

Grant Proposal



A.C.T. NOW
ABOLISH CHILD TRAFFICKING

Narratives

Executive Summary

Abolish Child Trafficking, Inc. (A.C.T. Now) proposes to launch a multi-prong series of projects to combat the pervasive growth of global child trafficking. More than 2 million children are being trafficked in the world today in an industry generating more than \$30 billion per year.

When faced with such a pessimistic outlook, it is not uncommon for modern society to express despair and helplessness at such an overwhelming task. However, Abolish Child Trafficking, Inc. embraces an “Inside-Out” philosophy. Human trafficking must be stopped at its roots. We can accomplish this by empowering the people most harmed and attacked by human traffickers through development projects at the local level.

Abolish Child Trafficking, Inc. (A.C.T. Now) proposes a four-point plan to stop trafficking in Haiti – identified by the U.S. State Department as one of the worst regions for human trafficking.¹ The two project areas are: Community 1 (Pay It Forward & Reduce Poverty) and Community #2 (Refugee Relief & Literacy).

Introduction

Abolish Child Trafficking, Inc. is a Section 501(c)(3) charitable organization headquartered at 1213 Grandview Ave, Ojai CA 93023. The organization's Mission is: “To abolish child trafficking by rescuing one at a time, one child at a time, one community at a time and one country at a time.” This will be accomplished through four distinct areas of focus: Prevention, Awareness, Rescue and Rehabilitation.

Over the past 2 years, A.C.T. Now has launched and sustained an ongoing, multi-tiered project in Haiti. As noted above, the poverty-stricken nation suffers some of the worst instances of human trafficking in the world – especially among children.

Under the Haitian system of *restavek*², children are sent against their will to serve as domestic servants to wealthier households in Haiti, across the border to the Dominican Republic or off the island completely. Their parents lack basic resources to raise them and often feel coerced to allow them to leave. Derived from the French, “to stay

¹ “2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Haiti” | U.S. Department of State | <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report-2/haiti/>

² “Toward Effective Intervention for Haiti's Former Child Slaves,” Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 36, No. 4, November 2014, Johns Hopkins University Press

with," the term *restavek* is a derogatory word to describe these unpaid, child servants. It is a system of child trafficking and forced labor. An estimated 300,000 Haitian children are coerced through violence and exploited by households for free labor. As noted by *Human Rights Quarterly*:

"Restavek children are abused physically, verbally, emotionally, and sexually. They are forced to do chores that are inappropriate for their age, often not sent to school, and treated as inferior to the children of the family."

To address this specific problem, A.C.T. Now doesn't seek to bring an outsider's perspective into Haiti. Rather, A.C.T. Now seeks out individuals already working on human-trafficking solutions within their community. We bridge the gap between where they are and what they want to develop, taking care at each step to make sure each project is totally "owned" by community leaders. This approach is more sustainable, because community leaders already attempting to solve the problem are trusted and passionate pillars of the community with a fire burning inside of them to make a difference in the lives of children. A.C.T. Now seeks to build on their success.

Organization History and Purpose

A.C.T. Now was founded in 2018 by filmmaker Chet Thomas following the successful production of [The Abolitionists](#),³ a 2016 documentary chronicling an undercover operation to liberate child sex slaves in Colombia.

"My expertise is based on going undercover for more than three years in the world of child trafficking and documenting the whole experience with undercover cameras," Thomas said. "I would go in undercover with an informant and spend weeks with traffickers in an effort to rescue the children being trafficked and arrest those doing the trafficking. In that effort there were over 125 traffickers arrested and more than 300 girls rescued." In addition, the film's wide release and critical acclaim helped raise more than \$20 million dollars to fight child trafficking.

Thomas noted that, while the efforts successfully took several traffickers off the streets, the root cause ran deeper. "Often, other traffickers would replace those that we arrested and many of the girls that were rescued would quickly re-enter the world of trafficking," he said. "From all that experience I realized that the problem had to be fixed from the inside out, meaning that the change had to come from within the community where the problem was so prevalent."

Thomas teamed up with community organizer Lance Mergens to focus the organization's efforts on Haiti and the *restavek* problem. Mergens is a retired operations manager for a Fortune 500 company as well as a retired risk manager for a

³ The video in its entirety is available for viewing at <https://vimeopro.com/user9536229/the-abolitionists-1/> (password = fletcher)

non-profit risk pool in Utah. Fluent in Haitian Creole, Mergens has served as “boots on the ground” in Haiti in building A.C.T. Now’s presence in the beleaguered nation.

A.C.T. Now’s mission is: **“To abolish child trafficking by rescuing one at a time: one child at a time, one community at a time and one country at a time. This will be accomplished through four distinct areas of focus: Prevention, Awareness, Rescue and Rehabilitation.”**

Statement of Need

A.C.T. Now seeks grant awards in the range of \$75,000-\$100,000 to bolster the above-mentioned four-pronged approach to eradicate child trafficking in Haiti. Each project falls under one of two areas of focus. The four projects are as follows:

Prevention

1. **Reduce Poverty (Prevention)** - Through mentoring local community leaders, co-op lending groups of 25 are being organized. Access to capital is almost an impossibility in Haiti. Thus, the program pools local capital and issues micro-loans to increase the productivity and prosperity of their small farming business.
2. **Refugee Relief (Prevention & Rehabilitation)** – Helping to break the links between poverty and human trafficking by providing meals and education to children of Haitian refugees (specifically near the Dominican border).
3. **Literacy (Prevention & Awareness)** – Started by a community leader as a school literally taking place under a tree, the program builds on grassroots success to empower youth with improved literacy and powerful access to educational tools.
4. **“Pay it Forward” (Prevention)** – This program facilitates a family giving a lamb to another local family in addition to instruction on care, breeding and feeding. The receiving family is then expected to raise the ewe and give away her first-born lamb to another family. From there, each family is empowered to build a herd of sheep and learn to profit from herding.

Plan of Action or Work Plan

A.C.T. Now will deploy grant funds⁴ to – among other things:

- Hire administrator – (mentored by Lance)

⁴ - A complete budget and cost breakdown is appended to this proposal.

- Hire teachers and purchase supplies for both the adult and youth education programs.
- Purchase a truck, training center, tools and supplies for the animal husbandry program ("Pay It Forward").
- Hire a cook and purchase food for the Refugee relief project.
- Purchase supplies (food, fuel, incidentals) for in-country infrastructure programs as well as funding travel expenses.
- Employ such other administrative staff as needed.

Evaluation and Measurable Outcomes

The overall goal of A.C.T. Now is to abolish child trafficking through various initiatives that eliminate the contributing factors of this devastating social crisis.

A.C.T. Now has launched several initiatives to accomplish this goal. Indeed, the effectiveness of each initiative is measured by how the principles taught are being adopted by the citizens and refugees within our communities.

Additionally, outcomes are measured by how those who are helped live out the vital changes in their overall behavior; especially those behaviors that injure innocent people. Because this problem can only be solved from within, it is critical to the community's success that those within the community are enthusiastically adopting the solution.

By way of example, evaluating and measuring the outcomes of our Community Banking initiative is not accomplished by the amount of interest generated on the individual monies invested. Rather, the key metric is the interest level of additional community members who want to participate in the program. This initiative has attracted more than 500 community members all eager to align their lives with the core principles of the program. A positive measured outcome like this would warrant continued effort and funding.

Key Personnel

CEO and Founder: Chet Thomas

Chet leads all high-level business aspects as well as leadership of the company in the overall execution of the vision and mission of A.C.T. Now.

Attorney: David Cartano

Although he is not in-house counsel, David is nevertheless a dedicated member of the team, handling all legal issues related to the non-profit.

Country Mentor: Lance Mergens

Lance organizes and leads all the humanitarian and leadership efforts on the ground, in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He travels to those countries every month for 10 days to oversee the execution of all A.C.T. Now initiatives.

In-house Bookkeeper: Angie Thomas

Angie manages all the bookkeeping and internal accounting for A.C.T. Now. She works closely with the accounting firm that handles all the company tax filings

Accountant: Emily Tafua

Emily is the accountant for the company and handles all the tax filings for the non-profit.

Conclusion

From CEO Chet Thomas:

*"My expertise is based on going undercover for more than three years in the world of child trafficking and documenting the whole experience with undercover cameras. I would go in undercover with an informant and spend weeks with traffickers in an effort to rescue the children being trafficked and arrest those doing the trafficking. In that effort there were over 125 traffickers arrested and more than 300 girls rescued. In these efforts, I worked with local governments and with the American government and embassies. From that experience, I have seen every aspect of the problem which is the reason I founded this organization. I clearly saw what the problem was and what the most effective way to solve the problem would be. We accomplished many positives in those three years, but there were problems with the methodology. Often, other traffickers would replace those arrested and many of the girls that were rescued would quickly re-enter the world of trafficking. From all that experience I realized that the problem had to be fixed **"From the Inside Out,"** meaning that the change had to come from within the community where the problem was so prevalent. That is our prime directive at A.C.T Now*
