



Application to the church

by Jennifer B. Scarborough

Having grown-up in church, I have been on many international mission trips. I have always loved traveling, serving, helping. On every trip, my church group would work together with American missionaries. Never did we work with true locals, for a variety of reasons. However, thanks to the Spiritual Life Office and the School of Social work at Baylor University, I had the chance to experience a different approach to missions where we worked with organizations run by nationals, also called grassroots agencies.

I helped lead such a trip for Baylor social work students to Rwanda. One of the grassroots agencies we visited, *Les Enfants de Dieu*, discussed by Jon Singletary in his article, provides transitional living for troubled boys. If no one had told me these boys had been living on the streets, I would not have known. They treated us with kindness and hospitality while we played soccer, painted, and had so much fun together. They even washed our hands for us after we painted, humbling me as I thought of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. In every part of the day, it was truly evident the boys received the love and the care they needed to help them make changes to achieve a better future.

Les Enfants de Dieu represents the grassroots agencies around the world that focus on a variety of issues and make a huge impact upon their communities. This article explores both the role and importance of grassroots agencies. Nationals who run these agencies know the language, the history, and

the culture of their country, enabling them to help their clients in culturally appropriate ways with ease. Likewise, it sets an example for the children to see adults from their country in positions of leadership and power making a difference.

Community-based care extends beyond transitional living for boys, which this article also explains. Many grassroots agencies offer foster care, as opposed to orphan care. Although many churches support orphanages, this article explores the benefits

of a community-based foster care system, the system that America also uses and that has a higher rate of successfully transitioning children into the community.

For church leaders engaging in missions, understanding the role of grassroots agencies can have a significant impact on their congregations and the world. Sadly, many grassroots agencies lack funding and support, including *Les Enfants de Dieu*. I believe beautiful partnerships can be created

between grassroots agencies and churches through prayer, financial support, and short-term trips. Building relationships with nationals and working alongside them presents a mutually beneficial situation as we learn from and help one another. There will always be a need for missionaries to go to other countries but even as they go abroad, they can foster partnerships with grassroots organizations. For church leaders supporting missions, this article provides enlightening and helpful information that truly keeps the needs of children at the center of our mission efforts.

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