



Reproductive Health Response in Crises Consortium

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January 19, 2010

Haiti Response Must Address Health Needs of Women and Girls

As a consortium of organizations dedicated to the promotion of health among all persons affected by crisis, we applaud relief efforts to provide water, sanitation, food and medicines in Haiti. We also call on humanitarian actors to provide lifesaving reproductive health services for women displaced by the earthquake.

There are approximately 63,000 currently pregnant women in Port-au-Prince, 7,000 of whom will deliver in the coming month. Further, 15% (9,450 women) of all pregnant women will also require care for life threatening pregnancy complications.¹ Newborns are at even higher risk.

Action:

- Give clean delivery kits to all visibly pregnant women.
- Establish services to treat pregnancy complications, including emergency c-sections.
- Ensure referrals to these services.

In crises like this, the risk of sexual violence and exploitation increases, especially for women and girls. Treatment within 3 days of an assault can prevent HIV infection and within 5 days can prevent pregnancy.

Action:

- Provide immediate access to clinical care for survivors of sexual violence including emergency contraception and post exposure prophylaxis for HIV.
- Prevent sexual violence and exploitation, and enable vulnerable people to access services safely.
- Support local resources to protect vulnerable people, especially single women and unaccompanied children.

HIV prevalence among men and women of reproductive age in Haiti is 2.2%². This crisis puts people at risk of infection through exposure to blood and body fluids and unprotected sex. In addition people currently on ARVs could develop resistance or become ill if their treatment is disrupted.

Action:

- Distribute condoms widely and at no cost.
- Ensure continued ARV treatment of infected people, especially pregnant women who are at risk of transmitting the virus to their babies.
- Always practice standard precautions to avoid HIV infection when there is potential exposure to blood and body fluids.
- Screen all blood products and provide clean safe blood transfusions.

In a natural disaster women are often unable to access their usual methods of family planning.

Unwanted pregnancy can lead to unsafe abortion, illness, disability and death.

Action:

- Provide easy access to free contraceptives.

We know that this disaster will have long-term consequences but there are actions we can take to reduce its impact on the lives of women and their families. Work with a lead agency and local partners to coordinate reproductive health services, ensure integration across sectors and plan for comprehensive reproductive health service delivery.

For further guidance, please refer to the [synopsis](#) of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for reproductive health, [MISP advocacy sheet](#), [HeRAMS](#) and a MISP [checklist](#). Other resources include the [Health Cluster Guide](#) and the [IASC GBV guidelines](#).

¹ The crude birth rate (CBR) for Haiti in 2007 was 28 births per 1,000 population ([UNICEF](#), 2007). The 7,000 deliveries in one month has been calculated using a CBR of 2.8%; however, [reproductive health procurement guidelines](#) recommend employing a CBR of 4% (at 10,000 deliveries/month) to ensure adequate supplies. It is known that 15% of all pregnant women will experience some form of complication during pregnancy that will require a medical intervention.

² Macro International, "[HIV/AIDS in Haiti: Key Finding of the Mortality, Morbidity and Utilization of Services Survey 2005 – 2006](#)," 2008.