



SUCCESS STORY

Saving Children from Tuberculosis

A five year old regains her health, energy, and curiosity



Photo: USAID/Karie Atkinson

Five-year old Naomi Jean is being treated for tuberculosis.

“When she arrived, Naomi could not move from the hospital bed for about two weeks — now she’s healthy again,” said the doctor who treated Naomi Jean.

Naomi Jean runs around like a typical 5-year-old. Her chocolate-colored eyes reveal a bright mind, curious about everything she sees. It’s hard to believe that not too long ago she was lying in a hospital bed in critical condition.

Naomi is one of 23 children receiving medicine to cure tuberculosis at the TB ward for children at Grace Children’s Hospital in Delmas, a poor neighborhood outside of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The hospital is supported by USAID in collaboration with the Haitian government, which is increasing the most effective treatment for TB, known as Direct Observation Therapy Short Course (DOTS), across the island.

Experts estimate that there are nearly 33,000 cases of active pulmonary TB in Haiti, even though 12,444 cases were successfully treated in five years through USAID-assisted organizations. Poverty, lack of education and limited access to health care contribute to Haiti’s ranking as the country with the Caribbean’s highest prevalence of TB.

Besides tuberculosis treatment and care, the USAID-supported hospital also treats children with HIV/AIDS. Some children are infected with both HIV and TB, making it critical that they receive proper medical attention. Children are brought to the hospital by their families or by USAID-supported health agents.

Naomi has been taking TB medicine since June 2006. She takes three pills each day. The dosage for children depends on the child’s age and weight. To be fully cured, children must follow a treatment regimen of 6 months. The first 60 days of treatment is intensive, and a hospital stay is required. “When she first came to the ward Naomi was malnourished and could not move from the hospital bed for about two weeks,” said the doctor on duty. “Now she’s healthy again,” she added, smiling as she watched Naomi run around the room. Through the TB treatment and care program, Naomi has regained her health and doctors expect her to leave the hospital as the bright, energetic child she was before her illness.