



Health

CARE Haiti: Life Saving Interventions for Women and Girls

Women are at the heart of CARE's community-based efforts to increase access to quality health care and expand economic opportunity. Since the January 2010 earthquake, CARE's **Life Saving Interventions for Women and Girls in Haiti** project has worked to combat gender-based violence (GBV) and reduce mortality and morbidity among earthquake-affected women and girls. The program also aims to improve sexual and reproductive health (SRH) using a community-based approach and partnerships with local health facilities. Project staff develop and work with community organizations - such as Fathers Clubs to engage men, Peer Educators to reach youth, Community Committees to prevent GBV, and other Income-Generating activities—to empower women .

CARE also conducts training programs for community members, health service providers, police, judges, and government officials to provide a network of needed services for reproductive health and more effectively prevent and respond to cases of GBV.

Key objectives:

- *Train community health workers and traditional birth attendants (midwives) on birth preparedness and planning*
- *Promote responsible sexual behaviours, including delayed sexual initiation, family planning, prevention of HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases*
- *Establish a reference system for SRH including the facilitation of emergency transportation*
- *Improve the social context for greater social equity between women and men*

Cases of sexual violence, including rape, sexual exploitation and child trafficking are disproportionately high in Haiti. More than a quarter of Haitian women, or 27%, have suffered physical violence at one point since the age of 15, with this number likely higher as gender-based violence is frequently under reported. History shows that violence increases after emergencies due to the disruption of communities, population movements, and lack of protection systems. This was unfortunately the case in Haiti. According to an *Institute for Democracy and Justice Report* released in October 2011, a University of Michigan survey estimated that 3% of all people in Port-au-Prince had been sexually assaulted since the earthquake; all but one of the respondents surveyed were female and half of the victims were girls under the age of eighteen. Also according to a study by SOFA, a Haitian women's health organization, 718 cases of gender-based violence against women and girls were documented in its clinics from January to June 2010.



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Haitian women also face formidable health challenges. According to a *Mortality, Morbidity and Utilization of Services* survey issued by the Haitian Ministry of Public Health (MSPP) in 2005-2006, the country has the highest infant under five and maternal mortality rates in the Western Hemisphere. Seventy five percent of all deliveries take place at home and on average, only 26% of births involve the assistance of a skilled birth attendant.

Progress to date

Immediately following the earthquake, CARE responded to the reproductive health needs of displaced families through the large-scale distribution of clean delivery kits, newborn kits, bed sheets, condoms and other necessary SRH items. Progress towards Recovery and Transition includes:

- Two Community Centres constructed and fully functional with 5 additional Centres underway
- Regular broadcast of radio spots on family planning, breast-feeding and antenatal care
- Staff at key community institutions trained on rape management and emergency obstetric care
- Accompaniment of GBV survivors, both at the community and institutional levels
- Hand over of support functions to 172 trained Peer Educators who work with youth in target communities to address responsible sexual behaviour, family planning, and violence prevention
- 161 Community Clubs created to raise awareness and promote key messages within their communities



The creation of fathers clubs, an innovative approach, engages men in SRH/GBV issues with male participants taking an important role in ensuring the health of women and girls.

CARE conducts small focus groups on GBV, creating safe environments to discuss sensitive issues.

CARE builds permanent community centres, managed by the community, to support a variety needs: vaccinations, family planning, and consultation

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CARE Haiti Jean Michel Vigreux - Country Director
vigreux@pap.care.org, tel (509) 2510 - 3360 / -3362

CARE Latin America & Caribbean Regional Management Unit,
Quito, Ecuador tel 593.2.2.923180/60141806/ 014179