information is available.

The motivation for providing ambiguous stories of success over thorough project analyses can be explained by the economic constraints placed on NGOs. StC needs money to launch projects and to survive as an organization. This places them in competition with other charitable organizations for donor funds, which in turn ties their ability to generate development projects to their public image, thus incentivizing a lack of transparency. Due to competition over donations, an NGO that creates sympathy among potential donors and puts itself forward as an unimpeachable champion of the poor is more likely to recruit new donors than an NGO that publicizes harsher self-critiques and realistic project analyses. This is especially the case with large NGOs like StC that have many corporate sponsors.<sup>63</sup> Corporate sponsors give money to NGOs partly to associate their own image with that of a charity, so the more positive an NGO's public image is, the more attractive it is to large corporate donors. This encourages NGOs to publicize positive details about their projects and conceal failures (stories fit this model perfectly). StC engages in corporate partnerships that show how close this relationship really is: a corporate partnership involves a joint media campaign that advertises both StC and its corporate donor.<sup>64</sup>

This economic constraint (the need for donor funding in order to influence development) means that the mere process of selecting stories leads to partiality. A story about food aid, for example, might describe a malnourished Haitian receiving life-saving sustenance from the NGO telling the story; it would probably not describe a Haitian farmer losing his job and becoming malnourished as a result of the broader economic effects of monetized food aid. "Moussa's Story" does not say whether it is normal for StC to send a car ten kilometers if they learn of a malnourished child in Mali, nor does it say whether Miles' trip was part of any regular, specific StC program in the region.<sup>65</sup> Even if this is part of a specific project, showing one success does nothing to prove the project's overall impact.

The way StC publishes stories without simultaneously publishing any thorough impact analysis of its projects is one example of how NGOs market themselves and their products, and how this marketing differs from that of private firms. Whereas private firms normally trade a good or service with a consumer in exchange for money, an international NGO exchanges money with a donor in a developed country (filling half the consumer's function) in exchange for the promise that it will turn the donor's money into goods or services in the developed world (filling the other half of the consumer's role, as a separate recipient). The purchasers and recipients of an NGO's programs are disconnected, and in almost all cases the only party who can transmit information between them is the NGO itself. Because there are no legal constraints on NGOs requiring that they accurately depict how donations will translate into goods or services, and because NGOs are responsible for self-reporting, they can effectively create two disconnected products: actual development projects in developing countries and, separately and without necessarily any connection, stories about these projects that are presented to donors. Donors pay

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63 Save the Children, "Corporate Partners – Save the Children," [savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6148397/k.C77B/Corporate_Partners.htm), [http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6148397/k.C77B/Corporate\\_Partners.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6148397/k.C77B/Corporate_Partners.htm)

64 Save the Children, "Corporate Partnerships' Best Practice Sharing," [http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/CORPORATE\\_PARTNERSHIPS\\_BEST\\_PRACTICE\\_%20SHARING.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/CORPORATE_PARTNERSHIPS_BEST_PRACTICE_%20SHARING.PDF)

65 Carolyn Miles, "Moussa's story."

for the narratives provided by NGOs and try to gauge the accuracy of these narratives based on an NGO's perceived reputation.

## ii. Child Sponsorship

StC continues to offer a sponsorship program as a form of fundraising. StC's promotional material says that "through child sponsorship, two lives are changed forever: yours and the life of your sponsored child," and that sponsorship "creates a unique bond between you and a child in need" and "fosters a meaningful relationship through letters and other correspondence."<sup>66</sup> But a yearlong investigation by the Chicago Tribune ending in 1998 exposed StC's sponsorship program as a fundraising tactic in which individual children are not actually sponsored:

As Save the Children executives later acknowledged, there is no guarantee that a sponsor's dollar will ever reach that sponsor's child, and no way of knowing whether it ever does...Still, charity officials acknowledge that nothing ever has been found to raise money more effectively than the face of a child...But what those sponsors likely do not know is that SCF [Save the Children Fund] does nothing to ensure that a sponsor's contributions necessarily find their way to their sponsored child or even the child's community.<sup>67</sup>

StC now acknowledges that it does not sponsor individual children.<sup>68</sup> The process of donating, however, still goes through a step-by-step process where a donor selects a child by searching through geographic regions, age groups, and specific pictures and backstories of children. A donor can go through this process without finding the specific line on StC's website (which is bulky with stories and superfluous information) that explains that a sponsored child is not necessarily going to be the recipient of a sponsor's donations, and so a sponsor may reasonably assume by the end of the activity that StC is signing a clear contract with the donor to ensure that a monthly sponsorship will—as StC claims—"provide nutrition and health, childhood development and education" to a sponsored child.<sup>69</sup> The process of choosing a child to sponsor is designed to imply that donations will be used in a way StC knows they may not be used. Other than to mislead potential donors, there is no clear reason why such a sponsorship program would even exist. The program would much more accurately be described as tithing to StC, not sponsoring a child.

Even if this sponsorship program were more transparent and a donor's money were either transferred directly to a sponsored child or given to a sponsored child in the equivalent form of vital services, targeting lucky individuals to be removed from an underprivileged environment does not help the goal of creating positive development outcomes for a struggling state. Worse, if the process were literal, it would be unfair and exploitive: in sponsorship programs children are photographed to compete for donors based on nothing more than their physical appearance

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66 Save the Children, "Sponsor a Child," savethechildren.org, <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6146367/>

67 Hugh Delliós, "For Sponsors, Image and Reality Worlds Apart," Chicago Tribune, March 15, 1998, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1998-03-15/business/9803150056\\_1\\_scf-child-sponsorship-despair-and-hope,1-2](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1998-03-15/business/9803150056_1_scf-child-sponsorship-despair-and-hope,1-2).

68 Save the Children, "Frequently Asked Questions About Sponsorship," savethechildren.org, <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6247781/>

69 Save the Children, "Sponsorship Home Page," savethechildren.org, <https://sponsor.savethechildren.org/>

and a brief backstory. Personal appeal to foreign sponsors is not an ethical or fair variable for deciding which children in a community are educated or fed.

### iii. Common Data Presentations

StC's use of quantitative data reinforces the argument that economic constraints encourage a lack of transparency. One number, "\$1 a day," is often repeated across StC's literature: as the minimum price of sponsorship, StC claims a single dollar can "provide nutrition and health, childhood development and education" to a child.<sup>70</sup> This is a conveniently simple and clear message to donors about what they can buy for their donations, but its simplicity and clarity comes at the cost of accuracy: the claim makes no differentiation between purchasing power parity or basic cost of living across the 120 countries StC works in.<sup>71</sup> These countries range from developing nations, like Haiti, Mali, and Zimbabwe, to developed nations with extremely high HDI ratings, including the US and UK.<sup>72</sup> Ignoring the huge differences between developing countries also promotes a stereotype of the developing world as a single mass space where a few American dollars are powerful enough to completely change an individual's life. Even in the lowest HDI environment, the promise of what StC can do with a dollar a day is misleading. Children in developing countries cannot be individually removed from their environments to receive a modern "developed" lifestyle with a small injection of money, a fact that StC understands well enough to utilize a community-based approach in designing projects, the very reason StC does not actually sponsor individual children, despite its promotional materials.<sup>73</sup>

Another commonly promoted piece of quantitative information is a pie chart that details StC's expenses. The pie chart, which appears at the bottom of every StC webpage and is prominently displayed at the head of StC's financials, states that 89.1% of funds go to program services, 6.4% go to fundraising, and 4.5% go to management.<sup>74</sup> "Program services" are not clearly defined, and having the bulk of an NGO's expenditures in the category does not discount the possibility of poor spending habits or ensure that program funds are mostly arriving at their intended communities. Land Rovers, which are increasingly seen as a sign of NGO opulence in Haiti, could be listed as program services if they are defined as necessary items for transportation, but StC does not provide this level of detail on its own expenses (nor is it legally obligated to do so).

The chart implies that 89.1% of a donor's money will go directly to program expenses, but this is misleading. Because much of StC's revenue comes directly from corporate sponsorships and from the state (and carries specific limitations on how it can be spent), a much smaller portion of sponsorship donations will actually go to programs. Some former members of StC have suggested that this is intentionally deceptive. Pam Winnick, former general counsel for StC, told ABC that the actual percent of donor funds that go to program expenses was somewhere between zero and thirty percent, and that StC's expenditures pie chart is misleading advertising.<sup>75</sup>

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70 Save the Children, "Sponsorship Home Page."

71 Save the Children, "Where We Work," [savethechildren.org, http://www.savethechildren.org/site/.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6146359/k.9C15/Where\\_We\\_Work.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6146359/k.9C15/Where_We_Work.htm)

72 Save the Children, "Where We Work."

73 Save the Children, "Frequently Asked Questions About Sponsorship."

74 Save the Children, "Financial Information," [savethechildren.org, http://www.savethechildren.org/site/.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6229505/k.5C4E/Financial\\_Information.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6229505/k.5C4E/Financial_Information.htm)

75 Primetime Live, "Who's Saving the Children?" ABC News, December 20, 1995, <http://www.netnomad.com/abc.html>

While state-based donations come with constraints on how they can be spent, StC is in no way legally accountable for its use of individual donations, regardless of what it tells sponsors. An ABC report found evidence of large-scale fraud in StC sponsorships, revealing that several low-income communities in the US were generating hundreds of thousands of dollars for StC through sponsorships while receiving little or even nothing in return. Primetime host Sam Donaldson, referring to then StC President Charles McCormick, said:

As to where the sponsor money went, McCormick acknowledged that a large proportion of it is used for staff salaries and other management and fund-raising activities. That's because other funds Save receives from U.S. government and foundation grants are limited in how they can be used.<sup>76</sup>

Speaking to author Michael Maren, Shelby Miller, a former StC consultant, said that the amount of sponsorship money reaching sponsored children is “woefully inadequate.”<sup>77</sup> Maren claims that StC’s category of “program expenses” is also exceptionally broad, and may include rents and salaries that donors would assume fall under administration and management costs. The ABC report also found that some of StC’s program expenses were for fundraising, including a \$105,000 liaison in D.C. to help locate fundraising sources.<sup>78</sup>

Another pie chart appears to detail StC’s expenses, but its breakdown uses broad categories like “Child Poverty and Livelihood” and “Child Rights Governance.” Again, these categories give no substantive information that could be used to analyze specific StC projects or overall spending habits.<sup>79</sup>

### C. Financial Review

#### i. Programs

StC programs in Haiti emphasize the needs of children and mothers. Its programs focus primarily on three areas: health and nutrition, education, and child protection.<sup>80</sup> Since the earthquake, StC has also helped to provide emergency services like access to clean water and sanitation.<sup>81</sup> The main sectors defined by StC for their expenses in Haiti over the last three years were, in order: Education, Health, Water / Sanitation, and “General Emergency.”<sup>82</sup>

StC identifies the Quality Education Initiative as the “centerpiece” of their educational work in Haiti.<sup>83</sup> The Initiative project includes: training teachers; physically rebuilding classrooms and school sanitation facilities; and early childhood education, including a subproject focused on

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76 Primetime Live, “Who’s Saving the Children?”

77 Michael Maren, *The Road to Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity* (New York: Free, 1997), 143.

78 Maren, *The Road to Hell*, 142.

79 Save the Children, “Financial Information.”

80 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After: Sustaining Our Commitment to Children,” February 2013, [http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/HAITI\\_YEAR%20THREE%20REPORT\\_FINAL\\_2-2013.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/HAITI_YEAR%20THREE%20REPORT_FINAL_2-2013.PDF)

81 Save the Children, “Haiti – Save the Children,” [savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6151435/k.B1C9/Haiti.htm), <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6151435/k.B1C9/Haiti.htm>

82 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 14.

83 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 7.

literacy.<sup>84</sup> The Education Initiative, however, is impossible to analyze in a meaningful way given the limited information provided by StC, which uses aggregations, stories, and vague numbers to describe its impact.<sup>85</sup>

StC manages health care clinics in Leogane and Port-au-Prince, where they help treat illnesses, care for children suffering from malnutrition, administer vaccinations, and advise mothers on maternal health issues.<sup>86</sup> StC has also created “child-friendly spaces” to support child development and psychological health.<sup>87</sup> In describing many of these projects StC again uses vague data or is simply unclear: StC says it created “75 mother’s clubs,” but says nothing about what these entail.<sup>88</sup> StC uses aggregations to inflate its role in providing medical, health, and sanitation services in Haiti. For example: “The Ministry of Public Health and Population vaccinated over 11,600 children in 2012, with support for basic services and the vaccination campaigns provided by our staff.”<sup>89</sup> This makes it unclear to what extent StC participated in the number of vaccinations listed, or to what extent their assistance was necessary or useful. StC has “11 clinics,” but does not report on the size of these clinics or give further details that could be used to analyze their impact, perform any cost-benefit analysis, or consider opportunity costs in their spending.<sup>90</sup>

Emergency services, health care, the creation of child friendly spaces and maternal education programs all fulfill a service void and may improve the lives of the people they reach, but have no clear role in leading to sustainable development in Haiti and thus to a “developed Haiti” that would produce these services on its own. Emergency services, including any services that take over state roles and responsibilities, make sense in the immediate aftermath of a disaster that wipes out the state’s capacity to perform basic services. Food aid, for example, is needed when a disaster wipes out local access to food: after the crisis has ended and local capacity returns, continuing food aid can have dramatic effects on the local economy (as it did in Haiti throughout the ‘80s and ‘90s).<sup>91</sup> The services provided by StC’s regular projects are not emergency services; they are long-term services intended to limit the chronic suffering of Haitians. Partners in Health also performs functions that cannot be fulfilled by the Haitian state in the near future, but PiH has simultaneously made great efforts to work with the state (for example, in their plan to turn over the Mirebalais hospital to the Haitian Ministry of Health).<sup>92</sup>

StC does not work through the Haitian state on issues like health care or education; StC’s flagship Quality Education Initiative works exclusively in private education even though this is an area the Haitian state is struggling to develop.<sup>93</sup> The current Martelly administration has been outspoken about the need to build universal public education in Haiti.

Microfinance and other financial programs that target struggling business or communities in poverty (such as CARE’s Village and Savings Loan Association program), or large-scale

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84 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 7.

85 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 7-8.

86 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 5-6.

87 Save the Children, “Haiti’s Children One Year Later: A Country at a Crossroads,” [savethechildren.org, http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SAVE\\_THE\\_CHILDREN\\_HAITI\\_1YR\\_REPORT\\_DEC2010.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/SAVE_THE_CHILDREN_HAITI_1YR_REPORT_DEC2010.PDF), 9.

88 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 5.

89 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 6.

90 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 6.

91 Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales, eds. *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake* (Sterling: Kumarian Press, 2012), 25.

92 Partners in Health, “Mirebalais Hospital in Mirebalais Haiti,” [pih.org, http://www.pih.org/mirebalais](http://www.pih.org/mirebalais).

93 Save the Children, “Haiti Three Years After,” 7.

projects that create infrastructure or physical capital (such as PiH's Mirebalais Hospital) have a clear plan toward creating long term improvements in Haiti's economic structure or in Haiti's HDI indicators. StC's projects require StC to continue administering them indefinitely in order to maintain an impact on communities.

## ii. Funding

StC receives 28% of its funding, approximately \$170 million, from the US government.<sup>94</sup> StC openly celebrates 2011 as "the most successful year ever in corporate fundraising for Save the Children."<sup>95</sup> Their 2011 corporate sponsors included Goldman Sachs, Chevron, Walmart, and the PepsiCo Foundation.<sup>96</sup>

StC has a history of policy change based on the interests of large donors. During the Iraq war, the UK branch of StC released a statement that, according to *The Guardian*, "accused coalition forces of breaching the Geneva Convention by blocking humanitarian aid... Within hours of the statement appearing, the US wing was demanding its withdrawal."<sup>97</sup> *The Guardian* describes a response in which subservience to the US government was assumed.<sup>98</sup> The 28% of StC's budget provided by the US state is not a subsidy: it is paid, and can be revoked, at the discretion of USAID.

In 2010, StC also reversed its position in advocating for a soda tax (to help fight child obesity in the US) immediately after receiving a large donation from PepsiCo.<sup>99</sup> Save the Children responded briefly to the soda tax controversy, denying it as pure coincidence: "Corporate donors support us but do not pressure us. Our focus is children not soda tax policy. Back to saving more children now."<sup>100</sup> But, of course, soda tax policy *was* a focus of Save the Children before the PepsiCo donation, and claiming a moral high ground for humanitarian intentions deflects the issue without justifying or even explaining the policy shift. StC was also in talks with Coca-Cola about receiving possible financial support, which Carolyn Miles has claimed to be unrelated to StC's reversal.<sup>101</sup>

In another example, StC staff wrote a report in 2003 critical of privatization only to have "a chapter critical of private finance initiatives...deleted by senior figures in the charity just before it was printed."<sup>102</sup> StC backed off from the criticism due to concerns over the reaction of one of its major donors at the time, Serco.<sup>103</sup> Serco is a private company that manages traditionally public

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94 Save the Children, "Financial Information."

95 Save the Children, "A Sincere Thank You to Our 2011 Corporate Partners," [savethechildren.org, http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.7934739/k.8F8B/A\\_Sincere\\_Thank\\_You\\_to\\_Our\\_2011\\_Corporate\\_Partners.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.7934739/k.8F8B/A_Sincere_Thank_You_to_Our_2011_Corporate_Partners.htm)

96 Save the Children, "A Sincere Thank You to Our 2011 Corporate Partners."

97 Kevin Maguire, "How British charity was silenced on Iraq" *The Guardian*, November 27, 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2003/nov/28/charities.usnews>

98 Maguire, "How British charity was silenced on Iraq."

99 Marion Nestle, "Did Soda Companies Buy Off a Charity Advocating a Soda Tax?" *The Daily Green*, December 17, 2010, <http://www.thedailygreen.com/healthy-eating/blogs/healthy-food/corporate-responsibility>

100 Save the Children, "Corporate donors support us but do not pressure us. Our focus is children not soda tax policy. Back to saving more children now." December 15, 2010, Tweet, <http://twitter.com/savethechildren/statuses/15062886292398080>

101 William Neuman, "Save the Children Breaks With Soda Tax Effort," *The New York Times*, December 14, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/15/business/15soda.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/15/business/15soda.html?_r=1&emc=eta1)

102 Maguire, "How British charity was silenced on Iraq."

103 Maguire, "How British charity was silenced on Iraq."

services for the government such as schools, hospitals, and prisons. StC claims that Serco did not pressure them over the report, but assuming this is true implies Serco had more influence over StC, not less: funding StC actually led to the charity self-moderating and silencing itself internally before any criticism was even made.

The economic constraint placed on NGOs, then, does not always allow large state or corporate donors to have direct control over charities like StC. Instead, it creates a more indirect form of manipulation subtle enough for StC to see itself as completely independent from its donors needs even while it self-censors based on their needs. This is especially problematic in the above cases because they each involve the wellbeing of children, and in each case the needs of StC's donors were placed before its mandate.

### iii. CEO and Executive Compensation

StC's Form 990 for fiscal year 2011 shows exiting CEO / President Charles F. MacCormack (CEO until August) earned a total of \$474,186 for his work with StC over eight months, between January and August, while incoming CEO / President Carolyn Miles (CEO since September of that year) reportedly earned \$393,483 for fiscal year 2011 (Miles worked as COO for the eight months prior to MacCormack's departure).<sup>104</sup> Both are listed as working thirty-five hours per week. Fourteen other employees earned over \$200,000 in 2011, of whom five earned over \$250,000.<sup>105</sup> A 2012 study of 2010 nonprofit data executed by CharityNavigator lists median CEO salary for US-based charities as \$132,739, and the median salary for StC's \$600 million revenue (the largest category, over \$500 million) as \$477,920.<sup>106</sup>

Three things are immediately noticeable about the CEO and executive pay scale in StC. First, CEO pay in StC is significantly lower than in the US private sector: average CEO pay in the US was \$9.6 million in 2011.<sup>107</sup> Second, the CEO and executive pay in StC is still very high compared to US earnings. In 2011 earning over \$200,000 meant one was in the top 4.2% of households for income, and both Carolyn Miles and Charles MacCormack's salaries put them in the top 1% of households (for further comparison, median household income in the United States was \$50,054, and GDP per capita was \$49,100).<sup>108</sup> Third, CEO and executive pay in StC is enormously high when compared with the average earnings in Haiti: GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity is only \$1,300 in Haiti.<sup>109</sup>

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104 Internal Revenue Service, "2011 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Save the Children," savethechildren.org, 2012, [http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/STC\\_990\\_2011.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/STC_990_2011.PDF), 10-11.

105 IRS, "2011 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Save the Children," 11-13.

106 Charity Navigator, "2012 CEO Compensation Study," charitynavigator.org, November 2012, [http://www.charitynavigator.org/\\_\\_asset\\_\\_/studies/2012\\_CEO\\_Compensation\\_Study\\_Final.pdf](http://www.charitynavigator.org/__asset__/studies/2012_CEO_Compensation_Study_Final.pdf), 1; 6; IRS, "2011 Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax (Form 990): Save the Children," 1.

107 Christina Rexrode and Bernard Condon, "Average CEO Pay 2011 Nearly \$10 Million At Public Companies: AP Study," May 25, 2012, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/average-ceo-pay-2011\\_n\\_1545225.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/25/average-ceo-pay-2011_n_1545225.html)

108 Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, Jessica C. Smith "Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2011," census.gov, September 2012, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p60-243.pdf>, 31, 6.

New York Times, "What Percent Are You?" The New York Times, January 14, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/01/15/business/one-percent-map.html>; CIA, "CIA World Factbook: US," cia.gov, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>

109 CIA, "CIA World Factbook: Haiti," cia.gov, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>

One effective way to measure CEO pay is in terms of opportunity cost. Child sponsorship is one of the main StC programs, and StC claims it is so effective that it can change a child's life for \$1 a day.<sup>110</sup> The CEO and executive pay scale in StC is completely detached from the "\$1 a day" claims made by StC to its sponsors: that Miles' salary is the equivalent of 1,078 sponsorships is evidence of how disconnected the program claims in StC are from the executive pay packages.

#### *D. Context and Conclusion*

The preceding case study shows how existing legal constraints fail to compel StC to act with transparency or accountability. StC does not need to provide specific or accurate details to the public on its projects or activities in Haiti, nor does it need to be accountable in any way to the recipients of aid or individual donors (this lack of accountability is what allows a misleading fundraising program like child sponsorship to exist at all). NGOs are insufficiently restrained by the law, which, if changed, could be used to force them to maintain a higher degree of transparency and make them more accountable to civil society in both donor and recipient countries.

StC is not completely unrestrained, though: the need for capital represents a major limitation on any NGO's freedom. Development projects require capital. In order to affect development, NGOs need to seek out donors with economic power—capital—in order to improve the conditions of the economically powerless. International charity presents itself as a type of global redistribution of capital, but it is also a voluntary, selective redistribution guided and restricted by those with wealth to distribute.

This same economic constraint discourages transparency. For an individual project focused on making advancements within a specific sector, like the Mirebalais hospital built by Partners in Health, the transfer of donation revenues into project expenses can be direct. For a large international organization like StC, the sheer volume of money muddies the accounting: StC needs to meet overhead costs across 120 countries, and revenues from its largest donors come with restrictions on how they can be used. This makes transparency risky for StC. If it opens its books completely and its expenses negatively affect the public perception of StC's value as a charity, it risks losing both corporate sponsors and individual donors, which in turn means a major loss in its ability to influence development outcomes.

The preceding case study of StC and its relationships with its benefactors also shows that donor sovereignty is not equal for all donors. Compare the power over StC shown by the US state on Iraq, PepsiCo and Coke on soda taxes, or Serco on privatization, to the individual sponsor who discovers through an investigative report that sponsorship does not work in any of the ways StC's literature implies. Individual small donors also have no influence over StC's programs, while large donors can qualify ways in which their donations must be spent. A developed state can legally require NGOs to spend in certain ways, as is the case with monetized food aid, and corporate donors can negotiate to jointly create programs with NGOs. While NGOs see themselves as originating in civil society, there is more evidence that states and corporations have more influence over them than the broader civil society of which they are ostensibly a part.

Donor sovereignty—that is, the power to influence NGOs with political or economic capital—must be viewed alongside the aid structure in Haiti, which is so massive that both Haitians and foreign observers often speak of Haiti as a Republic of NGOs managed by dual governments. Because donors have the capacity to manipulate NGOs and NGOs have broad

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<sup>110</sup> Save the Children, "Sponsorship Home Page," [savethechildren.org](http://savethechildren.org).



back into use: via a subdomain of care.org, donors can go through a process that claims to let them personally select items to be sent to the developing world via a CARE Package.<sup>117</sup>

*B. Access to Information*

*i. CARE Packages*

The modern CARE Package website is a perfect example of how the way information is presented can create a distorted image, and how the presentation of data, rather than a simple binary system that only accounts for the existence of data, must be considered an aspect of transparency. Via the website, potential donors are shown the faces of girls who were reportedly helped by CARE Packages and are prompted to put together their own unique package to send out.<sup>118</sup> A donor can choose from tangible items like food and water filters or more conceptual purchases like education for a single student and startup funds for a small business. A price tag is associated with each item, although the prices listed on each item are arbitrary: one item, “Cultivate a Leader,” claims that CARE will train locals in money management and “help women start small businesses” for the strangely specific sum of \$77.<sup>119</sup> Donors may assume these numbers are intended as estimates that will vaguely represent how a sum of money will be translated into a particular “sum of development,” but the assumption the CARE Package seems to be supporting is contrary to the reality of development. Changing the welfare of an individual in the long term means changing the welfare of their community, and this involves many complex, interconnected variables—a fact that is acknowledged by CARE’s community focused approach to find long term solutions to poverty.<sup>120</sup> CARE cannot simply spend \$77 to “cultivate a leader” in Haiti, as its website suggests, without first creating conditions which allow businesses and leaders to prosper.

The CARE Package system mimics monthly sponsorships in both form and function, and like child sponsorships it is pure advertising, an attempt to solicit donations with no tangible, real world corollary or demonstrable, long-term effects. As CARE itself admits on a separate page:

The items and activities you place in a CAREpackage are symbolic examples of CARE’s work to provide long-term solutions to poverty, as well as emergency relief. Your donation supports CARE’s global mission and activities, rather than providing a particular initiative or item.<sup>121</sup>

The CARE Package feature is designed to convince donors that they are actually purchasing and sending the items they select, and while CARE admits elsewhere that this system does not factually represent any associated response or action by CARE, the admission will only be seen by donors who go the extra mile to search through the site for the relevant fine print. Many donors may give money with the expectation that their specific package is real, and will walk away with the assumption that they were engaged in a clear transaction with CARE in which their money was exchanged for a specific type and number of commodities. There is no clear reason for CARE to produce such a specific and detailed list, with all of its specific prices, if not

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117 CARE, “Care Package: Then and Now,” care.org, <http://www.care.org/care%2Dpackage/pdf/Timeline.pdf>

118 CARE, “Build Your Own Care Package,” carepackage.org, <http://www.carepackage.org/build?h=earn>.

119 CARE, “Build Your Own Care Package.”

120 CARE, “About Care,” care.org, <http://www.care.org/about/index.asp>.

121 CARE, “Frequently Asked Questions,” carepackage.org, <http://www.carepackage.org/more/faq>.

to intentionally mislead donors.

This tactic can be seen as an attempt to navigate between two of aid's ethical dilemmas, albeit while creating a new one: on one side, the Scylla of donor sovereignty, where an NGO can focus too heavily on the need to provide donors with satisfying narratives describing how their money is being spent; on the other side, the Charybdis of project needs, where focusing too little on satisfying donors may mean less funding for the projects an NGO genuinely believes are needed to save lives and increase social welfare for the needy. By providing donors with a false, but satisfying, narrative, CARE attempts to placate them and solicit funds without having to engage in purely donor-motivated projects that do little to solve actual development problems. The image of literal items being placed in an actual box to be sent off to a foreign land may appease donors by creating a narrative of how their money is being spent, but whether or not it does so in service of a 'greater good,' the narrative is a fiction of advertising.

## ii. Audits, Finances and Transparency

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, CARE is required to make its IRS Form 990 available to the public, and is required to engage an independent auditor to evaluate its finances. An independent audit of CARE's finances includes assessment of their accounting practices, assets and liabilities.<sup>122</sup> The information made available by these two documents does not by itself make an NGO transparent, though it does make some important data public and is a prerequisite to real transparency. CARE's audit itself states that an audit's scope is limited and does not reflect the accuracy of CARE's reporting:

We were not engaged to perform an audit of CARE USA's internal control over financial reporting. Our audits included consideration of internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the CARE USA's internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, we express no such opinion.<sup>123</sup>

Evaluating an NGO's assets and liabilities confirms a nonprofit's financial solubility as if it were a private firm, but has no bearing on its public transparency or the effectiveness of its programs. An independent audit only ensures that an NGO has not become so financially unstable that its liabilities are threatening bankruptcy. Simultaneously, it can be used by NGOs to claim that their accounting is more transparent than it actually is: publicizing independent audits and the yearly IRS Form 990 creates the appearance of transparency, even though an exhaustive search through these documents reveals few details about an NGO's program activities or specific expenses.

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122 Ernst & Young LLP, "Consolidated Financial Statements: CARE USA and Subsidiaries, Years Ended June 30, 2012 and 2011," Ernst & Young LLP, <http://www.care.org/about/financialinfo/FY12AuditedFinancialStatements.pdf>

123 Ernst & Young, "Financial Statements: CARE USA," 1.

### C. *Financial Review*

#### i. 501(c)(3) Obligations

As noted, CARE is required to submit and publicize an independent audit of its accounting practices, assets, and liabilities. Although these audits communicate nothing about the spending habits of the organization and do not analyze their transparency in communicating their spending to donors, they do contain a broad overview of CARE's financials.

CARE's 2012 audit reveals that CARE has over \$175 million in investments, all but about \$2 million in the US.<sup>124</sup> These include \$27 million in US Treasury Obligations, \$65 million in mutual funds, more than \$60 million in securities, and more than \$7 million in money market funds.<sup>125</sup> These endowments are meant to provide a large charitable organization like CARE with a source of steady income that is reliable, does not require fundraising, and is independent from state, corporate, or donor influences. Especially given CARE's experience with the trap of monetized food aid, it may wish to have greater independence with regards to its revenue sources. Donors, on the other hand, might not be happy to know that CARE uses their donations to create an investment portfolio rather than for programs that facilitate urgent changes in developing countries.

While participation in the financial market may make sense to CARE as a method for generating steady revenue for projects, it raises questions about its expenditures: for an organization that ostensibly seeks to fight the root causes of global poverty, investing in the US financial market is ethically complex. Haiti is not an independent country whose underdevelopment is the result of simple internal factors; it is, as much as the US, a product of globalization, global capitalism, and international politics. This stresses a tension in aid between short-term pragmatism and long-term idealism, the same tension seen in Paul Farmer's "Help the person in front of you" mantra.<sup>126</sup> NGOs like CARE seeking to alleviate poverty in Haiti operate within the same system that created Haitian poverty. Short-term pragmatism dictates that they do everything they can within that system to help reduce the suffering of Haitians who do not have access to food, education, and basic health care, but if the long term effects of poverty are going to be changed, organizations like CARE need to engage with the institutional causes of acute worldwide inequality. CARE has chosen to place its own significant investments not in Haiti or in any other budding financial market in the developing world, but in the US. This is a rational decision if Haitian underdevelopment is seen as curable through steady injections of capital, but this represents an outdated understanding of development as a linear process. If Haitian underdevelopment is seen as occurring within the same system that has "overdeveloped" the US, then lending money to the US economy as a step in the process of equalizing quality of life in Haiti is counterproductive. CARE tells donors that it can help support a small business in the developing world for \$77—if this were even close to true, the value of CARE's investments in such an economy would be astronomical.

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124 Ernst & Young, "Financial Statements: CARE USA," 27.

125 Ernst & Young, "Financial Statements: CARE USA," 27.

126 Paul Farmer, *Haiti: After the Earthquake* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 332.

## ii. Monetized Food Aid

CARE's early history—using gift-in-kind aid to help WWII victims—foreshadowed recent controversies over its involvement in Haiti. In 1985, the United States Congress authorized the use of monetized food aid to fund development programs.<sup>127</sup> Under monetized food aid, NGOs like CARE are funded with US agricultural products that the NGOs are then required to sell on the local market where they intend to fund development programs. This policy caters to US agribusiness. As one New York Times column says of monetized food aid, “America’s biggest food aid program sits in the farm bill because the program was originally designed as a way to get rid of surplus agricultural products to keep prices high.”<sup>128</sup> US agribusinesses are not the only powerful interests that benefit from the practice, however: US law requires that 75% of food aid be transported on US ships, which makes the shipping industry a powerful advocate for it as well (in 2010, more than 540,000 metric tons of food aid was shipped to be used for the monetization program).<sup>129</sup>

Unfortunately, the policy also has the capacity to destroy local market prices and drive farmers out of business, especially in economies like Haiti’s that are heavily invested in agriculture. In 2011 the US Government Accountability Office criticized the practice of monetized food aid for being financially inefficient due to the associated transportation costs.<sup>130</sup> Oxfam has suggested that the practice represents a trade problem because it is explicitly “used to capture new markets” and can actually exacerbate hunger issues because of its ruinous effect on local economies.<sup>131</sup> In the immediate wake of a crisis that wipes out the capacity of the local infrastructure to provide basic services, gift-in-kind aid (such as food aid) can save lives. After the crisis is over, it can destroy them.

In 2009, CARE stopped accepting monetized food aid from USAID.<sup>132</sup> Two observations can immediately be made about CARE’s decision to reject this increasingly controversial form of aid. First, CARE did end the practice of monetized food aid even though it went against CARE’s interests as a fundraising organization: CARE lost \$46 million per year as a result of turning down the funding.<sup>133</sup>

Second, CARE continued to use monetized food aid for decades, even while analysts, including some like Timothy Schwartz who were even employed by CARE, opposed the practice.<sup>134</sup> With even a basic understanding of economics it should have been possible to predict the effects of injecting large quantities of cheap agricultural products into an economy with a primarily agricultural labor force. On the issue of food aid, then, CARE was largely influenced by its need for revenue but ultimately not controlled by it. A private sector business that saw its role exclusively as a profit seeker would not have ended the practice for ideological reasons or

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127 US Government Accountability Office, “Funding Development Projects through the Purchase, Shipment, and Sale of U.S. Commodities Is Inefficient and Can Cause Adverse Market Impacts,” GAO.gov, June 23, 2011, <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-636>.

128 Tina Rosenberg, “How to Feed the Hungry, Faster,” *The New York Times*, November 1, 2011, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/how-to-feed-the-hungry-faster/>

129 Harrell, “CARE Turns Down U.S. Food Aid;” GAO, “Funding Development Projects.”

130 GAO, “Funding Development Projects.”

131 Oxfam, “Food Aid or Hidden Dumping?” Oxfam.org, March 2005, [http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp71\\_food\\_aid.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp71_food_aid.pdf), 2.

132 Harrell, “CARE Turns Down U.S. Food Aid.”

133 Harrell, “CARE Turns Down U.S. Food Aid.”

134 Timothy Schwartz, *Travesty in Haiti: A True Account of Christian Missions, Orphanages, Fraud, Food Aid and Drug Trafficking* (Charleston: Booksurge Publishing, 2008), 106.

because it resulted in negative externalities. CARE did end the practice, but only after utilizing it for decades and exacerbating droughts and food shortages in Haiti.<sup>135</sup>

### iii. Projects in Haiti

In the immediate aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, CARE committed to a five-year \$100 million recovery program in Haiti.<sup>136</sup> CARE programs in Haiti include temporary shelter building and home repair; water and sanitation programs; education; government reform; economic development for the extremely poor; and sexual and reproductive health education programs.<sup>137</sup> Many of these programs specifically target women and girls.

According to CARE, it has built 2,550 transitional homes in Haiti to house about 13,400 people.<sup>138</sup> Transitional homes in Haiti are becoming problematic as donor fatigue sets in: as funds dry up, many of these homes are becoming permanent residences. Shelter is a major problem in Haiti, and the search for permanent solutions has been complicated by the fragmentation of aid groups. Because so many NGOs have participated in building temporary shelters, none are explicitly accountable for solving the much larger problem of finding permanent residences for the approximately 350,000 people still living in camps since the earthquake.<sup>139</sup> Responsibility is diffused across the industry. CARE has, however, tried to alleviate this problem by repairing permanent homes as well, and has started a potentially clever program in which it offers to repair a home for a family free of charge if the family will allow a second family to stay in their home rent free for a year.<sup>140</sup>

CARE's Village and Savings Loan Association (VLSA) program is aimed at educating women and small communities on money management and basic savings techniques.<sup>141</sup> Part of the goal is to create a local village savings fund that individuals can borrow from in order to establish (or, in many cases, reestablish) small businesses. This avoids the need for an approach like microfinance, which requires external actors.<sup>142</sup> Like the VSLA, other CARE programs try to focus on women and girls as especially vulnerable groups in situations of extreme poverty: CARE has especially focused on programs to educate women about reproductive health and gender-based violence, which has become a major problem in camps.<sup>143</sup> CARE also has a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project to ensure clean drinking water in camps and to build latrines.<sup>144</sup> Other projects include agricultural development, malaria mortality reduction, and cholera treatment programs.<sup>145</sup>

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135 Schwartz, *Travesty*, 104-105.

136 CARE, "Three Years Later," care.org, <http://www.care.org/emergency/haiti-earthquake-relief-efforts-one-year-after-quake>

137 CARE, "Haiti Country Profile," care.org, <http://www.care.org/careswork/countryprofiles/61.asp>.

138 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report: January 2010 - December 2012," care.org, January 2013, <http://www.care.org/emergency/haiti-earthquake-relief-efforts-one-year-after-quake/images/Haiti-quake-3-year-report-1-2013.pdf>, 2.

139 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report," 2.

140 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report," 2.

141 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report," 6.

142 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report," 6.

143 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report," 5.

144 CARE, "Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report," 4.

145 CARE, "Haiti Country Profile," care.org, <http://www.care.org/careswork/countryprofiles/61.asp>.

#### iv. Vague Data

Much of the data CARE provides about its programs is vague. For example: “After the earthquake... CARE’s emergency response team delivered lifesaving food, water, shelter and other vital services to 290,000 Haitians.”<sup>146</sup> It is not clear whether the nearly 300,000 Haitians each received the same services or different ones. The quality and extent of these services is also unclear. As another example, CARE says, “Our work improving educational quality has reached 32,320 children.”<sup>147</sup> Quality of education is itself hard to analyze, but more information on specific educational programs could be provided to give a stronger sense of CARE’s educational programs and their value. The word “reached” is also vague, and is used to characterize a program as effective without providing more substantive evidence of how that program impacted a community. CARE claims to have “completed emergency response activities benefiting a total of 28,775 children,” though the nature and extent of these benefits is not specified.<sup>148</sup> In yet another example CARE maintains it “conducted awareness-raising activities focusing on child rights for nearly 8,500 parents, teachers and administrators,” but its description of “awareness-raising activities” avoids detailing the specific nature of these activities or their impact.<sup>149</sup>

There are no details provided about how CARE internally arrived at any of the data points used, and CARE is in no way obligated to expand on how it reached these conclusions. This is the nature of self-reporting. It is impossible to confirm or deny the information provided by an NGO like CARE on its broad activities in Haiti, and this makes it impossible to measure its impact on development. Some NGOs, like Partners in Health with the Mirebalais Hospital project, spend their money in a clear enough fashion that an impact assessment is more viable: the Mirebalais Hospital is a clear project with clear goals and a clear impact. But NGOs like CARE who are present in nearly every development arena—shelter, education, water, sanitation, human rights, advocacy and government—manage dozens of different projects in Haiti and report only aggregate statistics such as the number of patients “reached” or individuals who “benefited” from programs.

#### D. Context and Conclusion

CARE’s unwillingness to surrender monetized food aid funding at the expense of their stakeholders demonstrates how an NGO is forced to pursue dual objectives, often at the expense of both: growth, in which an NGO behaves like a private sector firm, and development, in which it behaves like a charitable organization rooted in civil society. Of these two, growth is magnitudes easier to track and report than an organization’s impact on development. Like any private sector business, growth can be easily measured in investments, revenue and fundraising capacity, and assets and liabilities. Development impact, and the specific impact of development programs, is far more difficult to track with any accuracy. There is no single accepted set of impact variables or measurements upon which the aid industry or academic development studies have agreed.<sup>150</sup>

146 CARE, “Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report,” 2.

147 CARE, “Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report,” 7.

148 CARE, “Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report,” 7.

149 CARE, “Haiti Earthquake Emergency Report,” 7.

150 Michael Edwards and David Hulme, *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World* (West Hartford: Kumarian, 1995), 174.

An NGO must grow to a certain size in order to implement its projects, and as it grows larger it becomes capable of implementing larger projects, and in greater numbers. Just because an organization grows, however, does not mean its impact on development grows at a similar rate.

Development in Haiti that fulfills CARE's broader objective of poverty reduction would require major changes across multiple development fronts: health care; legal development; institutional development across multiple branches of government; development of physical infrastructure; and educational development would all need to make major progress to change the state of Haitian poverty. Creating a single program to support one of these variables in one community in one area of Haiti is a good thing, but will not create long-term, sustainable "development" in the absence of other factors. Improving sanitation conditions and access to clean water, for example, is of extraordinary importance in Haiti, but it is also only one of many prerequisite conditions to a future Haiti capable of breaking the chains of international poverty; giving Haitians clean water will not lead to gigantic strides in development by itself. As another example, ensuring access to alternate fuel sources will reduce deforestation in Haiti, but only after many years will this lead to conditions that improve agriculture and decrease the severity of extreme weather events that create mudslides and flooding.

Due to the extraordinary number of NGOs operating in Haiti, competition for donors is extremely high. This, again, forces NGOs to act like private sector firms in competition for scarce resources. NGOs are forced to act like businesses in order to pursue charitable goals. Competition may result in NGOs becoming focused on business growth variables like fundraising. This helps to explain why so many of the more easily tracked variables normally associated with private sector firms are commonly used by NGOs as markers of their accomplishments: if these variables become an NGO's own measurements of success, it can become a successful fundraising organization even while failing as a development agency. This is especially easy because, unlike traditional private sector firms, NGOs do not exchange a product for money. Instead, money is given in the form of donations with the understanding that a product will be given to someone else, possibly halfway across the world, whom the donor does not know and will likely never meet. Donors must rely on NGOs to self-report on both the delivery of the product and on the quality of the product delivered. The product donors purchase is, essentially, the narrative story given by the NGO.

NGOs, then, do not actually need to assess their impact on development. In seeking donors, an NGO needs only to advertise its best features and sell donors on a convincing narrative about the personal impact of their donations. In reporting to the IRS and to the public with Form 990s and independent audits, NGOs only need to report on broad components of their revenue and expenditures, not on the efficiency of those expenditures or their impact on development. This is how CARE is able to make use of the CARE Package concept. If CARE were a private company exchanging goods or a service for money, it would not be sufficient for them to run an Amazon-type business that explained in its fine print that purchased items would never actually be shipped, but that money would instead be given to community projects in a buyer's area. CARE is accountable to neither donors nor aid recipients, but is required to advertise and sell a product as if it were a private sector firm if it wishes to fund its own projects.

The example of CARE demonstrates how NGOs are caught between three worlds. They are part civil society organization, part private sector firm, and part state agency—but the doctrine of humanitarianism and assumptions of goodwill have been used to keep international NGOs from having to deal with the type of restrictions and requirements allocated to each of these other spheres. They are not accountable in Haiti as they would be if they were considered extensions of

a foreign state, although they are often funded directly by a foreign state with tax dollars and are subject to political manipulation through their funding sources (as CARE was under monetized food aid). Unlike private sector firms they do not need to actually produce a desirable product to survive, and can instead survive by creating the perception of a desirable product. Despite these organizational complexities, NGOs are generally seen as part of civil society, and this allows them to justify their lack of regulation with guarantees of humanitarian goodwill and good intentions.

If the US financial market, the US state, and private US companies can use gift-in-kind aid to alleviate the symptoms of poverty in underdeveloped nations like Haiti while suppressing questions about the system that created that poverty, then aid can be used as a tool to reinforce, rather than alter, global power dynamics.

## VI. Conclusion

The freedoms granted to NGOs converge with the constraints imposed on them to empower and weaken charitable organizations in all the wrong ways. Legal constraints are insufficient to ensure public transparency: there is no legal constraint forcing NGOs to uphold honesty in their advertising, as seen with CARE Packages as well as with the child sponsorship program used by Save the Children. Economic constraints discourage transparency, directly connect an organization's capacity to influence development with its capacity to fundraise, and give broad power over development—and the fate of the poor—to wealthy international actors. NGOs paid at the discretion of the state cannot accurately be called “non-governmental.” The state maintains indirect control over them, as seen with Save the Children and its censored criticism of the US military in the Iraq war, and as seen with CARE's use of monetized food aid, which benefitted US agribusinesses and the US shipping industry at the expense of the Haitian agricultural sector.<sup>151</sup>

Because the existing legal framework fails to enforce meaningful transparency standards, NGOs are allowed to solicit funds from small donors by producing images, stories, and narratives that may be completely disconnected from their actual development work. The total separation between the donors and recipients of aid prevents NGOs from being mediated by the market based on the value of their products as judged by recipients, as traditional private sector organizations would be by consumers. The apparent independence of NGOs shields them from international criticism over interventions into underdeveloped states (the way they would be if they were directly controlled by a foreign state), even when they are financially dependent on that state. The legal, economic, and political apparatus governing aid reduces NGO accountability to recipients and small donors, uses humanitarian reasoning to justify interventions that seize control of a foreign state's development trajectory, and conceals the financiers of humanitarianism.

### A. *NGO Policy*

Making recommendations to NGOs is unlikely to result in any large-scale changes to the aid apparatus described in this report. Recommending that an NGO change its policies in order,

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<sup>151</sup> Kevin Maguire, “How British charity was silenced on Iraq,” *The Guardian*, November 27, 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2003/nov/28/charities.usnews>; Ron Nixon, “Obama Administration Seeks to Overhaul International Food Aid,” *The New York Times*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/05/us/politics/white-house-seeks-to-change-international-food-aid.html?pagewanted=1&r=2&hp&>

for example, to become more transparent or accountable to the recipients of its programs still relies on that NGO to self-manage and will only be effective so long as the NGO's leaders voluntarily choose to operate based on those recommendations. The sheer number of NGOs operating in Haiti alone also creates an organizational imperative that makes it impossible to affect the outcomes of aid by simply suggesting that individual NGOs self-moderate in a different way. While a few NGOs may reorganize themselves in accordance with good policy or project suggestions, it would be a challenge to even communicate such suggestions to the bulk of NGOs operating in Haiti. Furthermore, trying to solve issues with NGO efficiency or accountability by making recommendations to NGOs furthers the assumption that humanitarianism is technical, and that the inefficiency of the aid apparatus can be solved by NGOs making technical changes in their organization, focus, or project implementation. NGOs are too dependent on the political and economic powers that finance them to be in a position to solve the shortcomings of humanitarian assistance and reconstruction in Haiti without first changing the way NGOs are governed and constrained.

### *B. Law and Public Policy*

The only way to increase the overall efficiency, transparency, and accountability of international NGOs will be to transform the political, economic, and legal framework that governs them. The responsibility for managing NGO behavior is firmly in the hands of lawmakers. There are, however, three different sets of lawmakers that have the power to change existing legislation to better oversee NGOs: the Haitian state itself; international lawmakers, including the UN; and, due to their proximity and uneven representation in Haiti in terms of both NGO personnel and financing, the US.

### *C. Reclaiming Sovereignty – Law on the Haitian Side*

Throughout this report, the Haitian state has been conspicuously absent. This is a reflection of its non-role in managing international NGOs. Despite concerns over NGO usurpation of Haitian sovereignty, the Haitian state has taken no steps to actually assert its own sovereignty over them. The Martelly administration could, for example, pass legislation requiring that all international aid work be channeled through the Haitian public sector. It is unclear why it has not chosen to do this so far, especially given the strong opposition to NGOs within Haitian civil society and the frequency of complaints from within Haiti and abroad about the need to include the public sector. The Martelly administration may be motivated by concerns over the removal of President Aristide at the hands of US forces in 2004.<sup>152</sup> The new administration must operate under the knowledge that a previous administration, popularly elected in legitimate elections, was summarily removed in a military coup as soon as its policies became distasteful to developed states with interests in Haiti. The state in Haiti is itself constrained by powerful international actors.

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<sup>152</sup> Paul Farmer, "Who Removed Aristide?" *London Review of Books* 26 (2004): 28-31, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v26/n08/paul-farmer/who-removed-aristide>

#### D. *The Panopticon – Law on the International Side*

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon—a hypothetical model for a prison where the incarcerated would be under surveillance at all times, from every angle—provides a metaphor for the legal framework necessary to create real transparency in international NGOs. Competition over funds has discouraged NGOs from being more transparent. This is a collective action problem: one NGO does not want to open its books completely to public scrutiny for fear that other NGOs, whose expenses may be very similar, will outcompete them for resources as a result. The Panopticon approach resolves this conflict by forcing universal standards across all humanitarian organizations. International actors, especially the US and the UN in the case of Haiti, have the power to enforce strict transparency and public reporting standards. If they are serious about critically evaluating the role NGOs have played in development, they can revise their governing framework to create results that address the needs of Haitians.

Public reporting would not saddle NGOs with any significant amount of additional work, as NGOs already perform the necessary work internally. Save the Children, for example, could not produce the totals listed on its expenditures pie chart without knowing the expenses that added up to those sums. Reporting on these details and detailing *all* financial transactions undertaken by an NGO would make NGOs genuinely transparent while simultaneously increasing accountability. A Panopticon-styled legal framework would compel NGOs to make spending decisions with the knowledge that their purchases would eventually face scrutiny.

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