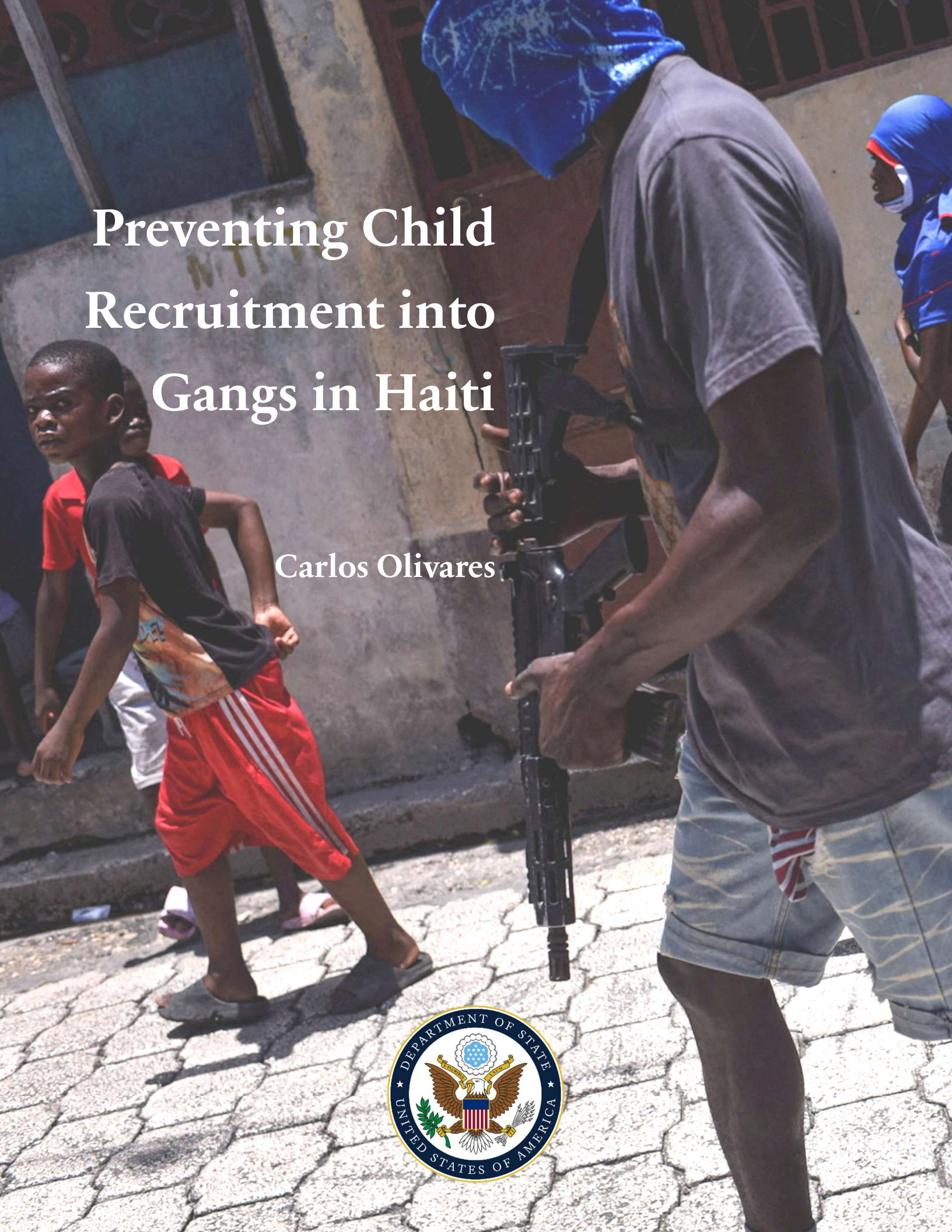

Preventing Child Recruitment into Gangs in Haiti

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2024-2025 Applied Policy Project

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Disclaimer

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Honor Pledge

On my honor as a student, I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.

Acronyms

BPM	Brigade for the Protection of Minors (Government of Haiti)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DOS	US Department of State
FSO	Foreign Service Officer
G-9/G-Pep	Two rival gang alliances in Port-au-Prince
GFA	Global Fragility Act (US Congress, 2019)
GOH	Government of Haiti
HA	Office of Haitian Affairs (US Department of State)
HCSP	Haiti Citizen Security Program
HNP	Haitian National Police
IBESR	The Social Welfare and Research Institute (Government of Haiti)
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
INCLE	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (US Department of State)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MSS (Mission)	Multinational Security Support Mission (United Nations)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment (US Department of State)
TPC	Transitional Presidential Council (Government of Haiti)
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
USUN	United States Mission to the United Nations
WHA	Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (US Department of State)

Executive Summary

The presence of violent armed gangs in Haiti have led to the closing of various public services, none more important for children than education. Hundreds of schools have closed since 2022 due to gang violence, preventing hundreds of thousands of children from receiving their basic education and making them much more susceptible to being recruited by gangs (Agunos & Estrella, 2025). Children are lured by these gangs with promises of money and power, only to be trapped in a life of crime and violence. In November 2024, UNICEF reported that the number of children recruited by armed groups in Haiti increased by 70% in the last year, and that between 30% and 50% of gang members are now children under 18 years old (UNICEF, 2024). Without further action, this number will continue to increase, as over 1.2 million children in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, live under the threat of violence from armed gangs. In order to reduce the influence of gangs and protect the future of their country, the governments of Haiti and the US should develop methods to deter and prevent children under 18 from turning to gangs for a livelihood.

The following memo describes prevention strategies for child recruitment worldwide, highlighting the importance of community-level interventions and trusted implementing partners for these interventions. I analyze three alternatives based on the available literature to reduce child recruitment in Port-au-Prince:

1. Community-Based Education Program
2. Cash Transfers
3. Community-Based Religious Program

These alternatives are assessed based on their administrative feasibility, political feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and adaptability to Haitian political conditions. Ultimately, I recommend the community-based education program because of its strong political feasibility and cost-effectiveness.

I conclude by describing the stakeholders and steps involved in implementing this program. I also outline some implementation challenges, including gang influence, inter-agency cooperation, and monitoring and evaluation.

All research cited in this memo was drawn from open or unclassified sources.

Introduction

In 2019, the Global Fragility Act drew attention to various countries marred by conflict and crisis. Haiti, plagued by endemic corruption and increasing gang violence, was one of them. Armed groups have existed in Haiti since the 1960s, but over the past five years, their proliferation has been exponential. The most noteworthy gang-related incident occurred in March 2024, when members of the G-9 gang alliance took control of Toussaint L'Ouverture International Airport in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and prevented the Prime Minister's plane from landing (El Hammar Castano et al., 2024). As these gangs continue to expand their influence, they also seek to recruit and exploit children who live in poverty across Port-au-Prince. The increase in gang violence and influence has led to schools closing across Port-au-Prince, leaving children especially vulnerable to the dangers of recruitment.

Problem Statement

In Port-au-Prince, Haiti, over 1.2 million children are living in environments increasingly shaped by the presence of armed groups. The resulting insecurity has significantly undermined access to essential public services, particularly education. In 2022, an estimated 500,000 children lost access to school due to widespread closures of educational institutions and the suspension of government programs (USAID, 2024c). Since January 2024, over 900 additional schools have closed, further reducing educational access and heightening the risk of youth involvement with armed groups (Agunos & Estrella, 2025). Another consequence of the presence of gangs is food insecurity, which affects more than half the Haitian population and further contributes to conditions where children turn to gangs for basic survival needs (USAID, 2024c).

This crippling and systemic lack of opportunity leaves these children vulnerable to gangs who promise them money and power, only to trap them in a life of crime, violence, and the threat of an early death. Just this November, UNICEF reported that the number of children recruited by armed groups in Haiti increased by 70% in the last year, and that between 30% and 50% of gang members are now children under 18 years old (UNICEF, 2024). That means there are between 1,800 and 3,000 children in Port-au-Prince today subject to the perils associated with gang membership. **These dynamics underscore the need for coordinated policy responses to deter and prevent children under 18 from turning to gangs for a livelihood.**

Client Outline

The Office of Haitian Affairs (HA) in the US Department of State (DoS) serves as the primary liaison between the US government (USG) and Haiti, coordinating diplomatic efforts to support Haiti's stability, development, and governance. Its primary methods for doing so are through political, economic, and security policy. HA engages with the Haitian government, the United Nations, civil society groups, the Haitian diaspora, and other international and regional organizations to promote sustainable political, economic, and social growth in Haiti. HA provides policy recommendations to US government officials and international partners, ensuring that strategies align with US foreign policy objectives and international agreements. The office plays a key role in shaping and implementing long-term initiatives that strengthen democratic governance, economic resilience, security, and human rights in Haiti.

Additionally, HA facilitates humanitarian assistance and development aid efforts, working closely with other DoS offices, NGOs, and multilateral institutions to improve infrastructure, health care, education, and economic opportunities for the Haitian people. Through diplomatic engagement, HA also addresses issues such as migration, trade, and disaster response, ensuring that US policies support Haiti's long-term stability and prosperity. However, HA is not the only office working on issues in Haiti. Most of the USG's lines of effort involve partnerships between regional and functional offices, Haitian diaspora groups, and in-country civil society groups. This was a strong factor for choosing HA as a client for this project, because while HA is my main point of contact, the end product can hopefully serve the efforts of various different organizations. All of these efforts are especially important today, as gangs continue to control much of the territory in Port-au-Prince. My goal is that this memo can supplement all the work these organizations do in Haiti with background and recommendations focusing specifically on child recruitment.

Background

Life in Port-au-Prince

Figure 1: Map of Haiti

Figure 2: Overlook of Port-au-Prince

Haiti shares the picturesque, resource-rich Caribbean island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic (*Figure 1*). Its capital, Port-au-Prince, is a bustling port city with the potential to be one of the most economically attractive in the region. However, corruption, instability, and poverty have plagued the nation for decades, and armed groups have flourished as a result.

Though *Figure 2* illustrates an idyllic Caribbean city, the reality of life for many in Port-au-Prince is shown by *Figure 3:* desolate poverty and few resources. Haitians often live on just a dollar a day, and the poorest citizens live in shacks with little or no access to food or clean water (Rivers, 2024b).

Figure 3: Shacks in Cite Soleil Neighborhood of Port-au-Prince

Gang violence is now one of the main security issues in Haiti, but their history can be traced back to the 1960's with the founding of "Tonton Macoute," a brutal secret police force created by President Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier (Freedman & Lemay-Hebert, 2024). A brutal dictator, Duvalier ordered this police force to commit heinous and violent human rights abuses to suppress political opposition. The

"Macoutes" evolved under the equally brutal presidency of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier (the son of "Papa Doc"), and it led to the creation of various subsequent paramilitary groups.

Since the 1990's, Haiti has been characterized by political unrest and the presence of armed groups. The gangs of today spawned from this instability as mercenaries funded by the wealthy class of businessmen and politicians in Haiti. They were initially used to suppress political opposition and influence election outcomes through kidnapping and assassination. As they grew in power, they also gained influence over Haiti's economic activity. Gangs took control of major roads, water and electricity distribution networks, and the main sea ports and oil terminals. They profit from kidnappings and ransoms, extorting business, and charging higher prices for resource access (Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2022).

Gangs began to coalesce in 2020, leading to the rise of major gang alliances like the G-9 and the G-Pep. The 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse created a power vacuum and an opportunity for the gangs to seize even more power and territory in Port-au-Prince (Buschschluter, 2024). There has not been a newly elected President since then, and gangs today stand as a violent opposition to a government they deem unstable, illegitimate, and incapable (Freedman & Lemay-Hebert, 2024). Many Haitians continue to live in poverty, and the temporary government has been unable to set up new presidential elections. There are now an estimated 300 gangs in Haiti, which have formed various alliances that now control around 85% of the territory in Port-au-Prince (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2025). Given their control of territory and resources, gangs are increasingly ruthless and structured in their criminal activity and recruitment.

The gangs' senior leaders present themselves as "Robin Hood" figures, providing people in poverty food or clothes where the government cannot (Rivers, 2024a). In reality, these gangs kidnap, murder, and terrorize the citizens of Port-au-Prince to the point where it is unsafe for much of the population to live, work, or attend school. This is especially detrimental to children, who grow up with these atrocities happening to their friends, family, and themselves. Children as young as 10-12 years old are forcibly recruited by gang members to surveil rivals, run deliveries, or do chores. They may be approached on the street with offers of food or money, or coaxed by their friends to join with promises of food or power. Girls may be kidnapped on the street and raped before being forced to provide house or sex work for gang members. If children refuse to work, they or their families are threatened, beaten, or killed (Amnesty International, 2025). A UNICEF report in November 2024 estimated that child recruitment had risen by 70 percent over the past year (UNICEF, 2024). If recruitment

continues at a similar rate, there will be around 3,600 children in gangs by the end of 2025. See **Appendix A** for this approximation.

Root Causes of Child Recruitment in Haiti

One of the main challenges with tackling the recruitment issue in Port-au-Prince is that there are a variety of root causes, and many are intertwined. For example, a lack of education could be seen as a primary or secondary root cause for children joining gangs. However, that issue is a cause and effect of various other factors.

I identify four primary, systemic, root causes for the issue of children joining gangs:

1. An increase in the power and prevalence of gangs in Port-au-Prince
2. Poverty in Port-au-Prince
3. Lack of Formal Employment Opportunities
4. Lack of Educational Opportunities

The prevalence of gangs has increased in large part due to the absence of a legitimate government in Haiti. The last presidential election took place in 2016, and the elected president, Jovenel Moïse, was subsequently assassinated in 2021 (Al Jazeera, 2024). The temporary governments since then have largely been seen as illegitimate, and alongside a corrupt judicial system, they have allowed gangs to thrive in a lawless environment (Department of State, 2022).

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with over half its population living below the poverty line (Roy & Labrador, 2024). The earthquake in 2010 largely destroyed Port-au-Prince, and the subsequent mismanagement of funds and political instability have prevented its citizens from recovering financially. Since 2010, Haitians have flocked to Port-au-Prince in search of economic opportunity. This has led to a population growth in the capital city by almost 50% (almost one million people), creating denser living conditions and more competition for fewer opportunities (MacroTrends, 2024). Haitians often relocate from the country's rural areas to the city in search of work and money, but struggle to find them because of the city's lack of a formal economy. The main formal industries in Port-au-Prince are textiles[1] and construction, but a low minimum wage, a lack of worker protections, and

[1] The textile industry in Haiti largely consists of sweatshops run by international apparel manufacturers.

the presence of gangs have led to decreasing employment in these sectors (Department of State, 2024).

As of 2021, an estimated 60% of Haiti's GDP was generated by the informal sector, which employed 86% of the labor force (International Finance Corporation, 2021). The informal economy in Haiti and Port-au-Prince is comprehensive, and it includes street vendors, transportation providers, construction laborers, and small-scale farmers, among other things. These workers have little to no employer, legal, or union protections, and the work's unregulated nature makes it difficult for Haitians to build any real wealth (Nations Encyclopedia, n.d.). One notorious area of work that is not included in official informal economic statistics is domestic work, especially for children.

The lack of educational opportunities occurs as a result of not having government funding and endemic gang violence. The last major education initiative was proposed in 2011 by then-President Michel Martelly, but the program was a massive public failure because Martelly's PHTK political party allegedly embezzled millions of dollars in funds (Berrouet-Orieol, 2022). There was limited funding for education, even when there was a government, and the proliferation of gangs now also prevents children from going to school. Since 2022, over 500,000 children have lost access to education, and well over 900 schools have closed (USAID, 2024c). Without the education, food, and safety provided by going to school, children are far more susceptible to gang recruitment.

Why Children Join Gangs

There are a number of immediate push and pull factors that lead children to join armed groups around the world, which are described in *Figure 4*, and are true for volunteers and forced recruits (Barstad, 2008). In Haiti, poverty and lack of education are the strongest factors for recruitment.

Pull Factors

- Security: Joining an armed group means they will not be attacked by them.
- Education: Children may believe military training is the only way they can learn or develop skills.
- Sense of belonging: The pressure to be part of a group or a cause is a strong pull factor in most settings.
- Revenge: Children may become soldiers after witnessing the death or ill-treatment of their families, friends, or communities.

Push Factors

- Poverty: There are no jobs, training, or education opportunities that can give people the money they need to survive.
- Weak family structure: Lack of a strong family or friend structure may push children towards joining armed groups.
- Lack of Education: The closing of primary and secondary schools leads kids to live on the street, making easier targets for gangs.

Figure 4: Push and pull factors to join armed groups around the world

Types of Recruitment

Recruiting child soldiers is also common in countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, and the Philippines, which are particularly affected by social and economic crises and widening inequality gaps. Syria is one such country that has demonstrated predatory and structural recruitment of children into ISIS due to the group's role in controlling the systems of power (Østby et al., 2022). Predatory recruitment, or grooming, happens at the interpersonal level, where members of criminal groups have access to families or community spaces, where they recruit children with little power to resist. Structural recruitment means that criminal organizations control governmental or economic institutions, and they can instill their values in children on a broader scale and from a younger age (Østby et al., 2022). ISIS in Syria, for example, controls media and education systems, and can teach children strict Salafist values from an early age (Østby et al., 2022).

Haitian gangs do not have this level of systemic influence and primarily rely on predatory recruitment. However, if they continue to grow in power and status compared to the stagnant government, it may become even easier for them to recruit children. The push factors for recruitment are particularly strong in Haiti. Human Rights Watch interviewed children in criminal groups who said hunger and poverty were the primary reasons for joining gangs (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Children turn to gangs for food, clothes, or shelter, and receive only the minimum to provide for themselves and their families. Gangs then pressure them to stay by reminding them of their impoverished situation if they were to leave (Amnesty International, 2025).

> "When I decided to leave … they said, 'You don't have food at home, so if you leave us, you'll die of hunger.' That's how [they] tried to force me to stay."
>
> -16-year-old from Port-au-Prince

Existing Government Programs

Haitian Institutions

In 2000, the Government of Haiti (GoH) created the *Institut du Bien-Etre Social et de Recherches*, or IBESR (The Social Welfare and Research Institute), which conducts a labor analysis for children's conditions and established a hotline for reporting complaints and children's protection requests (Cicero Santalena, 2023). Separately, the Brigade for the Protection of Minors (BPM) is an arm of the Haitian National Police (HNP) that cooperates with IBESR to investigate allegations of child labor (US Department of Labor, 2023). These agencies were designed as accounting systems to more precisely keep track of children who are victims of gang violence or recruited by the gangs themselves. However, the US Department of Labor reports that the BPM and other law enforcement agencies within the HNP lack the personnel, equipment, and training to carry out their mandates and that it was "unknown" if they were even able to impose penalties for any violations found (US Department of Labor, 2023).

To help the Haitian National Police (HNP) combat gang violence, the UN approved the Multilateral Security Support (MSS) Mission in Haiti in October 2023, which pledged international finances and personnel to help. The immediate goals of the MSS Mission included regaining control of the main port and the gang-controlled neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince (United Nations, 2024). MSS Mission personnel first arrived in Haiti in June 2024, but delays in personnel and equipment delivery have limited the impact of the international force. Almost a year later it continues to face violent opposition from the gangs (Mboto, 2025).

Ongoing US Government Strategy

The Global Fragility Act (GFA) was passed by Congress in 2019, which mandated that the President identify at least five countries and regions in conflict and devise an integrated 10-year Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. The GFA authorized up to $200

million for each of the first five years in appropriations for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund, but only $114.5 million of that was requested in the 2024 Congressional Budget Justification (Bayoumi, 2024).

Led by USAID and the Department of State, the USG in 2022 published its initial 10-year plan containing broad strategies and specific targets for reducing poverty and gang violence in Haiti. Within that, USAID's 5-year Citizen Security Program (HCSP) best targets the recruitment of children by gangs as a priority (USAID, 2024b). HCSP has three pillars, the latter two of which emphasize community and GoH partnerships to "strengthen youth resistance to recruitment into gangs and violent activities through mentoring, training, safe spaces, and increased livelihood opportunities (USAID, 2024a)." The second pillar specifically outlined how this would be done through subgrants to existing local organizations. Given the shutdown of USAID, the status of these programs is unclear as of April 2025.

Aside from the lack of funding, there are two other primary challenges with USG programs in Haiti. The first is that official progress reports for the 10-year strategy and 5-year HCSP quickly become outdated due to the ever-changing situation on the ground in Haiti. This makes the assessment of recruitment prevention programs complicated at the federal interagency levels. The second is the lack of verification for the implementation of funds. Corruption runs rampant through most of Haiti's governance systems, and it is important to verify that funds reach their targets and are implemented as designed (Fauriol, 2020).

On a broader level, corruption is one of the reasons why many of the problems in Haiti persist, and why domestic and international programs may fail to achieve their goals. It also perpetuates poverty and political instability, which allows gangs to continue growing and recruiting children.

Existing Solutions to Child Recruitment

Haiti's children are not only victims of violence, but in some cases also perpetrators through their involvement in armed gangs. The level of recruitment of children into gangs in Haiti has exploded in the past 10 years, and has increased 70% in the past year alone (UNICEF, 2024). This brings the estimated total number of children under 18 in gangs to over 2,000, which is up from around 1,400 in 2023. Because it has become so prevalent in Haiti only recently, I will compare the recruitment of children into gangs to the recruitment of child soldiers in other conflicts around the world. Many of the conditions for recruitment into Haitian gangs are similar to conditions seen for joining armed groups in other countries, and the push and pull factors are essentially the same. Among these are a need for money to survive, a lack of social or educational programs, and a sense of belonging.

Colombia, Honduras, Syria, and Nigeria are just a few of the countries that have seen armed groups recruit children, and I will look at how they were recruited and what solutions were offered to deter and prevent recruitment. In countries with stronger government systems, like Colombia and Nigeria, prevention programs were more successful because of the authority and legitimacy that the government holds. Solutions were targeted at the local levels, and the government's ability to financially support them helped them succeed. In countries like Honduras and Syria, where the central government is weaker or armed groups are more dominant powers, prevention programs are not as successful, and child recruitment persists. Like in these other countries, the driving factors behind children joining gangs in Haiti are inextricably linked to poverty, inequality, and the breakdown of social structures.

Solutions Offered

There have been various policy solutions to prevent children from joining armed groups in countries around the world. However, their actual impact is difficult to quantify and is rarely reported, especially in statistical, evidence-based experiments (Garbarino et al., 2020). The case studies I describe differ in scope and impact, and identifying best practices for preventing recruitment usually comes through in-depth interviews or focus groups with former armed group members. The main takeaway from these case studies is that community-driven solutions in partnership with trusted partners and government support are most likely to prevent the recruitment of children. This is especially challenging in Haiti, where corruption is widespread, and citizen records are poorly kept.

In addition to the literature that exists on preventing child recruitment, there is also broad documentation on the various stages of joining an armed group. Following initial

recruitment, children can disengage from these armed groups and either subsequently be reintegrated into society or re-recruited. This evidence review and the subsequent recommendations will **focus specifically on preventing initial recruitment**, rather than reintegration programs for former armed group members or preventing re-recruitment.

Establishing Communication

Before offering any solutions, it is important to note that the US government itself does not negotiate with terrorist or armed groups. USG organizations navigate that line carefully in the peace process and often rely on reporting from in-country civil society groups and embassies (K. Chambers & T. Luu, personal communication, December 6, 2024). In Haiti that responsibility falls to civil society groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and neutral international governmental organizations (INGOs) (K. Chambers & T. Luu, personal communication, December 6, 2024). Trusted local groups or neutral organizations have the ability to meet with armed groups face to face and negotiate goals like medical aid, access to food and water, and reducing child recruitment. Trust, neutrality, and understanding the local power dynamics are key to even reaching this stage of negotiations (K. Chambers & T. Luu, personal communication, December 6, 2024). However, lasting settlements for ceasefires or peace can be difficult to reach with non-state actors because they are not party to international treaties and can therefore skirt any binding provisions (InterAction, 2024).

Multinational-Driven Action Plans

Over the past 20 years, the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has developed action plans to end and prevent child soldier recruitment with government and non-state actors in over 15 countries (Vinet, n.d.). These action plans outlined concrete, time-bound steps to improve children's protection. *Figure 5* describes several steps that may be included in one such action plan. One example is the UN reaching an agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in June 2019, which describes non-state actors like ISIS and the Syrian government forces as parties in Syria conducting "grave violations" against children (Vinet, 2019). These efforts are ongoing, as the political situation in Syria remains complex and undemocratic.

Figure 5: UNICEF sample action plan

While this action plan is still active in Syria, the Nigerian Civilian Joint Task Force's (CJTF) plan achieved compliance with its goals in 2021, four years after its signing (Adebayo, 2021). The CJTF was an armed group formed to combat the terrorist group Boko Haram, but it used child soldiers to do so. From 2017 to 2021, the CJTF released over 2,000 children from its ranks, many of whom subsequently enrolled in schools and were provided psychological support by UNICEF (Adebayo, 2021). For reference, around 3,500 children were recruited by different parties to conflict in Nigeria from 2013 to 2020 (Adebayo, 2021). While the action plan was a significant step for reducing child recruitment in Nigeria, Boko Haram itself continues to recruit and arm children (Adebayo, 2021).

Nigeria is likely successful because of its larger population and functioning government. There are accounting and accountability mechanisms to track child recruitment, and the parties to the action plan are limited in number and well-defined. Gangs in Haiti are numerous, unorganized, and intertwined with the private and public sectors. An agreement with the UN would strengthen the power and status of these gangs by recognizing them as legitimate players in the Haitian political sphere. They could use this as additional bargaining power against the Haitian government and international organizations, or as extortion power against individuals and businesses.

Community-Driven Solutions

Most of the literature emphasized local, community-driven solutions to prevent children from joining armed groups. This included parent planning services and early childhood development programs to reduce the push factor of a weak family structure. It also included having "child-friendly" spaces and protections for these spaces to ensure children can develop together with a lower risk of exposure to gangs (Vargas-Baron, 2007). Civil society, NGOs, and religious groups can play a role here, as they often have best practices, are better funded, and can develop trust among the community. The key to comprehensive reform is integration across the various sectors that can influence policy for children: education, health and nutrition, sanitation, and justice (Vargas-Baron, 2007). This proves challenging in countries like Haiti, where mass corruption and low legitimacy in government persist.

One successful case of localized community-driven action came from the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan in 2013. The armed opposition group, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) recruited heavily from the 50,000+ children in the camp, prompting the NGO Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) to support the refugees in self-organizing to protect vulnerable children (InterAction, 2024). In consultation with the refugee council, tribal leaders, and community members, NP established a child protection committee in each camp block consisting of 15

volunteer members (8 women and 7 men), including community leaders, teachers, nurses, elders, women leaders, and community police (InterAction, 2024). NP provided the committees with training on child protection in emergencies, supported them in developing action plans, and monitored new mobilization and recruitment activities by JEM. They also conducted awareness-raising campaigns on how to prevent child separation, abuse, and exploitation, and identified vulnerable children for referral to the NP and other protection actors. The committee initially identified 74 children who had escaped from JEM in the refugee camp and helped accommodate them into new homes. Child recruitment by JEM decreased significantly in the following years, even after NP stopped its work in Yida (InterAction, 2024).

Country Case Studies

Various countries have conducted studies on recruitment and prevention, and I will focus on cases in the Western Hemisphere, which may be more similar to Haiti in scope, impact, and culture.

El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras

In 2021, USAID partnered with Florida International University to conduct a series of focus groups in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras to discuss gang governance and intervention programs in those countries (Cruz et al., 2023). Though closer to Haiti in size, proximity, and culture, the results from this study remain qualitative and cannot be generalized to entire communities or provide statistical recruitment trends. The participants suggest solutions that work best for preventing recruitment and offer caveats for why they may or may not succeed.

The broad theme for community-driven solutions to succeed is trust, whether in the implementers, the gang members in the community, or even the program's name. The focus group participants described religious groups as particularly effective for programs to deter and prevent recruitment (Cruz et al., 2023). The influence of God is powerful in Latin America, and gang members were swayed not to join or even leave gangs to pursue a religious calling (Cruz et al., 2023). Because these programs often occur in gang territory, gang members may take an interest and even participate. Gang members can assess the programs for themselves and see their merit for children, but conversely, could infiltrate these programs for recruitment (Cruz et al., 2023). Participants also mentioned that name brand recognition for programs is important, such as "the Scouts" or "missionaries," who are

established in those communities and have developed trust among their citizens (Cruz et al., 2023).

Beyond the element of trust, the focus group participants stated that knowing the community and its actors is most important (Cruz et al., 2023). Program implementers should know they often work in gang territory, so knowing the local leadership and social dynamics is crucial. Local authority must be respected, and it must be conveyed that the programs are not a risk to that authority (Cruz et al., 2023). This is challenging because the situation on the ground frequently changes at a pace outsiders may struggle to keep up with. The gang situation can be violent and unpredictable, which deters programs from launching and locals from participating.

Colombia

The Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) was founded in 1968 to protect children and adolescents in vulnerable situations. The cartel conflicts and the subsequent revolutionary groups in the 1990s turned Colombia into a war zone, inevitably leading to child recruitment. According to the Truth Commission, over 16,000 minors were recruited into armed groups between 1990 and 2017 (Vanegas, 2023). However, over 12,000 children were disengaged from these groups from 2003 to 2014 (Downing, 2014). This is an encouraging ratio of recruitment to disengagement, likely due to the presence of the ICBF and other government programs designed to mitigate the push factors leading to child recruitment.

The ICBF is an agency within the Department for Social Prosperity, which has launched several programs to address recruitment. "Familias en Accion" was launched in 2001 and has since provided over 2.6 million families with conditional cash transfers for registering their children's school attendance. As of 2014, the agency reported that the transfers lowered child labor rates and school dropouts, and increased the high school completion rate (Downing, 2014). "Jovenes en Accion" was a program run from 2003 to 2007 that gave 18-25 year olds cash transfers conditional on attending employment training classes (Downing, 2014). The program reportedly also positively affected recipient employment and income, but it is targeted towards older adolescents who are beginning to enter the workforce rather than children (Downing, 2014). While this is beneficial for adolescents in need of job opportunities, it may not be the most appropriate intervention for children under 12 who have not yet reached working age. Employment and income, however, may be similar to education in that they can provide children with an escape from gang influence.

The Colombian Reintegration Agency conducted a study in 2011, which included 38 in-depth interviews with former members of armed groups (Downing, 2014). The interviews described factors for recruitment like poverty, status, and domestic violence, but notably also that the lack of government presence can lead to increased armed group presence and child recruitment. These interviews highlighted the need for community-specific responses and the presence of a government as an authority and employer. These government structures deter armed groups from forming, and provide children and adolescents a legitimate way to make money instead of joining these armed groups (Downing, 2014).

UNICEF and the ICBF conducted a study between 2013 and 2022 of children separated from armed groups in Colombia, which included a statistical analysis of ICBF program records for 2,181 minors who received care after leaving those groups (Loaiza, 2023). The study also included 24 in-depth interviews and 78 workshops for qualitative analysis of recruitment practices (UNICEF, 2023). The results described changing recruitment tactics by Colombian armed groups, and highlighted that the negotiations between the government and the FARC guerrilla group from 2012 to 2016 led to a down period in child recruitment (Vanegas, 2023). Groups that are socially or economically marginalized, like minority or indigenous groups, were also more targeted for recruitment. This is similar to Haiti, where the most impoverished children are generally the most targeted by gangs.

The most important findings, however, revolved around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2020 and 2022, 532 minors were recruited across 27 departments, which can be attributed to schools closing, incomes decreasing, and lower access to in-person government programs (Vanegas, 2023). This demonstrates the importance of these programs and the need for a government presence to deter armed groups and recruitment. Juan Sebastian Campo from the NGO Benposta argued that rights and opportunities are the most effective prevention for recruitment. "There is enough information about the reasons that minors get involved in the war. Many are children who are literally tired of domestic violence, economic precarity or having nothing to eat, and end up fleeing and joining armed groups," says Campo (Vanegas, 2023).

> "What else can they do when everything is closed to them?"
>
> -Mayerly Briceño, Benposta

Researchers in Medellin are currently piloting a randomized evaluation of adolescent males that will measure the impact of anti-gang interventions. This study aims to measure the effect of such interventions on a quantitative level, given that there is little data on the effectiveness of recruitment methods or interventions. The study is taking place from 2023 to 2025, and

samples 1,400 teens in high-risk neighborhoods to see if mentorship programs for legal career paths and information sessions about the dangers of gang membership can prevent future recruitment (Blattman et al., 2024). The same researchers are also running a concurrent panel survey of adolescent males in Medellin to identify the risk factors of gang recruitment (Blattman et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the highlighted case studies describe the need for targeted, trustworthy solutions backed at least in part by a functional government. Colombia, being far more developed and systematically capable than Haiti, especially shows how government welfare and programs can be the difference between children joining an armed group or not. These examples are highly localized, however, and data must be drawn primarily from lived experience rather than statistical analysis. As a result, only the broadest and most commonly offered solutions (from the individuals' perspective) can be interpreted as externally valid. The recommendations I offer reflect this evidence, but only by addressing the deep-rooted, systemic issues that exist can lasting progress be made in safeguarding the rights and well-being of Haiti's children.

Summary of Existing Solutions

Child recruitment into armed gangs in Haiti has greatly increased over the past two years, and over 2,000 children are now involved in gangs. This trend reflects similar recruitment dynamics seen in conflict zones globally, where children are drawn into armed groups due to poverty, lack of access to education and social services, or a need for protection. Countries like Colombia and Nigeria have demonstrated that when governments possess legitimacy, resources, and the ability to support localized programs, they can effectively reduce child recruitment. These programs typically include conditional cash transfers, educational support, and reintegration services, which have contributed to thousands of children disengaging from armed groups. However, in countries like Syria, Honduras, or Haiti with weak governance or dominant non-state actors, recruitment prevention efforts often fail due to the lack of infrastructure, trust, and consistent implementation.

The most promising strategies for addressing child recruitment are those rooted in community involvement and trust, often led by NGOs, civil society, or religious groups with strong local ties. Policy initiatives should include safe spaces for children, support for early childhood development, and community protection networks, like those seen in the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan. While international frameworks like UN-led action plans have had some success, the broader lesson from experiences in countries like Colombia is that

lasting progress requires tackling underlying issues like systemic inequality, chronic violence, and weak government institutions. Without a stable, accountable government and broad community engagement, Haiti faces significant obstacles in protecting its children from the influence of armed gangs.

Given this evidence from other contexts, it is clear that child recruitment prevention efforts in Haiti must prioritize community-based initiatives, and provide educational or economic opportunities. The following section explores three potential policy alternatives that align with these principles: a community-level education program, cash transfers for children and families, and a community-level religious program. Each alternative seeks to create safe environments, reduce the incentives for gang recruitment, and support children's development despite the difficult living conditions in Haiti.

Policy Alternatives

Alternative 1: Community-Level Education Program

Hundreds of thousands of children in Port-au-Prince have lost access to education over the past two years due to gang violence. Schools are places where children can go during the day to learn basic skills for their future, but they are also where children can be safe from potential dangers in their neighborhoods or communities. This alternative is a partnership between the State Department (DoS) and international organizations like UNICEF, Hope for Haiti Foundation, Plan International, and the Regroupement Éducation Pour Toutes et pour Tous (REPT) that creates and funds education programs in gang violence-affected neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince (*Education for All Group*, n.d.).

This program would give children a place to continue their basic education and career skills training. Children younger than 12 would continue to develop reading, writing, and math skills, and those older than 12 could supplement these with digital literacy, leadership, critical thinking, and career development skills. A key piece of the program would be having reformed gang members as staff to share experiences and warnings about gang violence. Some children join gangs for the risk or the thrill, and understanding that gang membership is dangerous and deadly could be a stronger deterrent to joining. This program would support children at the grade school level, specifically those from ages 6-15, who are not yet capable of working or finding high-paying jobs. It would take place five days during the week, at around six hours per day in existing community spaces.

This program would be implemented in Port-au-Prince by civil society groups that are trusted in Port-au-Prince so that residents or gang members do not see them as imposing or threatening. Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) in Port-au-Prince would work closely with their implementing partners on the back end to ensure funds are not being misused and to measure the number of children who go from having no source of education to receiving education and safety benefits through this program.

If successful, this program gives children in Port-au-Prince a chance to get off the streets, where they are threatened and recruited by gangs. Successful implementation and take-up can also be a useful measuring tool for determining how many children are affected by the mass closing of schools in Port-au-Prince. It also gives them a chance to continue their education, if just in a rudimentary way, while their schools remain closed. Local partnerships with civil society groups would ideally establish trust among community members,

including gang members, who would see the collaboration as not meant to threaten their commercial operations.

Potential drawbacks include failure to implement appropriately or gang interference in the operation. There is also the potential for a lack or interruption of funding due to the new administration's policy priorities in the Western Hemisphere. Another potential downside of these programs is that they can only operate during the week for a limited time, leaving children vulnerable to recruitment when they are not in the program.

Alternative 2: Cash Transfers for Children and Families

More than half the population of Haiti lives on less than USD 3.74 a day ("Haiti," 2025). As a result, they turn to gangs for cash or food in exchange for loyalty or service. This alternative would require the DoS to work with international partners and the GoH to provide cash transfers to children and families. This would reduce children's and families' reliance on gangs for education, money, or food and improve their ability to live and survive daily. In the longer term, cash transfers can also build families' resilience, strengthening their ability to better cope with shocks and reducing vulnerability to future crises (Opota, 2024).

This alternative would be a partnership between the US State Department, the US Mission to the UN (USUN), UNICEF, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and Plan International. The program would start with an 18-month period of cash transfers targeting families in Port-au-Prince with children between the ages of six and fifteen living below the poverty line. These families would be identified in an analysis done beforehand based on their income relative to the poverty line, proximity to gang territory, and number of children. Households would be given USD 28 per month per child within the age range, conditional on it being used for food or education expenses, registration with IBESR, and reporting children's avoidance of gang activity. This value of $28 is half the international poverty line, and is equivalent to around 3,700 Haitian Gourdes per month. Funds would be digitally distributed through Digicel's MonCash application, which would facilitate day-to-day use and reduce the likelihood of misappropriation (*FAQs*, 2025).

Despite the analysis of recipients done beforehand, the lack of accounting systems for people in Haiti means that even if that funding is appropriated legitimately, it still may not reach all of its intended targets. Another challenge is getting that money to those people since many may not have bank accounts, other financial capabilities, or even basic financial literacy. A third challenge is that gangs could extort families for the money they receive, further

widening the power gap between gang members and poor citizens. The program may also create a social disparity between those who receive these benefits and those who do not. This could also be exploited by gangs and used to perpetuate violence. It may require the program to add protection, either financial or physical, for families receiving cash loans or payments. A final challenge associated with cash transfers in general is that the money received may not be used for its intended purpose.

Alternative 3: Community-Level Religious Program

This alternative is similar to Alternative 1 in the sense that it gives children and families a place to go to avoid gang violence in a manner that gang members have a higher likelihood of respecting. Religion is an essential aspect of life in South and Central American countries, and it can play a prominent role in small communities. This alternative could only be suggested by the US government, and would have to be developed and implemented by civil society or faith organizations, such as World Vision International, Faith in Action International, Have Faith Haiti Mission, and the Catholic Church. Funding would primarily come from faith-based organizations and from larger financial institutions like UNICEF or the IDB.

A religious program like this one would give children a place to practice faith in a safe environment and continue with their basic education. Children younger than 12 would continue to develop reading, writing, and math skills, while developing moral and ethical traits to pursue non-violence and social responsibility. Children older than 12 could supplement these with digital literacy, leadership, critical thinking, and career development skills. This program would support children at the grade school level, specifically those from ages 6-15, who are not yet capable of working or finding high-paying jobs. It would serve to maintain children's education in a rudimentary way until schools in Port-au-Prince can be fully reopened. The program would take place three days during the week (Friday through Sunday), at around six hours per day in existing religious spaces in the community.

This program would be implemented by civil society or religious groups that are trusted in Port-au-Prince so that residents or gang members do not see them as imposing or threatening. UN or other NGO workers in Port-au-Prince would work closely with their implementing partners on the back end to ensure funds are not being misused and to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Partnering with civil society groups would ideally establish trust among community members, including gang members, who would see the collaboration as not meant to threaten their commercial operations.

The main drawback is that the US government cannot be involved in the planning or funding of a religious program like this due to its separation of church and state (A. Lee, personal communication, March 19, 2025). Other potential drawbacks include failure to implement appropriately or gang interference in the operation. Another potential downside of this program is that they can only operate during the week for a limited time, leaving children vulnerable to recruitment when they are not in the program.

Criteria

Criterion 1: Administrative Feasibility

Administrative feasibility would be measured on a points scale by the number of staff available to focus on a project before and during implementation, and how many weeks or months it would take for a program to begin after initial approval. The more staff available (in government, private partners, and civil society organizations) and the quicker it can begin operating, the more points will be awarded.

1. Number of Additional Staff (2 points max)
    - Less than 50 additional personnel: 2 points
    - 50-150 additional personnel: 1 point
    - More than 150 additional personnel: 0 points

2. Inter-agency Coordination (1 point max)
    - Low inter-agency coordination: 1 point
    - High inter-agency coordination: 0 points

3. Immediacy (2 points max)
    - Program begins January 2026-July 2026: 2 points
    - Program begins July 2026-July 2027: 1 point
    - Program begins after July 2027: 0 points

Staffing is important because there needs to be people who can research and generate ideas for the programs, as well as diplomats and case workers in the field who can work with international partners and civil society organizations on implementation. If there are not enough people staffing the offices that work on Haiti issues, the staff will be stretched thin on the different issues and will not have the capacity to work on a niche problem like child recruitment. This will be especially difficult now that USAID has been eliminated from the executive branch. USAID partnered frequently with DoS projects for implementation, especially on the ground in-country. The US embassy in Port-au-Prince has also been on ordered departure since July 2023 due to gang violence, and cutting USAID staff means there is an even greater lack of staff and services provided by the embassy.

Immediacy can be seen as how quickly the program begins after its directive and funding are approved. This could mean waiting until the budget for 2026 is approved before seeing any

implementation, depending on how much funding is allocated to Haiti issues and child recruitment specifically. Any program could also begin immediately using existing funds for similar DoS or former USAID initiatives. Gang violence in Haiti continues to be dangerous for citizens, and the sooner project implementation can begin, the sooner that children can (ideally) benefit from reduced gang recruitment. Cost calculations begin for implementation in July 2025 and extend through 2028. Each alternative could begin as early as July 2025 and as late as January 2027.

This criterion is important because the various government agencies involved in a program must have the capacity to develop, implement, and maintain it, both quickly and over time. **Weight: 30%**

Criterion 2: Political Feasibility

Political feasibility would be measured on a points scale, depending on USG's willingness and ability to pursue each program, the program's sustainability over time, and the proportion of financial contributions by the US government. The more open the administration is to the project, the more sustainable it would be, and the fewer financial contributions USG would require, the more points it would be awarded.

1. USG Willingness to pursue the program (2 points max)
    - High willingness: 2 points
    - Mixed willingness: 1 point
    - Little or no willingness: 0 points

2. Sustainability over time (2 points max)
    - High sustainability: 2 points
    - Medium sustainability: 1 point
    - Low sustainability: 0 points

3. Proportion of USG financial contributions (1 point max)
    - Low proportion: 1 point
    - High proportion: 0 points

Another aspect of political feasibility is the partnership between private and international organizations. Given the resurgence of "America first" policies, there could be less initiative to fund international programs, especially given the USAID shutdown. The more responsibility

partner organizations hold financially and technically, the more likely the government is to support implementation.

Sustainability over time describes the consistency and maintainability of any potential alternative. If a program is enacted but is subject to pressure from the government or gang leaders, it will likely not be as successful. This criterion also refers to whether any potential program can maintain or increase its level of funding over time. Suppose the USG or partner organizations can only pledge funding for a few months or on condition of immediate program success. In that case, the program may not have long-term or permanent impacts on recruitment. If the program ends too soon without leaving a real impact, gangs may go back to recruiting children as they were before the program began.

This criterion is important because the administration must want to pursue this kind of program and be willing to fund programs for Haiti and the Western Hemisphere as a prerequisite. The Trump administration may be prioritizing domestic security programs like immigration and border security over foreign assistance programs, especially in poorer nations like Haiti. There will still be funds appropriated to develop programs, but likely much less in the Trump administration than in the Biden administration. The Department of State will take its cue from Secretary Marco Rubio, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs will take its cue from a yet-to-be-appointed assistant secretary (as of April 2025). It is currently uncertain if their directives will place a greater or lesser emphasis on Haitian affairs.

The more money and resources can be contributed by international organizations or private actors (as opposed to the USG), and the longer that funding can be sustained, the higher the score for political feasibility. **Weight: 20%**

Criterion 3: Cost-Effectiveness

The effectiveness criterion will measure the monetary cost per child impacted by the program in year 0 and account for the total monetary cost in year 0. Year 0 is used to compare monetary values more accurately due to uncertainty about economic conditions in future years. Cost-effectiveness would be measured on a points scale, with lower per-child and total costs awarding more points. Monetary values are provided in USD.

1. Total Year 0 Cost (2 points max)
    - Less than $10 million: 2 points
    - $10 million-$50 million: 1 point

- More than $50 million: 0 points

2. Cost per At-Risk Child Served in Year 0 (3 points max)
    - Less than $1,000 per child: 3 points
    - $1,000-$2,000 per child: 2 points
    - $2,000-$3,000 per child: 1 point
    - More than $3,000 per child: 0 points

The overall monetary cost of the programs will be measured, but effectiveness can be measured broadly by the number of children served by the program in its first year and over the first three years. Because the alternatives I describe cannot guarantee coverage of all children in Port-au-Prince, I cannot make a causal assumption about the change in child recruitment due to the selected alternative. This is why I do not measure cost-effectiveness in terms of monetary cost per child prevented from recruitment.

While this measurement can be helpful, it may not fully capture causality. Other factors, such as broader security improvements or economic changes, could influence recruitment rates independently of the program. Additionally, the human accounting systems in Haiti are poorly funded and managed, and gang membership is often secret, which makes accurate data collection difficult. To improve this measurement, one could consider incorporating multiple indicators: (1) Surveys and qualitative assessments from community members, teachers, and law enforcement to gauge perceived changes in recruitment trends, (2) The number of at-risk youth participating in the program versus those who disengage, (3) Crime statistics related to youth gang activity, and (4) Longitudinal tracking of program participants to assess their outcomes over time.

Budgeting and paying for a program are essential and are key considerations for any administration. It must be known which agencies are using their budgets for these programs, how much is allocated to each agency, which international organizations are assisting, how they will disperse funds, how long the commitments will be, and various other factors. This makes it difficult to calculate, especially for programs lasting more than one year. Given that the program is in Haiti, it is also necessary to track who is receiving the money, if it is being received, and if it is being spent appropriately. I will look at budgets for the past couple of years and the budget request for next year to approximate what is being allocated for similar programs and what is feasible. **Weight: 30%**

Criterion 4: Adaptability to Haitian Political Conditions

Gang violence in Haiti has only contributed further to what were already politically unstable conditions. The Prime Minister often clashes with the Transitional Presidential Council (TPC), and in 2024 alone, there were three different prime ministers and corruption allegations against three members of the TPC. Corruption is rampant in the GoH, and the lines between the public and private sectors can be blurred. Any policy alternative will likely have several stakeholders worldwide, and the program they fund will need to be insulated from political transitions or upheavals. Programs will also likely depend on trust between these organizations and the GoH.

Adaptability would be measured on a points scale and vary depending on several factors. Each one of the following would be worth up to one point, adding up to the five total points assigned to each alternative:

1. Reliance on the GoH to function
    - Light reliance: 1 point
    - Medium reliance: 0.5 points
    - Heavy reliance: 0 points

2. Insulation from gang violence or extortion
    - Strong Insulation: 1 point
    - Medium Insulation: 0.5 points
    - Weak Insulation: 0 points

3. Number of agencies involved in project implementation
    - Few: 1 point
    - Many: 0 points

4. Ability to continue effectively and transparently amid a culture of corruption and mismanagement in Haiti
    - Strong Resilience: 1 point
    - Medium Resilience: 0.5 points
    - Weak Resilience: 0 points

5. Ability to continue functioning if international aid is halted or delayed
    - Strong Resilience: 1 point

- Medium Resilience: 0.5 points
- Weak Resilience: 0 points

This criterion is distinct from administrative feasibility because it is conditional on a change in Haitian political conditions. It is also more a measure of program resilience given a change in Haitian political conditions rather than whether the administrators or implementors can adapt. Feasibility is based on current administrative conditions and staffing, rather than any potential changes in the Haitian system. **Weight: 20%**

Analysis of Alternatives

Each criterion evaluates each alternative and assigns a score from 1 to 5 based on its likelihood of success. Each criterion has different components, which are scored differently, but each adds up to five points per alternative. One is the lowest score, meaning the policy alternative would not perform well according to that criterion. Five is the highest score, meaning the policy alternative would perform well according to that criterion. After analyzing all the alternatives, the scores are more clearly shown in an outcomes matrix.

Alternative 1: Community-Level Education Program

Criterion 1: Administrative Feasibility

- Number of Additional Staff (285): 0 points
- Inter-agency Coordination (Low): 1 point
- Immediacy (mid-2026): 1 point
- **Total: 2/5**

Staffing: The recent decision by the US administration to dismantle USAID significantly impacts the administrative feasibility of potential programs. USAID has historically been a significant conduit for humanitarian initiatives in Haiti, and its closure disrupts existing partnerships and reduces the capacity for on-the-ground project management. Although some staff are being retained to handle essential programs, including those in Haiti, the overall resource reduction poses substantial challenges (Toosi et al., 2025). Furthermore, the US Embassy in Port-au-Prince has been operating under ordered departure since July 2023 due to escalating gang violence, limiting the presence of FSOs who would typically oversee such initiatives. One possibility is assigning a TDY officer to the embassy to facilitate communication and implementation. However, general staff shortages will necessitate stronger ties and more frequent meetings with implementing NGOs and CSOs.

Stronger partner ties are also needed, given the number of additional Haitian personnel required to supervise the program, teach the classes, and provide security. Given the assumption of about 20 schools in the program, around 285 additional personnel, including teachers, program managers, administrators, and security, would be required to support the program. This provides a minimum of 285 additional jobs for Haitians but requires greater coordination between implementing NGOs and program staff.

Immediacy: The urgency of addressing child recruitment is underscored by reports indicating that between 30% and 50% of gang members in Haiti are children, with recruitment increasing by 70% in 2024 (UNICEF, 2024). However, the initiation of new programs will likely face delays due to the current restructuring of US foreign aid agencies and the need to establish new funding mechanisms. Once foreign spending resumes, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement programs (INCLE) may take priority due to a requested $124 million funding increase for 2025 (*FY 2025 International Affairs Budget*, 2025). If the program relies on reallocated funds or new appropriations, bureaucratic processes could further slow implementation, hindering the ability to respond promptly to the crisis. The earliest a program like this could begin with adequate funding is early 2026.

The reliance on local civil society groups for implementation is a strength, but the lack of US personnel on the ground may weaken oversight. If funding can be secured quickly and sustained over time, and if security conditions allow for implementation, the program has the potential to reduce recruitment by providing children with education and a safe space. However, without these conditions, it risks being a short-lived or ineffective intervention.

Alternative 1 (community education program) would receive 2 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 2: Political Feasibility

- USG Willingness to pursue the program (High): 2 points
- Sustainability over time (Medium): 1 point
- Proportion of USG financial contributions (Medium): 0.5 points
- **Total: 3.5/5**

The Trump administration has prioritized domestic initiatives, such as immigration and border security, often at the expense of foreign assistance programs. This shift is evident in the recent freeze on foreign aid, which has impacted various international projects, including those in Haiti. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has demonstrated a focus on Western Hemisphere affairs, emphasizing security and migration issues. During his recent tour of Latin America, Rubio secured agreements aimed at combating undocumented migration and narcotics trafficking. However, his approach has been characterized by a preference for burden-sharing with international partners rather than direct US intervention. For instance, in addressing Haiti's crisis, Rubio has called for assistance from foreign partners to stabilize

the nation, indicating a reluctance for extensive involvement by the US (La Roche Pietri, 2025).

The dismantling of USAID further complicates the political landscape. USAID has historically been instrumental in funding and implementing educational programs in developing countries, including Haiti. Its closure disrupts existing partnerships and reduces the capacity for new initiatives (Knickmeyer & Kinnard, 2025)Even if funding resumes at the previous level, INCLE funding or development assistance may take priority for Haiti's foreign assistance. The program can be framed as a step towards reducing gang violence, but education programs may still be among those least emphasized by the Trump administration.

Sustainability Over Time: The sustainability of these education programs is threatened by both financial instability and security concerns. The dismantling of USAID creates uncertainty regarding long-term funding commitments, as many NGOs that previously relied on USAID support are now facing significant financial shortfalls. Security issues further complicate sustainability. Gangs control significant portions of Port-au-Prince, and there is a risk that they may interfere with or target educational initiatives, especially if perceived as threats to their influence. Gang interference could take the form of blocking participant attendance, harming or kidnapping staff or participants, or damage and destruction of the program site, all of which threaten the physical and financial safety of the program. With around 285 staff on the ground, an uninterrupted budget, and no significant changes in political affairs or gang violence, an education program like this would last around three years.

Given these factors, the political feasibility of implementing community-level education programs in Haiti hinges on securing substantial involvement from international partners like UNICEF, Hope for Haiti, and Plan International. The more responsibility these entities assume, both financially and operationally, the more likely the US government is to support the initiative. This approach aligns with the administration's preference for shared responsibility in international affairs.

Alternative 1 (community education program) would receive 3.5 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 3: Cost-Effectiveness

- Total Cost in Year 0 ($4.68 million): 2 points
- Cost per Child Impacted in Year 0 ($936): 3 points
- **Total: 4/5**

Cost Analysis: The recent 90-day freeze on foreign aid by the US administration has significantly disrupted global humanitarian efforts, including in Haiti. Essential programs such as health clinics and food distribution have been shuttered, and the downsizing of USAID has further complicated funding channels (Farge et al., 2025). In Fiscal Year 2025, Haiti received $266.3 million in US foreign aid, ranking it among the top recipients in the world (*US Foreign Aid by Country 2025*, n.d.). However, the recent aid freeze and the potential closure of USAID introduce uncertainties in the availability and distribution of these funds. To ensure the sustainability and success of these programs, it is crucial to explore alternative funding sources, such as partnerships with international organizations and private entities. If the program began in January 2026, **the cost for the first year would be around USD 4.68 million,** accounting for projected inflation in Haiti (*Haiti - Inflation Rate 1989-2029*, 2024). **Over three years, the program would cost around $14.2 million.**

Effectiveness Evaluation: Community-based educational interventions have shown promise in reducing youth involvement in gangs. Studies highlight the importance of children having safe spaces for learning and growth free from violence or influence from armed groups around them (Vargas-Baron, 2007). Additionally, children need structured environments while their parents work, and this provides an alternative to the more than 900 schools closed since January 2024 due to gang violence (Agunos & Estrella, 2025). Child protection committees in African refugee camps have successfully reduced child recruitment into armed groups, demonstrating that similar approaches could be practical in Haiti (InterAction, 2024). Even if the program is not widely implemented across Port-au-Prince, it will still offer children physical protection from gangs and critical-thinking skills to help them resist recruitment on their own.

This program could serve 5,000 children in Port-au-Prince, based on the size of the facilities used. As a result, the costs per child served are as follows:

Cost per at-risk child served in Year 0 (2026): $936
Cost per at-risk child served over the first 3 years: $945

The costs for this alternative rely on several assumptions, including the number of schools, staff, and days per week the program operates. Given these assumptions, the costs are added together and calculated on a yearly basis through 2029. The figures provided in this overview are the per-child and total costs in Year 0 and over the program's first three years. The full cost calculations are further described in **Appendix B**.

Alternative 1 (community education program) would receive 5 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 4: Adaptability to Haitian Political Conditions

- Reliance on the GoH to function (Light): 1 point
- Insulation from gang violence or extortion (Weak): 0 points
- Number of agencies involved in project implementation (Few): 1 point
- Ability to continue effectively and transparently amid a culture of corruption and mismanagement in Haiti (Medium): 0.5 points
- Ability to continue functioning if international aid is halted or delayed (Medium): 0.5 points
- **Total: 3/5**

Adaptability can be assessed by evaluating the program's complexity and the number of stakeholders involved. Partnering with the UN gives the program credibility in the eyes of the international community, the GoH, and the USG. In collaboration with Haiti- and children-focused NGOs like Hope for Haiti and Plan International, an education program could be maintained despite political instability or escalating gang violence. These NGOs are well-established internationally and have continued providing aid in tumultuous times for Haiti. Their existing presence within communities enhances the program's resilience to political upheavals.

Concerns remain about NGO reliance on donor funding, particularly regarding competing priorities in other countries, security threats in Haiti, and financial stability. However, established NGOs such as those mentioned have sustained their focus on Haitian issues since the devastating 2010 earthquake (Nesbitt & Miks, 2020).

Alternative 1 (community education program) would receive 3 points based on this criterion.

Alternative 2: Cash Transfers for Children and Families

Criterion 1: Administrative Feasibility

- Number of Additional Staff (100): 1 point
- Inter-Agency Coordination (High): 0 points
- Immediacy (mid-2026): 2 points
- **Total: 3/5**

Staffing: The recent dismantling of USAID provides the most significant challenge for this criterion, as it was the agency most experienced in administering such financial programs. There may also be a lack of NGO personnel in Port-au-Prince to oversee and coordinate financial disbursements, which could delay program rollout and increase the risk of inefficiency or failure. Additionally, Haiti's weak administrative structures and history of corruption make it challenging to ensure funds are correctly allocated and tracked, as there are no robust accounting mechanisms to prevent misappropriation or diversion of funds. This means that DoS offices will have to work more closely together across bureaus and with the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, UNICEF, and the Haitian government to disperse funds. This could require creating an interagency working group for the program's implementation, providing regular updates on child recruitment, and subsequent monitoring of the program. However, it would not require more than 100 additional personnel in Haiti to disburse funds and monitor the program itself.

Immediacy: Studies show that adolescent recipients of unconditional cash transfers benefit from having additional money in their pockets, whether by attending school, dropping drinking or drug habits, or preventing early marriage (Baird et al., 2016). One World Bank study shows that after a two-year program of cash transfers ceases, the recipients revert to these behaviors at rates similar to before treatment (Baird et al., 2016). This implies that even a program as short as 18 months could show effects on preventing recruitment, with households in this proposed cash transfer program receiving an additional minimum of 50% of their current income *per child*.

If reliant on new budgetary allocations, the program may not begin until at least midway through the 2026 fiscal year, delaying critical support for vulnerable families and allowing gangs to continue recruiting children in the meantime. While funding could be reallocated from existing development programs, the absence of USAID and the ongoing security crisis make rapid deployment unlikely. Additionally, many Haitians lack access to banking services,

financial literacy, or essential identification documents, so even if funds are allocated, logistical barriers could delay or prevent distribution to intended recipients. With the reallocation of existing funds from similar programs held by UNICEF or the IDB, this program could begin by January 2026.

Alternative 2 (cash transfers) would receive 3 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 2: Political Feasibility

- USG Willingness to pursue the program (Mixed): 1 point
- Sustainability over time (Low): 0 points
- Proportion of USG financial contributions (Medium): 0.5 points
- **Total: 1.5/5**

The current US administration under President Donald Trump has implemented a 90-day freeze on foreign aid, causing significant disruptions in global humanitarian efforts. Despite exemptions for essential services, many programs remain stalled due to confusion and communication breakdowns (Farge et al., 2025). However, specific initiatives like the Multinational Security Support (MSS) Mission are funded by the United Nations and donor countries and are exempted from the aid freeze. This indicates that targeted cash transfer programs may still receive support, especially if they demonstrate clear benefits and involve international partnerships (Kimani, 2025). Therefore, increasing contributions from international NGOs like the World Bank, the IDB, and UNICEF could enhance political feasibility. The more responsibility and funding these partners assume, the more likely the program is to gain approval and support from the US government.

Support for this program from the US administration could increase if the bulk of funding and administrative work were shifted to international financial institutions or NGOs with existing infrastructure in Haiti. Additionally, limiting direct US financial responsibility may reduce political resistance from US policymakers who are skeptical of foreign aid spending. The more decentralized the funding and implementation, the higher the program's viability under the current administration. This is particularly the case given the administration's "America first" policies and the dismantling of USAID. The necessity of collaboration with the Haitian government, which is highly unstable and has weak institutions, further undermines political feasibility, as US policymakers may be reluctant to approve direct engagement with a government that lacks legitimacy. If the program can be framed as

contributing to broader regional stability or national security by potentially reducing migration pressures on the US, then it may have a stronger case for funding.

Sustainability Over Time: The long-term viability of cash transfers depends on continuous funding, security conditions, and recipient protection. If the program provides only temporary relief and ends before making a lasting impact, gangs could quickly resume recruitment efforts, effectively neutralizing any gains. However, the financial commitments required by the international community are substantial, and there may be challenges in securing or maintaining funding as new policy challenges arise around the world. Furthermore, there is a high risk that gangs would extort families receiving cash assistance, either by demanding direct payments or coercing them into continued dependence on criminal networks. This not only threatens the effectiveness of the program but could also unintentionally strengthen gang control over impoverished communities by making them intermediaries in aid distribution. These factors make it more likely that this cash transfer program would last for a maximum of 18 months.

A well-designed program that minimizes USG financial burden, ensures accountability, and aligns with broader US interests in regional stability would have a better chance of success.

Alternative 2 (cash transfers) would receive 1.5 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 3: Cost-Effectiveness

- Total Cost in Year 0 ($38.67 million): 0 points
- Cost per Child Impacted in Year 0 ($473): 3 points
- **Total: 3/5**

Cost Analysis: This program would be led and coordinated by the Department of State, but would rely on funds from the UN, the IDB, the World Bank, and Plan International, supplemented by contributions from member countries and other NGOs. Given that total US foreign assistance to Haiti in 2025 was $356 million, it is unlikely that the USG would contribute a substantial share of the cost this year (*FY 2025 International Affairs Budget*, 2025). However, there is potential to further increase the budget for the Economic Support Fund in the 2026 budget request, following an allocation of $7 million in 2025. Haiti continues to be a focal point for WHA and the international community, and providing funds for children in poverty could improve food and education access in addition to reducing child recruitment.

Ideally, the IDB and World Bank would lead on contributing funds, and UNICEF would implement the program and contribute funds via donor countries.

The cash transfers would be conditional on being used for food or education, registration with IBESR, and reporting avoidance of gang activity. They would be provided to households living below the poverty line in Port-au-Prince with at least one child between the ages of six and fifteen (6-15). The senior member of the household (mother or father) would receive USD 28 (HTG 3,700) per month via Digicel's MonCash application over 18 months. Low estimates indicate that approximately 81,000 children aged 6-15 years old are living in multidimensional poverty in Port-au-Prince, and that there are around 0.835 children in this age range per household (Tromben et al., 2020).

Given the transfer amount of $28 per month and inflation in Haiti, the total cost for 18 months of cash transfers would be around USD 56 million, which breaks down to around $44 per child per month (or $36 per household per month). **The total cost for Year 0 would be around $38.7 million.** Approximately 21% of this total cost represents built-in administrative costs, which include program design, transaction fees through Digicel, and monitoring and evaluation. This cost is based on a cash transfer program conducted in Haiti from 2012 to 2014, and is explained further in **Appendix C.** The most important things to monitor include corruption or extortion of funds from gangs or the GoH, misuse of funds by families, and failure to report gang affiliation. False reporting of income by a household would be grounds for immediate suspension from receiving benefits. Cost calculations are included in the appendix, and total costs are extended through 2028.

Effectiveness Evaluation: The program's effectiveness in reducing gang recruitment should ideally be measured by comparing child recruitment rates before and after implementation. However, given Haiti's poor administrative capacity and the clandestine nature of gang operations, accurate data collection remains a significant obstacle. Alternative indicators, such as community surveys, crime statistics, and tracking program participants over time, could provide supplemental evidence, but these methods are less precise. If a significant portion of funds is lost to corruption, misallocated, or extorted by gangs, the program could end up funding the groups it seeks to weaken, making it ineffective and counterproductive. Mobile transfers reduce the likelihood of cash theft, but could facilitate more intricate methods of online fraud by implementers (Gordon, 2015).

This program has the potential to serve up to 81,000 impoverished children in Port-au-Prince, as it would give thousands of households the financial means to avoid reliance on

gangs for money or survival. The numbers below describe the program if it reaches all its intended recipients. If fewer children receive their cash benefits, the price per child would increase. The costs per child served are as follows:

Cost per at-risk child served in Year 0 (2026): $473
Cost per at-risk child served over the first 3 years: $562
Cost per at-risk child served over the first 18 months (program length): $500

The costs for this alternative are based on several assumptions, including the $28 per month transfer value, the number of children aged 6-15 per household in poverty, and changing rates of population growth and inflation in Haiti. The assumption that 21% of the total program cost accounts for administrative costs reflects the costs of a 2012 cash transfer program in Haiti called "Ti Manman Cheri." The 21% figure was calculated by Haiti's Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes (Tromben et al., 2020). The costs are estimated given these assumptions and calculated annually through 2028. The figures in this overview represent the per-child and total costs in Year 0 and over the program's first three years. I also include the per-child cost of the first 18 months of the program, since this is its intended duration. The full cost calculations can be found in **Appendix C**.

Because this program could serve more children, the costs are distributed more evenly and are lower per child than those of the other two alternatives.

Alternative 2 (cash transfers) would receive 3 points based on this criterion

Criterion 4: Adaptability to Haitian Political Conditions

- Reliance on the GoH to function (Medium): 0.5
- Insulation from gang violence or extortion (Medium): 0.5
- Number of agencies involved in project implementation (Many): 0
- Ability to continue effectively and transparently amid a culture of corruption and mismanagement in Haiti (Weak): 0
- Ability to continue functioning if international aid is halted or delayed (Weak): 0
- **Total: 1/5**

Any program relying on cooperation with the Haitian government risks disruption if key officials are replaced or political infighting weakens institutional support. The success of this alternative depends on its ability to function independently of shifting political conditions

in Haiti. This insulation remains challenging given the need to collaborate with Haitian authorities and companies. One major factor limiting adaptability is the number of stakeholders involved. A program dependent on multiple international agencies, the Haitian government, local civil society organizations, and financial institutions faces significant bureaucratic and logistical challenges. If political conditions change, relationships with government actors may have to be renegotiated, which could prevent aid distribution.

Additionally, cash-based assistance programs in Haiti are particularly vulnerable to corruption, both at the administrative level and through direct extortion by gangs. If political instability increases, government actors could divert or manipulate funds, making it harder to ensure that aid reaches the intended recipients. If gang influence over local officials grows, families receiving cash transfers could face heightened risks of extortion or retribution.

The financial institutions involved in this alternative possess significant expertise in distributing cash transfers worldwide. While this lends to the program's credibility, it requires input from many additional stakeholders who can just as easily prioritize issues in other countries. Financial support could be stopped or diverted at any time, especially if it is evident that funds are being misappropriated or extorted. Although most of these organizations already disburse financial aid to Haiti, drastic changes to the government or increased gang violence could dissuade further investment.

Alternative 2 (cash transfers) would receive 1 point based on this criterion.

Alternative 3: Community-Level Religious Program

The analysis of religious programs is mainly similar to the analysis of education programs, with the main differences being the stakeholders and the political feasibility. The religious program I describe also serves children by continuing their basic education rudimentarily. Religious programs may also be more insulated from gang influence than education programs, which is an additional positive aspect. However, the US government is prevented from pursuing religious programs at home and abroad, which makes this program largely infeasible.

Criterion 1: Administrative Feasibility

- Number of Additional Staff (85): 1 point
- Inter-Agency Coordination (High): 0 points
- Immediacy (early 2026): 2 points
- **Total: 3/5**

Staffing: Like previous alternatives, the USAID closure disrupts existing partnerships and reduces the capacity for on-the-ground project management. Although some staff are being retained to handle essential programs, including those in Haiti, the overall reduction in resources poses a substantial challenge (Toosi et al., 2025). The embassy in Port-au-Prince being on ordered departure also continues to limit the presence of FSOs who could monitor such initiatives. However, the USG's inability to work directly on this program will necessitate stronger ties and more outreach between NGOs developing and implementing the program.

Many religious NGOs worldwide work in poor countries, and the more organizations that contribute funding and personnel, the better. This could, in turn, increase support for the Haitian personnel who are in charge of the program itself. Because this program would have fewer schools, it would also require much fewer Haitian staff. A smaller number of teachers would result in needing around 85 personnel to begin the program.

Immediacy: The urgency of addressing child recruitment is underscored by reports indicating that between 30% and 50% of gang members in Haiti are children, with recruitment increasing by 70% last year (UNICEF, 2024). However, the initiation of new programs will likely face delays due to the current restructuring of US foreign aid agencies and the need to establish new funding mechanisms. Since this program prioritizes religion, it could benefit

from increased attention from the NGO sector, which means little reliance on the USG and quicker implementation. The earliest a program like this could begin with adequate funding would be early 2026.

The reliance on local civil society groups and churches for implementation is a strength, but the lack of US personnel on the ground may weaken oversight. If funding can be secured quickly and sustained over time, and if security conditions allow for implementation, the program has the potential to reduce recruitment by providing children with a safe space for worship and education.

Alternative 3 (community religious program) would receive 3 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 2: Political Feasibility

- USG Willingness to pursue the program (Low): 0 points
- Sustainability over time (High): 2 points
- Proportion of USG financial contributions (N/A): 0 points*
- **Total: 2/5**

The Trump administration has prioritized domestic initiatives at the expense of foreign assistance programs, which is evident in the recent freeze of foreign aid and the shutdown of USAID. USAID has historically been instrumental in funding and implementing religious programs in developing countries, including Haiti. Its closure disrupts existing partnerships and reduces the capacity for new initiatives (Knickmeyer & Kinnard, 2025). Even if funding resumes at the previous level, INCLE funding or development assistance may take priority instead of funding for new programs. Religious programs for children may not be a priority for the administration, but a religious program may resonate more with conservative policymakers than an education program.

However, this does not change the fact that the USG cannot recommend or pursue programs abroad that specifically focus on religion. The separation of church and state requires no federal funding for religious programs or institutions at home and abroad, which makes this religious education program unlikely to be championed by the US State Department (A. Lee, personal communication, March 19, 2025). This program could be much more successful if

developed exclusively by foreign NGOs that are trusted by the international community for their work in the religious space.

Sustainability Over Time: The sustainability of this religion program is threatened by both financial instability and security concerns. The dismantling of USAID creates uncertainty regarding long-term funding commitments, as many NGOs that previously relied on USAID support are now facing significant financial shortfalls. There is also the risk of gang interference with the program if it is perceived as a threat to their influence. However, this risk may not be as high as with a religious program because of how important Christianity is to Haitians (*Hope for Haiti Comes from Within*, 2010). The religious nature of the program also gives it a higher chance of lasting beyond its initial directive of preventing child recruitment. Gang interference is still a threat, and harming participants, staff, or property could all threaten the physical and financial safety of the program. With around 85 staff on the ground, an uninterrupted budget, and no major changes in political affairs or gang violence, a religious education program like this one would last around three years.

Given these factors, the political feasibility of implementing community-level religious programs in Haiti hinges on a non-USG program that can secure substantial involvement from partners such as UNICEF, Faith in Action International, Have Faith Haiti Mission, and the Catholic Church. The US may support the initiative in practice, but it is unable to contribute financial resources or personnel to the program. *Having no technical or financial support from USG means this program cannot be scored for proportion of USG financial contributions.

Alternative 3 (community religious program) would receive 2 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 3: Cost-Effectiveness

- Total Cost in Year 0 ($3.0 million): 2 points
- Cost per Child Impacted in Year 0 ($1,498): 2 points
- **Total: 4/5**

Cost Analysis: The recent 90-day freeze on foreign aid by the US administration has caused significant disruptions in global humanitarian efforts, including in Haiti. Essential programs such as health clinics and food distribution have been shuttered, and the downsizing of

USAID has further complicated funding channels (Farge et al., 2025). In fiscal year 2025, Haiti was allocated $266.3 million in US foreign aid, ranking it among the top recipients (*US Foreign Aid by Country 2025*, n.d.). However, the recent aid freeze and the potential shutdown of USAID introduce uncertainties in the availability and distribution of these funds. It is crucial to explore alternative funding sources, such as partnerships with international organizations and private entities, to ensure the sustainability and success of these programs. If the program began in January 2026, **the cost for the first year would be around USD 3.0 million,** accounting for projected inflation in Haiti (*Haiti - Inflation Rate 1989-2029*, 2024). **Over three years, the program would cost around $9.01 million.**

Effectiveness Evaluation: Community-based religious interventions have shown promise in reducing youth involvement in gangs. A 2021 study of gang recruitment in Central American countries by USAID and Florida International University showed that religion and the role of God can have a strong influence on whether individuals join gangs (Cruz et al., 2023). Strengthening children's morals and ethics through the lens of religion would ideally have this same effect in Haiti. The children in these schools would be exposed to religious principles of nonviolence, which would be reinforced by critical thinking and reasoning skills to help them resist gang recruitment.

This program can serve 2,000 children in Port-au-Prince, due to the size of the spaces used to host the program. As a result, the costs per child served are as follows:

Cost per at-risk child served in Year 0 (2026): $1,498
Cost per at-risk child served over the first 3 years: $1,513

The costs for this alternative are based on several assumptions, including the number of schools, staff, and days per week the program operates. The costs are calculated annually through 2029. The figures provided in this overview are the per-child and total costs in Year 0 and over the first three years of the program. The full cost calculations are further described in **Appendix D**. Because this program potentially serves fewer children, the costs per child are not as widespread and are higher than in the previous two alternatives.

Alternative 3 (community religious program) would receive 4 points based on this criterion.

Criterion 4: Adaptability to Haitian Political Conditions

- Reliance on the GoH to function (Light): 1 point
- Insulation from gang violence or extortion (Medium): 0.5 points
- Number of agencies involved in project implementation (Few): 1 point
- Ability to continue effectively and transparently amid a culture of corruption and mismanagement in Haiti (Medium): 0.5 points
- Ability to continue functioning if international aid is halted or delayed (Medium): 0.5 points
- **Total: 3.5/5**

Adaptability can be assessed by evaluating the program's complexity and the number of stakeholders involved. Partnering with UNICEF lends credibility to the program among the international community, and partnering with Haiti-focused religious NGOs like Faith in Action International, Have Faith Haiti Mission, and the Catholic Church itself lends credibility to the program. These NGOs have provided aid in Haiti for many years, and have established partnerships in Port-au-Prince's most impoverished communities. There are general concerns about donor-based NGOs, specifically regarding competing priorities in other countries, Haiti's security challenges, and funding stability. Even though religious NGOs may be more tied to the communities they serve in Haiti, they are affected by the loss of funds previously granted by USAID (Stanley, 2025). This could lead to programming challenges and less flexibility in the future.

Even if there are significant changes at the national government level, these groups' ties to the community and the program's religious nature can help keep it operational. Since the implementers are religious rather than political groups, there would be less impact on them or the program in the event of significant leadership changes in the GoH. This aspect of the program also reduces (but does not eliminate) the likelihood of gang interference or extortion. Gang members may be religious themselves and recognize the value of a part-time religious education for children. However, this is not a foolproof solution, and the locations would still require a security presence.

Alternative 3 (community religious program) would receive 3.5 points based on this criterion.

Outcomes Matrix

The following outcomes matrix outlines the points assigned to each alternative and sums them up to see which option is best. Each criterion has a maximum of 5 points, so there is a maximum of 20 unweighted points per alternative. However, the four criteria are weighted differently based on their importance to the alternative. Administrative feasibility and cost-effectiveness are weighted at 30 percent, and political feasibility and adaptability at 20 percent. The total weighted points are calculated out of 5. The raw and weighted scores are provided below in *Figure 6*, with the weighted scores used to determine which policy alternative to pursue. The weighted points are shown underneath the raw points in each box in parentheses.

	Administrative Feasibility	**Political Feasibility**	**Cost-Effectiveness**	**Adaptability to Haitian Conditions**	**Total Points (Raw Score/20)**	**Total Points (Weighted/5)**
Education Program	2 (0.6)	3.5 (0.7)	5 (1.5)	3 (0.9)	13.5	**3.7**
Cash Transfers	3 (0.9)	1.5 (0.3)	3 (0.9)	1 (0.2)	8.5	**2.3**
Religious Program	3 (0.9)	2 (0.4)	4 (1.2)	3.5 (1.05)	12.5	**3.55**

Figure 6: Policy Outcomes Matrix

Recommendation

Based on the analysis of each alternative and the points assigned to each, **the community-based education program emerges as the best alternative**. It ranked highest in two of the four criteria, and the political feasibility criterion was the differentiating factor between the other two alternatives. Administrative feasibility was rated lower because of the high number of Haitian staff needed to operate the program compared to the other alternatives. Ensuring sufficient teaching staff and management personnel is essential for the program to reach the

desired number of children and keep them safe from gang influence. Political feasibility was rated the highest of the three alternatives because direct cash transfers and religious programs are not within the direct scope of USG policy intervention (A. Lee, personal communication, March 19, 2025). That alternative might have been selected if the USG had the authority to pursue such religious programs. Since education for impoverished children is a priority for many organizations, this program could likely continue if financial sponsors change or withdraw. Although full implementation is planned for 2026, the program could be piloted at a smaller level starting in 2025 before expanding in its first year.

Because the education program requires more personnel on the ground, it costs more than the religious program, but significantly less than the cash transfer program. Cash transfers are cost-effective because they target many people, but the high total cost of the program makes substantial USG financial involvement less feasible. Similarly, the more students the education program attracts, the lower the per-child cost. The number of students and schools can cause variability in total costs, but including more children in the program would ideally reduce child recruitment. The education program's adaptability to Haitian political conditions is comparable to that of the religious program, but because it is secular, it relies more heavily on the GoH to operate. If government conditions shift during the implementation stage, they may affect how aid programs are managed and how gangs operate.

Implementation

Program Design Overview

Since many schools are closed in Port-au-Prince, the program will operate five days a week for six hours daily and provide one meal per day. It will use existing spaces within the community but will include a budget for building new spaces as the program expands. This will provide children with a structured, safe environment away from gang influence. The program aims to foster academic growth and social responsibility while creating a pathway for children to avoid gang involvement.

Curriculum

The community-level education program will focus on providing education and moral development in a safe environment. The target group will consist of children aged 6 to 15, divided into two categories: younger children (ages 6-12) and older children (ages 13-15).

The curriculum will focus on foundational literacy and numeracy skills for younger children. Language development in Haitian Creole and French will emphasize phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and basic writing exercises. Mathematics instruction will cover fundamental arithmetic operations, introductions to fractions, shapes, measurements, and practical applications such as counting money and telling time. In addition, moral and character development lessons will teach children about nonviolence, honesty, responsibility, and community engagement. Civic education will introduce them to Haiti's history, fundamental rights and responsibilities, and environmental awareness. To support their well-being, children will also receive instruction in health and hygiene, covering topics such as disease prevention, nutrition, and mental health. Creative and physical activities, including music, dance, storytelling, and sports, will promote self-expression and teamwork.

The curriculum will build upon basic education for older children while incorporating practical and vocational skills to prepare them for future employment. Advanced literacy and communication lessons will focus on reading comprehension, persuasive writing, and public speaking. Mathematics will include algebra, financial literacy, budgeting, and entrepreneurship fundamentals. Leadership and critical thinking modules will encourage decision-making, conflict resolution, and ethical responsibility. A career development component will expose students to vocational training in trades such as carpentry, mechanics, and tailoring, as well as digital literacy skills like computer use and social media training. Additionally, students will receive education in health, personal safety, stress management,

and strategies for avoiding gang influence. To ensure program success, assessments will be conducted to track student progress and make necessary improvements.

Counseling and Skill Building

Beyond academics, the program will integrate mentorship and counseling to support children's emotional well-being, personal growth, and career development. Trained mentors, including local community leaders, educators, and even reformed gang members, will provide guidance, encouragement, and positive role models for the students. These mentors will help children navigate personal challenges, build self-confidence, and set long-term goals. Counseling services will focus on addressing trauma, stress, and the psychological impact of living in high-risk environments, offering children a safe space to express their emotions and develop healthy coping mechanisms. Additionally, career counseling will introduce older students to potential career paths, vocational training opportunities, and skill-building workshops in areas like digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and trades. Most importantly, the program will prioritize creating safe spaces and shielding children from gang influence while providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary for a brighter future.

Gender Considerations

One major challenge is safety and mobility, as girls are often at a higher risk of harassment or violence, which may prevent them from traveling to educational spaces. Additionally, girls often face domestic responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings or contributing to household work, limiting their ability to attend school. In contrast, boys are more likely to be targeted for gang recruitment and may experience pressure to engage in violence. Cultural and societal norms may also prioritize boys' education and employment over girls', which can affect learning and employment outcomes (Buitrago-Hernandez et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, the program would implement safe transportation options and secure learning environments to encourage girls' attendance while offering alternative learning schedules for those balancing household duties. Parental engagement initiatives can challenge gender norms and reinforce the value of education for both boys and girls. The curriculum should also include gender-sensitive career training, ensuring that vocational opportunities extend beyond traditional gender roles. Moreover, counseling and mentorship programs should provide trauma-informed support for both boys and girls, recognizing that girls may face gender-based violence while boys may experience gang-related trauma. Including boys in gender equality discussions can help shift harmful norms and promote respectful community interactions.

Stakeholders

Education-Focused NGOs

The primary stakeholders will include UNICEF, the Hope for Haiti Foundation, Plan International, and the Regroupement Éducation Pour Toutes et pour Tous (REPT). These are not exclusive, and any project will be a combination of prominent international institutions that can provide funding and planning, working with smaller, local organizations that are known in the community and can implement the program in a trustworthy manner. These organizations should be well-established in Haiti, have strong ties to the community, and possess a deep understanding of local dynamics. They should also provide additional staff and training, drawing on their extensive experience in child development, education, and community-based initiatives. Additional local partners include Fonkoze, a Haitian NGO that promotes economic growth through microfinance and community-based programs. Partners in Health, which, while mainly focused on healthcare, has a history of working closely with community organizations in Haiti and could help support the program's community integration efforts (Fonkoze, n.d.).

Donors and International Partners

Internationally, organizations like UNICEF will be critical in funding and coordinating the program, ensuring alignment with global child protection standards. The IDB will also be a key partner in providing financial support. These partnerships will ensure the program's adaptability to local needs, build community trust, and provide diverse funding and operational expertise, making it more likely to succeed in reducing gang recruitment and providing safety and education to vulnerable children. However, donors will require detailed reporting and accountability to ensure their funds are used effectively. They expect the program to demonstrate measurable outcomes in reducing gang recruitment and improving educational attainment among vulnerable children. To maintain donor support, the program should provide quarterly progress reports, financial transparency, and impact assessments. Clear communication about the program's success in addressing these critical issues will help ensure continued donor confidence. To mitigate the lack of US government personnel, a TDY officer from HA could help oversee the program's strategic implementation, ensuring that the goals and funding are aligned with the United States' broader priorities for Haiti. The officer would also facilitate communication between USG, international, and local partners, ensuring the program meets operational standards.

Government of Haiti

The Government of Haiti will likely support the education program if it aligns with the country's child protection and education priorities. Given the security challenges and political instability in Haiti, the GoH may have concerns about gang violence and the potential disruption the program could face. Additionally, they may worry about reliance on international aid and its implications for national sovereignty. Engaging with the GoH early on to ensure endorsement and collaboration will be critical. By involving the government in key decision-making processes, the program can also secure its long-term support and sustainability, particularly if it can help reduce child recruitment.

Gang Alliances

Gangs and criminal organizations in Haiti are likely to be resistant to the program, as it directly challenges their ability to recruit children and maintain control over communities. Children who would have been vulnerable to gang recruitment may now find an alternative, safe space where they can receive education and moral guidance. To reduce the threat of gang violence, the program should adopt a community-based peace-building approach, working with local leaders and mediators to foster communication with gang members and address any concerns. Even so, it is important to maintain a strong security presence around educational sites to protect participants and staff from potential interference or violence.

Parents and Families

Parents' involvement directly impacts a child's vulnerability to gang influence and their overall development. The program will offer parent workshops on conflict resolution, economic empowerment, and alternative discipline strategies to support families in fostering a safe and nurturing environment. These sessions will equip parents with tools to manage household stress, resolve disputes peacefully, and adopt positive, nonviolent disciplinary methods. Economic empowerment workshops will guide financial literacy, small business opportunities, and job resources to help families gain financial stability and reduce reliance on gangs for survival. By actively engaging parents through regular meetings and community discussions, the program aims to strengthen family bonds, create safer home environments, and ensure long-term positive outcomes for children.

Funding Strategy

The community-level education program will require an estimated USD 4.6 million for its first year and $14.2 million over three years, accounting for projected inflation in Haiti. Given the 90-day freeze on US foreign aid and USAID's elimination, securing funding

through alternative channels will be essential. The estimated cost per child served is $936 in the first year and $945 over three years. To increase the scale of the program or lower per-child costs, the program will seek private-sector contributions and diaspora engagement. Haitian diaspora communities in the US and Canada will be encouraged to contribute through crowdfunding campaigns and targeted donation drives, which could help subsidize tuition, meals, and security costs.

A UNICEF-led crowdfunding strategy can be implemented to ensure sustained funding for the education program, leveraging multi-donor trust funds, international partnerships, and digital fundraising campaigns. The program can tap into UNICEF's Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund, which pools resources from high-income nations and private foundations to support child-focused initiatives in crisis-affected areas (UNICEF, n.d.-a). Additionally, direct government contributions from donor nations like Canada, France, and EU member states can be pursued to fill gaps left by the US foreign aid freeze. The program can also integrate corporate partnerships, modeled after UNICEF's past collaborations with private companies, to secure funding for educational materials, teacher salaries, and security costs. Digital crowdfunding efforts, similar to UNICEF's social media-driven campaigns, could be launched to engage the Haitian diaspora community, encouraging donations through faith-based networks, international churches, and philanthropic organizations (UNICEF, n.d.-b).

Program Launch and Development

The education program will be rolled out in three phases to ensure effective implementation and adaptation to local conditions: (1) Initial Setup (first six months), (2) Full-Scale Operation (months 7-18), and (3) Evaluation and Expansion (months 19-36). The first six months will focus on securing facilities, recruiting staff, and engaging the community. Full-scale operations will see the program running at full capacity, supporting up to 5,000 children with the potential for further expansion.

The program will use existing community centers and schools to minimize infrastructure costs and increase community buy-in. Facilities will be equipped with desks, chalkboards, educational materials, and digital learning tools where possible. Community leaders and local education-focused organizations will play a critical role in outreach, encouraging families to enroll their children and building trust among residents, reducing the likelihood of gang interference.

The program will require a core team of approximately 285 staff members, including educators, administrators, security personnel, and community outreach specialists. Staff will be divided across multiple locations, ensuring a manageable student-teacher ratio and allowing the program to cover different neighborhoods effectively.

- **200 teachers** (**spread across locations**)**:** Each teacher will initially oversee small classes of 25-30 children, ensuring individualized instruction and personal mentorship. As more schools are utilized or built, more teachers will be hired to accommodate the increased number of children in the program.
- **10 program managers:** These individuals will oversee daily operations, staff coordination, and curriculum implementation while ensuring the program meets its educational and safety goals. They will also manage stakeholder relationships, monitor program impacts, and address security risks and funding continuity challenges. They will coordinate curriculum development, track student progress, and liaise with funding organizations and implementing partners.
- **15 administrative personnel:** These individuals will oversee program logistics, financial management, staff supervision, and community engagement to ensure smooth operations and sustainability. Their responsibilities include coordinating class schedules, managing budgets, monitoring program impact, and liaising with partners like UNICEF and faith-based NGOs to maintain transparency and secure ongoing funding.
- **40 security personnel:** To mitigate gang threats, security will be strategically positioned around each program site, ensuring safety while maintaining a non-threatening presence.
- **20 community outreach workers:** These staff members will engage with local families, religious leaders, and gang members to promote the program and reduce hostility.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation for this program will focus on tracking student progress, program effectiveness, and community impact. The program will assess children through a combination of academic, behavioral, and practical evaluations. Literacy and math assessments will measure students' reading comprehension, writing skills, and mathematical proficiency, while behavioral observations will track engagement in discussions on nonviolence, responsibility, and civic duties. Vocational readiness will be evaluated through practical assessments in technical skills, digital literacy, and financial management.

Leadership development will be monitored through self-assessments, mentor feedback, and students' participation in teamwork and public speaking exercises.

Key metrics for the program itself will include student enrollment and retention rates, skill development, and the prevention of gang recruitment among participants. Program managers will compile data for quarterly evaluations to ensure alignment with program goals. Community engagement will be integral to this process, with regular feedback sessions held with local leaders, parents, and program staff to gauge satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. In addition, the program will collaborate with external evaluators from partner organizations like UNICEF and faith-based NGOs to conduct annual impact assessments. This data will refine curriculum delivery, improve safety protocols, and ensure that the program remains responsive to community needs.

Worst-Case Scenarios

Gang Violence

One of the most significant risks for the program is gang interference with the program's locations. If gangs feel the program hinders their ability to recruit children, they may retaliate by harming or kidnapping children, teachers, or other staff involved. This could lead to the program being halted, children being too fearful to attend, or staff withdrawing for safety concerns. To mitigate this risk, it is crucial to establish a strong security presence around program sites, engage with local leaders for conflict resolution, and ensure the community's support. Building relationships with gang members can help reduce confrontations but requires careful management and security protocols.

Political Instability

Haiti has experienced frequent and often violent political shifts, and a significant government overhaul could lead to a shift in priorities or policies that undermine support for foreign aid and religious programs. In the worst-case scenario, this could result in the government withdrawing its support for the initiative, directly or indirectly, through reduced resources or security. To address this, it is essential to cultivate strong partnerships with local religious organizations and international entities like UNICEF, which can provide stability if government support fluctuates.

Funding Freezes

Another significant risk is funding shortages or the withdrawal of financial support. Given the freeze on foreign aid in Haiti, there is uncertainty around the availability of funds for new initiatives. If key donors withdraw their funding or there are delays in securing resources, the program may face financial challenges that hinder its operation. To mitigate this, it is critical to diversify funding sources by tapping into various international organizations, private donors, and faith-based contributions. A contingency fund could also be established to cover any short-term gaps, and transparency in financial reporting will be crucial in securing continued funding.

Conclusions

The situation in Haiti poses one of the most challenging policy problems for the US and the international community. Factors like corruption, poverty, and violence consistently withstand intervention, and their resistance to change makes more niche issues like child recruitment even more difficult to address. This was reflected by the members of the diaspora I spoke with, who were pessimistic and critical about the current political and social state of the country. UVA Politics Professor Robert Fatton highlighted the influence of corruption in Haiti, and that Haitians are tired of the government's inefficiencies but have little power to change them (R. Fatton, personal communication, October 9, 2024).

Meaningful systemic change in Haiti will take years and many more millions of dollars, but meaningful targeted change for Haiti's children is much more feasible. Similarly, addressing gang violence is a drawn-out process of conflict and negotiation, but preventing child recruitment can be direct and community-driven. Community-based solutions have seen the greatest rate of success for deterring recruitment around the world, and a similar application in Port-au-Prince could help impoverished children resist the temptations offered by gangs. Finally, any improvements in the structure and funding of GoH agencies like IBESR or the BPM are welcome, as they could serve as steps towards a stronger government better prepared to care for its children.

I recognize that even with these recommendations and all the foreign aid currently being sent to Haiti, there are still many problems left to address. Even with a successful reduction in child recruitment, the unfortunate reality is that many children will still live in poverty and under a dysfunctional government. My recommendations are not new by any extent, and preventing child recruitment is a small but important piece of working towards peace and stability in Haiti. These building blocks are important, no matter how small, and giving children the opportunity to live, learn, and thrive today could be the key to unlocking Haiti's potential for the future.

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Appendix

Appendix A

The calculation for children in gangs in Haiti comes from figures from various articles of reporting news. An October 2024 AP News article estimated around 6,000 gang members in Port-au-Prince, and a November 2024 UNICEF article estimated that between 30% and 50% of gang members are children. This means that there are between 1,800-3,000 children in

gangs in Haiti today (Coto & Sanon, 2024), (UNICEF, 2024). This figure also draws from the same UNICEF report detailing that child recruitment increased 70% in 2024. That means there were an estimated 1,400 children in gangs in 2023. Assuming a further 50% increase in recruitment in 2025 means there will be between 2,700 and 4,500 children in gangs by the end of 2025. Costs are shown in *Table 0* below.

Assumptions	**Total**	**Notes**
Armed groups in Haiti	300	Dec-24
Percent in Port-au-Prince	50%	Mar-24
number of gang members in haiti (est, July 2024)	12000	Jul-24
number of gang members in PaP (est)	6,000	Oct-24
percent of children in gangs (2024 Est Avg)	40%	Between 30-50%, Nov 2024
Assumed 2025 increase in child gang membership	50%	
Children in Gangs in PaP (2024 Est Avg)	2400	Range: 1800-3000
Increase from 2023	70%	
Children in Gangs in PaP in 2023	1412	
Children in Gangs in PaP by end of 2025 (Projected)	3600	Assuming 50% growth again

Table 0: Outline of changes in child recruitment

Appendix B

The Assumptions in *Table 1* show the baseline assumptions made for the implementation of community-based education program. *Table 2* below outlines fixed and variable costs including personnel, materials & equipment, facilities & operations, monitoring & evaluation, and overhead costs. Monetary estimates for different costs were drawn from a variety of sources. Fixed costs are only incurred in Year 0 of the program, and represent school supplies (desks, chairs, computers) and initial facility upgrades where needed. Variable costs include staff, school supplies each year, facility maintenance, training, data collection, and audits.

Assumptions	
Number of schools	20
Number of classrooms/school	5
Number of teachers	200
Total Staff	285
Haiti's inflation estimate changes by year	Haiti Inflation Projections
Hours per day	6
Days per week	5
Meals provided per day	1
Estimated Students Reached by the Program	5,000

Table 1: Alternative 1 Assumptions

The cells highlighted in light purple in *Table 2* represent the net present value of these costs across the three years of the program. The costs in the 2026 column highlighted in light purple represent the costs for Year 0, and adding the 2027 and 2028 variable costs yields the total 3-year program cost.

Sum of Costs				
	2025	2026	2027	2028
Year	0	1	2	3
Variable (Repeating) Costs	$3,765,500	$4,345,763.55	$4,607,761.17	$4,728,966.43
NPF Variable Costs	$3,765,500	$4,190,707.38	$4,284,818.67	$4,240,625.91
Fixed, One-Time Costs	$439,000	$506,649.90	$537,194.84	$551,325.52
NPV Fixed Costs (Only add for the year the program starts)	$439,000	$488,572.71	$499,544.65	$494,392.45

Table 2: Sum of Variable and Fixed Costs for Alternative 1

Table 3 describes the Year 0 and 3-year costs, as well as the per-child cost for each period. The per-child cost is found by dividing the Year 0 and 3-year costs by 5,000, which is the number of children the program aims to serve.

Year 0 Cost if Program Begins 2026:	$4,679,280
3 Year Cost if Program Begins in 2026:	$14,181,870.08
Cost per at-risk child served (Year 0)	$936
Cost per at-risk child served (Over 3 Years)	$945

Table 3: Total and per-child costs for Year 0 and first 3 years

Appendix C

The Assumptions in *Table 4* describe the basic assumptions for the cost transfer program, including the international poverty line standard of USD 56 per month, the 21% rate of administrative costs, and the average children per household in poverty. The administrative cost is drawn from the "Ti Manman Cheri" program conducted in Haiti from 2012-2014, which gave mothers cash for enrolling their children in school. An analysis by the Haitian Superior Court of Auditors and Administrative Disputes found that 21% of this program's total cost was administrative costs (Tromben et al., 2020).

Assumptions:	Notes:
All calculations done in USD	
Poverty Line: USD/month	$56
Transfer per child	$28
21% of total cost is admin costs	21%
Admin Cost multiplier: 1.265	1.265822785
GDP of Haiti (2023)	19,500,000,000
Program Begins July 2025	Option for January 2026
OMB 3-Year Discount Rate	3.70%
Average Children per Household in Poverty (Ages 6-15)	0.835
Changing Haitian Inflation	
Payments disbursed by household	
Population growth in Haiti (per year)	Varies

Table 4: Alternative 2 Assumptions

The estimate for the number of each kind of family (single parent, nuclear, extended, single parent nuclear) is drawn from the same study of cash transfer estimates (Tromben et al., 2020). It also estimates the number of children in Port-au-Prince living in poverty by age group, which leads me to an estimate of around 400,000 between the ages of 6 and 15, shown in *Table 5*. I then multiply the average children per household in poverty by the percentage of children between the ages of 6-15 to get the average children aged 6-15 per household in poverty (shown in *Table 6*).

Estimates here are for Port-au-Prince Metropolitan Area	
Age Group (Total)	Populations in PaP (2019)
0-15	656,000.00
6--14	358,000.00
15-19	235,000.00
6--15 (Est.)	400,000.00
6-15 (Percent)	0.47

Table 5: Estimated number of children in poverty in Port-au-Prince

Type of Family	# of children
Single Parent	1.5
Nuclear	2
Extended	2.2
Single Parent Nuclear	1.4
Average Children/Household	1.775
Average Children 6-15/Household	0.835

Table 6: Average children per household aged 6-15

I also account for population growth in Haiti among children aged 6-15 from 2017 to 2028, using estimates from MacroTrends (MacroTrends, 2024). This estimates around 81,703 children in Port-au-Prince by 2026 between the ages of 6-15 in poverty. This is the number of children in Year 0 that would receive cash transfers. Estimates are shown in *Table 7* below.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Population Growth		1.37%	1.34%	1.31%	1.24%	1.20%	1.21%	1.21%	1.21%	1.21%	1.21%	1.21%
Population of Children Ages 6-15 (Est.)	73,025	74,025	75,017	76,000	76,943	77,866	78,808	79,762	80,727	**81,703**	82,692	83,693

Table 7: Population growth in Port-au-Prince from 2017-2028

Using this figure, I calculate the total cost of $28/month in cash transfers for one year and also per child. For the 6-15 age group in 2026, those costs are shown in *Table 8* below in green.

Age Group (Total)	Populations in PaP (2019)	Percent of Age Range in MP	Populations in PaP in MP (2016-2017)	If $28/month	per year	Per child per year	With Admin Cost	Total Cost per child, per year
0-15	656,000.00	20.40%	133,824	3,747,072.00	44,964,864.00	336.00	56,917,549.37	425.32
6--14	358,000.00	17.50%	62,650	1,754,200.00	21,050,400.00	336.00	26,646,075.95	425.32
15-19	235,000.00	14.50%	34,075	954,100.00	11,449,200.00	336.00	14,492,658.23	425.32
6--15 (Est.)	400,000.00	Est. 18.26%	73,025	2,044,700.00	24,536,400.00	336.00	31,058,734.18	425.32
6-15 (In 2026)			**81,703**	2,287,697.55	27,452,370.61	336.00	34,749,836.21	425.32

Table 8: Costs for children in poverty in Port-au-Prince aged 6-15

I then account for a 3.7% discount rate, set by the Office of Management and Budget, and for inflation in Haiti (OMB, 2024). Inflation rates through 2028 are shown below in *Table 9* (Statista, 2024).

Inflation Rates -->	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
	26%	20.72%	15.41%	10.62%	7.89%

Table 9: Inflation in Haiti from 2024 to 2028

First I calculate the cost of the program with inflation in Haiti, shown in the table below in green. The 2025 estimate in green is half of the total $34 million cost shown in *Table 8*, assuming the program would not begin until July 2025. I then account for the 3.7% discount rate in the light purple row of *Table 10,* and outline costs through 2028.

		2025 (6 months)	2026	2027	2028
		0	1	2	3
Cost with Haitian Inflation		17,374,918.11	40,104,785.97	49,075,361.94	61,632,117.71
Net Present Value Cost	3.7% Discount Rate	17,374,918.11	38,673,853.40	45,635,834.71	55,267,627.45

Table 10: Costs with Inflation and Discount Rates

Assuming the program begins in January 2026, these are the costs for Year 0, the first 3 years (to compare with the other 2 policy alternatives), and over the first 18 months. *Table 11* shows the total costs, and *Table 12* shows the per-child costs, which represents total cost divided by the number of children given cash transfers.

Year 0 Cost	**$**	**38,673,853**
3-Year Cost	**$**	**139,577,316**
18-month Cost	**$**	**61,491,770.75**

Table 11: Total Year 0 and 3-Year Costs

Cost per at-risk child served (Year 0)	**$**	**473.34**
Cost per at-risk child served (Over 3 Years)	**$**	**562.61**
Cost per at-risk child served (Over 18 Months)	$	499.73

Table 12: Per-child Year 0 and 3-Year Costs

In the text, I also break this calculation down per child per month, and also per household per month. The per-child cost is greater because it is stretched over the first 18 months of the program. The average household cost is calculated by multiplying the initial 18-month cost by the average number of children aged 6-15 per household in poverty (0.835). The per-month cost is calculated by dividing this previous total by 18. Results are shown in *Table 13* below.

Cost per Child, First 18 months	Cost per Child, Per Month	Average Cost per Household, First 18 Months	Average Cost per Household, Per Month
787.12	43.73	657.25	36.51
767.53	42.64	640.89	35.60

Table 13: Costs per child and per household, per 18 months and

Appendix D

The Assumptions in *Table 14* show the baseline assumptions made for the implementation of the community-based religious program. The Sum of Costs in *Table 15* outlines fixed and variable costs including personnel, materials & equipment, facilities & operations, monitoring & evaluation, and overhead costs. Monetary estimates for different costs were drawn from a variety of sources. Fixed costs are only incurred in Year 0 of the program, and represent school supplies (desks, chairs, computers) and facility upgrades where needed. Variable costs include staff, school supplies each year, facility maintenance, training, data collection, and audits.

Assumptions	
Number of schools	10
Number of classrooms/school	5
Number of teachers	20
Total Staff	85
Haiti's inflation estimate changes by year	Haiti Inflation Projections
Hours per day	6
Days per week	3
Meals provided per day	1
Estimated Students Reached by the Program	2000

Table 14: Alternative 3 Assumptions

The cells highlighted in light purple in *Table 15* represent the net present value of these costs across the three years of the program. The costs in the 2026 column highlighted in light purple represent the costs for Year 0, and adding the 2027 and 2028 variable costs yields the total 3-year program cost.

Sum of Costs				
	2025	2026	2027	2028
Year	0	1	2	3
Variable (Repeating) Costs	$2,294,500	$2,648,082.45	$2,807,730.18	$2,881,586.37
NPF Variable Costs	$2,294,500	$2,553,599.28	$2,610,945.81	$2,584,017.03
Fixed, One-Time Costs	$397,500	$458,754.75	$486,412.18	$499,207.05
NPV Fixed Costs (Only add for the year the program starts)	$397,500	$442,386.45	$452,321.18	$447,656.03

Table 15: Sum of Variable and Fixed Costs for Alternative 3

Table 16 describes the Year 0 and 3-year costs, as well as the per-child cost for each period. The per-child cost is found by dividing the Year 0 and 3-year costs by 2,000, which is the number of children the program aims to serve.

Year 0 Cost if Program Begins 2026:	$2,995,986
3 Year Cost if Program Begins in 2026:	$9,075,721.47
Cost per at-risk child served (Year 0)	$1,498
Cost per at-risk child served (Over 3 Years)	$1,513

Table 16: Total and per-child costs for Year 0 and first 3 years