

Fast Facts on the
U.S. Government's work in

HAITI



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Addressing Challenges

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a chronic problem in Haiti. The risk of violence and sexual exploitation against women and girls, exacerbated by political instability and the economic crises, likely increased following the earthquake. The United Nations and human rights organizations reported increased incidence of rape in the months immediately after the earthquake; women and girls who continue to live in precarious conditions are particularly vulnerable.

Promoting women's empowerment and reducing GBV are critical to Haiti's development; and combating GBV is a priority for the U.S. Government (USG). Effectively addressing GBV requires immediate action to improve security and support survivors as well as sustained engagement to reduce vulnerability through legislative action, community outreach, and economic empowerment. The weakness of the Haitian justice system makes it difficult for GBV survivors to find redress; the fear of reprisals and social stigma attached to being a victim of sexual violence contributes to underreporting; and a lack of comprehensive baseline data makes strategic response planning more difficult. To tackle these challenges, the USG is working with the Government of Haiti (GOH), Haitian civil society (including many women-led organizations), and the international community to address pressing needs as well as provide support for long-term GBV prevention.

Improving Security

Immediately after the earthquake, the USG acted quickly to improve security for the most vulnerable populations, including women and girls, to minimize the risks for harm, exploitation, and abuse.

- **Funding preventative security measures.** USAID programs provided direct support and technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs for a campaign against rape. USAID has supported the procurement and installation of over 800 solar lamps in urban and rural sections of Port-au-Prince, St. Marc, and the northern corridor of Haiti.
- **Building the capacity of the Haitian National Police (HNP).** In partnership with the New York Police Department, the USG works to build the capacity of the Child Protection Unit of the HNP to combat gender-based and domestic violence against children. In 2012, the USG supported a Brazilian-led GBV assessment visit to Haiti and subsequently funded a study tour in Brazil for six members of the HNP and judiciary, including two female judges, to present best practices in countering sexual gender-based violence (SGBV). U.S. police officers assigned to the MINUSTAH mission have provided mentoring to HNP officers in SGBV. The USG also supports entry-level training of HNP officers that includes a module on SGBV.
- **Calling for increased female representation and leadership within the HNP.** The USG continues to urge the HNP to recruit and retain more women. In early 2013, the USG will support the training of up to 40 female HNP cadets in Colombia for a year; this training will include a focus on GBV and child protection issues.
- **Protection and prevention programs.** The Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons supports law enforcement and social welfare agencies to increase their capacity to identify victims of trafficking and refer them to NGOs that provide direct services.

Supporting Survivors

USG programs strive to facilitate GBV survivors' access to relevant services and community-based support.

- **Reinforcing access to services for survivors of GBV.** A USAID program is providing female survivors of sexual violence with access to integrated health services; over 2,300 GBV victims have been referred to voluntary counseling and testing for HIV services, reproductive health and/or psychological support services since June 2012.
- **Providing training to identify GBV cases.** USAID's health service delivery program is incorporating a GBV component under which health care providers at 30 health facilities will be trained to identify and manage GBV cases, and to provide referrals to social and legal services. Since June 2012, almost 9,200 people have been sensitized and surveyed on GBV, including 113 staff and over 9,000 patients.
- **Supporting legal aid in low-income and marginalized communities.** USAID is providing free legal aid, including to GBV survivors, in partnership with local bar associations in St. Marc, Cité Soleil, and Martissant. In FY 2012, 45 GBV victims benefitted from the free legal assistance provided in the law clinic established in Cite Soleil.
- **Protecting displaced women and girls.** The Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons is assisting children in involuntary domestic servitude by supporting community-based social protection networks and specialized shelter services as well as working with families to facilitate healthy reintegration and reduce the chances of re-trafficking. Over 1,000 children received direct assistance to include family tracing and reunification, and medical, psychosocial and educational support.
- **Improving GBV response, preparedness and prevention capacity.** USAID is supporting the International Rescue Committee to build the capacity of local organizations in Haiti to prepare and respond to the needs of GBV survivors during emergencies, including training teams to mount an effective response in the first acute days of a crisis, pre-positioning essential supplies, and putting clear systems in place to safeguard sensitive data about survivors.

On July 22, 2011, an important precedent was set when a man from St. Marc was sentenced to 20 years hard labor for beating his wife. USAID's partner, Federation des Femmes du Bas Artibonite, referred the victim to a local hospital, provided legal assistance to enable the Prosecutor's Office to issue an arrest warrant, helped to locate the individual accused of the crime, and encouraged the continued investigation and follow up of the case so that it would be brought to trial. This was the first successful prosecution of domestic violence in the commune of St. Marc.

Improving Legislation and Capacity

The USG provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs to enable them to draft and introduce bills in Parliament to protect women's rights. Additionally, a new, five-year program will work at the national level to strengthen the legislative framework and build the capacity of GOH institutions, including the Ministries of Women's and Social Affairs, Office of Citizen Protection, Minor's Protection Brigade of the Haitian National Police, and the Institute of Social Welfare and Research (IBERS) to prevent and respond to abuse.

- **Strengthening legal protection for women.** Three bills on domestic work, responsible paternity, and common-law marriage have been passed by the Chamber of Deputies and await Senate passage. Draft legislation on combating human trafficking is in progress with USG support.
- **Enforcing existing legislation.** An executive decree issued in 2005 criminalized rape and violence against women. USAID is working with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs to strengthen the enforcement of this existing legislation.
- **Promoting multilateral coordination.** The USG has met and continues to meet with Haitian women leaders from civil society and the public and private sectors throughout the country to discuss priorities set forth within the Haitian Women's Policy Platform for Haiti Reconstruction, of which improving access to healthcare and addressing GBV is a priority action.
- **Helped local organizations build capacity.** USAID provided capacity building support to KOFAVIV and two similar women's organizations to establish a call center at the KOFAVIV office for providing information on available assistance resources, created a database of resources and incidents of violence, and trained three women on information management and communication. These women in turn trained 60 others on how to use their phones to better communicate and share relevant information with stakeholders.

Creating Economic Opportunity

The stresses of poverty can cause deep frustration and contribute to violence. USAID is working to provide Haitians with job opportunities, vocational training, and access to financing for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises.

- **Providing sustainable economic solutions.** In FY 2012, USAID's agriculture program trained over 2,107 female farmers and certified over 230 female master farmers, helping to increase farm yields.
- **Providing vocational training.** Since November 2009, nearly 2,000 women received training on leadership, GBV prevention, community health promotion, and sustainable gardening and harvesting; over 45 percent are learning how to manage productive businesses and identify new opportunities.
- **Training out-of-school youth.** In FY 2011, under USAID's out-of-school youth livelihood project, 38 percent of those gaining new or improved employment and 47 percent of those transitioning to education and training after participating in USG-funded workforce development programs were female. The new Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement (LEVE) program will continue to provide training to out-of-school youth.
- **Linking women to capital.** In FY 2012, USAID's financial services program assisted over 520,000 women.

Raising Awareness

The USG has played a leading role in raising awareness of GBV and its destructive effects within communities.

- **Partnering with communities.** USG partners work with communities to form women's support groups and develop community-based protection committees to organize local prevention measures such as community watches or patrols. Programs such as Women Empowered to Lead and Advocate for Development (WE-LEAD) have provided support to build leadership capacity of women's groups in Haiti and help them integrate their priorities, including preventing GBV, into the country's reconstruction and development process.
- **Training women mediators in Cité Soleil.** USAID's PROJUSTICE program trained 40 women from the Jean Marie Vincent internally displaced persons (IDP) camp to be mediators of family disputes in order to pre-emptively reduce the incidence of intimate partner violence through dialogue between partners.
- **Promoting new social norms.** USAID supported communication campaigns, targeting both genders, during the World Cup and Carnival, to raise awareness of GBV and resources available to survivors and witnesses.
- **Supporting an innovative emergency response approach to GBV.** USAID is providing technical support to GBV prevention in Jacmel through the development of an innovative activist prevention kit that will build capacity in a local organization to prepare for and respond to GBV in emergencies as well as assess and share evidence-based resources to organizations that focus on GBV and interventions to meet women and girls' needs in emergencies.
- **Providing technical support to help promote protection issues.** USAID is supporting advocacy efforts in the Protection Coordination Cell—or Cluster—that promotes increased public participation, notably through the central and local levels of government, and program planning on protection issues, including GBV. The program develops strategy documents that address GBV and other protection issues for the remaining displaced people from the earthquake and other vulnerable people.