

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 is exacerbated by poverty, poor security, and a lack of awareness. The United Nations and human rights organizations reported increased incidence of rape in the months immediately after the 2010 earthquake. Today, many Haitian women and girls continue to live in precarious conditions, which make them particularly vulnerable.

Reducing GBV and promoting women's empowerment are critical for promoting Haiti's long-term economic and democratic development. Combating GBV is a priority for the U.S. Government. Effectively addressing GBV calls for a sustained engagement to reduce vulnerability through legislative action, community outreach, increased literacy, and economic empowerment. The weakness of the Haitian justice system makes it difficult for GBV survivors to find redress. Also, the fear of reprisals and social stigma attached to being a victim of sexual violence contributes to underreporting. Further, a lack of comprehensive baseline data makes strategic response planning more difficult. To tackle these challenges, the U.S. Government is working with the Government of Haiti, Haitian civil society (including many women-led organizations), and the international community to address these pressing needs.

Improving Security

Immediately after the earthquake, the U.S. Government 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.** The U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) programs provided direct support and technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs for a campaign against rape. To improve security, USAID has supported the procurement and installation of over 1,700 solar lights 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).** The U.S. Government provides substantial support to Haiti for the professionalization of the HNP and to expand its ranks in order to improve overall security in Haiti. In partnership with the New York City Police Department, the U.S. Government 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 U.S. Government 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 share best practices in countering GBV and sexual violence. U.S. police officers assigned to the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) have provided mentoring to HNP officers in sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). The U.S. Government also supports entry-level training of HNP officers on SGBV. The American Bar Association's Rule of Law Initiative, funded by the U.S. Government, provided cross-trainings to police, judges, and prosecutors on handling SGBV cases.
- **Calling for increased female representation and leadership within the HNP.** The U.S. Government continues to urge the HNP to recruit and retain more women and to pursue its goal of having females represent at least ten percent of new promotion of HNP officers.
- **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

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

- **Reinforcing access to services for survivors of GBV.** USAID, through GHESKIO center, 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 31 health facilities will be trained to identify and manage GBV cases and provide referrals to social and legal services. Since June 2012, more than 730,000 people have been sensitized and surveyed on GBV, including 362 staff, over 56,500 patients, and over 16,000 people at the community level living in high-risk areas.
- **Supporting legal aid in low-income and marginalized communities.** USAID is providing free legal aid 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, one of Port-au-Prince's poorest areas.
- **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. Programs also work 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 supported 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 by pre-positioning essential supplies and putting clear systems in place to safeguard sensitive data about survivors.
- **Evaluating handheld solar lights as a protection intervention.** USAID is supporting the U.S. Center for Disease Control, Emergency Response and Recovery Branch and the International Rescue Committee to assess the use of handheld solar lights in reducing the risk for GBV and contribute to a more protective environment for women and girls in Haiti. Data gathered on methods that aim to increase security and reduce risk to women and girls will inform the design of future GBV prevention strategies.

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 U.S. Government provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs to enable them to draft and introduce bills in Parliament that protect women's rights. A new, five-year program will work at the national level to strengthen the legislative framework and build the capacity of Government of Haiti institutions, including the Ministry 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.** Parliament has passed two bills that address issues regarding domestic work and responsible paternity. Legislation on common-law marriage is currently being reviewed in the Lower Chamber and the Senate. In addition, draft legislation on combating human trafficking that was supported by the U.S. Government was voted on by the Senate and is now being reviewed by the Lower Chamber. In collaboration with the Women Parliamentary Caucus, USAID also plans to work on gender-based violence bills in the 2013 current legislative session.
- **Enforcing existing legislation.** USAID is working with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs to strengthen the enforcement of the 2005 executive decree which criminalized rape and violence against women.

- **Promoting multilateral coordination.** The U.S. Government engages regularly with Haitian women leaders from civil society and the public and private sectors throughout the country. These discussions focus on progress on priorities of the Haitian Women's Policy Platform for Haiti Reconstruction, of which improving access to healthcare and addressing GBV are key provisions.
- **Helping local organizations build capacity.** USAID provided capacity building support to three women's organizations, including the Commission of Women Victims for Victims (KOFAVIV), to establish a call center at KOFAVIV that provides information on resources available to victims of GBV.
- **Strengthening the judiciary.** In the spring of 2013, the U.S. Government supported training for more than 20 female judges, lawyers, and public notaries on GBV and advocacy techniques. This training provided them with skills and tools to conduct advocacy campaigns in their jurisdictions for the adoption of anti-trafficking in persons legislation. The one-week training was co-sponsored by USAID, the State Department, and the International Women's Judges Association through its local chapter *Chapitre Haitien de l'Association Internationale des Femmes Juges*.

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 2,100 female farmers and certified over 230 female master farmers, helping to increase farm yields. Additionally, more than 40 percent of the nearly 13,000 farmers enrolled in the Haiti Hope mango program are women.
- **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 boasted 38 percent female participation rate for those gaining new or improved employment. For those transitioning to education and training after participating in U.S. Government-funded workforce development programs, 47 percent were female. The new Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement 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 U.S. Government has played a leading role in raising awareness of GBV and its destructive effects within communities.

- **Partnering with communities.** U.S. Government 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 have provided support to build leadership capacity of women's groups in Haiti. It also helps them to integrate their priorities, including preventing GBV, into the country's reconstruction and development process.
- **Training women mediators in Cité Soleil.** In 2012, USAID's PROJUSTICE program trained 40 women from the Jean Marie Vincent internally displaced persons camp to be mediators of family disputes in order to preemptively reduce the incidence of intimate partner violence through dialogue between partners.
- **Promoting new social norms.** USAID supported communication campaigns, targeting both men as well as women, 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 the southern city of Jacmel through the development of an innovative GBV prevention kit for use by activists. The kit will build capacity in a local organization to prepare for and respond to GBV in emergencies. It will also assess and share 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.