



Photographer Christina Simons documents the plight of children in Haiti.

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# Focus on the poor children

**Words:** Larissa Ham  
**Picture:** Mark Stewart

IT'S likely MANY Australians could not pronounce Haiti, let alone point it out on a map.

And fewer would know that in that country – which is off the tip of Cuba – 3000,000 children are estimated to be living like slaves.

A St Kilda exhibition by photographer Christina Simons sets out to open more eyes

to the plight of Haitian children. The Haiti Project, at the Uber Gallery until February 28, documents the grief and anguish suffered, alongside happier photos of children enjoying themselves.

Simons, an Icelandic/American, said a long-standing interest in human rights led her to the country.

"I was compelled to follow up on the issues of slavery out there, how it could exist there and why," she said.

"I couldn't understand how something like

slavery exists in this day and age." Simons said the country's gut wrenching poverty meant many families were forced to send their children to live with others, in the hope they would get a better future.

But the reality was that children were usually used as a "little workhouse" – maltreated and sometimes raped by their owners.

Simons said although there were laws stating that children under 12 could not be used as domestic help, was rarely enforced.

She met children as young as six in that situation.

"Somewhere between 12 and 16 they usually run away," Simons said.

More than 40 of her photographs, taken during a month's stay in the country, will be on exhibition at the Uber Gallery.

All proceeds will go to Save the Children Canada, for its work in helping Haitian children.

» Details: [www.savethechildren.ca](http://www.savethechildren.ca)