

Gender briefing kit for field staff: Haiti Earthquakes

The following information¹ is valuable for learning more about the gender relations in Haiti pre- and post the earthquake and includes contact details for women's organization in Port-Au-Prince. It is MSB:s ambition to conduct all operations with a gender perspective, i.e. taking the situation, needs and capacities of women, men, girls and boys into account for ensuring that the operation more efficiently reaches the whole target group – including vulnerable groups. Even in a sudden onset disaster which entails a fast response including support through secondments, it is crucial that field staff conduct their mission tasks with a gender perspective for example by raising gender concerns in meetings and reports, collecting information from different sources, taking security concerns for women into consideration and contributing to the gender policies that the host organization has determined.

Gender and vulnerability aspects of the disaster

Since the earthquake took place during office hours (4.53 pm) many people were at work. Since 82 % of men are part of the formal labour force as opposed to about 40 % of women a possible conclusion is that there are **more male victims in the collapsed office buildings** in the most affected cities (Port-au-Prince, Carrefour and Jacmel).² Since many injuries stem from burns (according to the Swedish Red Cross) from gas containers for cooking (and cooking is connected with a gender role associated with women in Haiti) it can also be assumed that most of these victims are women due to contextual gender roles. It is estimated that one quarter of the impacted population are women of childbearing age, with thousands of pregnant women among them. It is important to be aware of the fact that **sexual violence increases in the aftermath of a disaster**, which has a specifically negative impact on women and has occurred previously in Haiti.

In the IFRC preliminary appeal (which includes immediate needs such as SAR, relief items, shelter, logistics, emergency health and water and sanitation) the needs of **women, children and the elderly** are pointed out as important when prioritizing beneficiaries and a gender focus forms one of the main criteria for the selection of beneficiaries. **Female-headed households** with limited or no access to productive land, and persons/families affected by HIV or Tuberculosis are also additionally vulnerable. It is important to bear in mind that **persons with disabilities and children** are especially vulnerable and relevant for additional concern and support in the relief and recovery phase. This is related to the fact that **disasters usually make existing inequalities even worse** and the more vulnerable population groups with less resources and political power are more negatively affected.

Some sources indicate that three million people are estimated to have been directly affected and since an average family in the area has at least three children up to two million children could be affected by the earthquake (Save the Children). The safety of children who have become separated from their families is unsure as well as the fact that the quake hit when many children were in school. It's crucial that children struggling on their own are protected from being crushed by more debris and are kept safe from abuse on the streets. Many will have been orphaned or be badly injured themselves and in urgent need of medical help.

¹ Since MSB:s operations in Haiti vary a great deal and continue to expand the updated version of this document can be found at: V:\Dokument\03 Hantera\30 Insatser\Genus\Info- och återträff . The MSB Gender Equality Handbook – practical advice for international assistance can be found at: V:\Dokument\03 Hantera\30 Insatser\Genus\Jämställdhetshandboken.

² The Global Disaster Alert and Coordination System (GDACS) reports that the possible number of those affected can be based on a calculation of 444 people per square kilometre.

Thousands more will have lost all contact with their families and friends and are now struggling to survive alone in the rubble.

Baseline on gender relations Haiti (pre-disaster)

It is important to note the importance of involving women in relief activities through representation and participation. More than half of the population in Haiti are women and the country has a high proportion of economically active women. More than half of the people live in rural areas, unemployment rates are around 50 % and three-fourths of the households are classified as poor. Under these conditions, **gender** has little **correlation with poverty**, except in the **urban areas**, which are growing rapidly as a result of internal migration. A high proportion of both men and women participate in the workforce but, on average, women earn less than men. Overall, adult women have less schooling than adult men and are more likely to be illiterate. Population growth, high fertility, and a predominance of young people, as well as an **HIV/AIDS** infection rate of more than three percent are additional significant indicators related to gender. There is a gender gap whereby young women are being infected at twice the rate of male counterparts.

In regards to the **economic division of labour** men are primarily responsible for heavy agricultural work, clearing lands, tilling, harvesting, care of large livestock, cattle, horses, mules, cultivation and marketing of export crops, agricultural wage labor, fishing and migratory labor. Women are primarily responsible for: Agriculture; planting, weeding, harvesting and bulking for market; care of small livestock: pigs, goats, poultry, donkeys, sale of agricultural produce in the domestic marketing circuits; purchase of household essentials with marketing revenues; cooking, cleaning, laundry; care of children, including educational and medical needs; fetching water. Children assist their parents in all of these activities, by gender.

The typical **household** is **structured** around a man, a woman, and children. Men often have more than one wife, as many as the individual can afford, but women are expected to be (serially) monogamous. Polygamy is relatively common but declining sharply: at present, less than **one-third of unions are polygamous**. In conditions of extreme poverty, getting pregnant is one of few ways of accessing another's resources.

Women continue to be second-class citizens with **unequal representation before the law and the State**. Women are marginalized in relation to their male counterparts but at the same time exercise a considerable degree of **autonomy and independence** in the management of **household resources**. The labor force participation of women nearly equals that of men. Focusing on women's economic activities automatically results in benefits to entire households in terms of nutrition, health and education.

Continued rapid population growth erodes the government's ability to provide basic services. **Life expectancy** at birth is the lowest in the Latin America and Caribbean region (LAC) region at 51 years for males and 54 years for females. Of every 100,000 live births in Haiti (2000), 523 women die in child birth. These high rates are seen as related to unsafe abortions, and the failings of the national health care system. Only nine percent of pregnant rural women give birth in hospitals (1998 data). The overall **fertility level** is 4.7 children per woman. Fifteen percent of Haitian women are married between the ages of 15 and 19. Modern contraceptive use in Haiti is the lowest in the LAC region.

Illiteracy levels in Haiti are the highest in the LAC Region for both men and women, but are higher for women than men; in 2000 these stood at 33 percent for men and 43 percent for women. **Extreme poverty** in Haiti is primarily a rural occurrence since 77 percent of the extremely poor live in rural areas. Rural poverty contrasts sharply with the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, while other urban areas are similar to the rural countryside.

Four times as many male-headed households face extreme **food insecurity** as female-headed households (2001 data). Since women have been engaged in food production traditionally, female-headed households may be likely to direct their energies towards maintaining food security at the expense of other income generating activities.

Haiti's economy is approximately 85 percent in the **informal sector** (15 % formal), and within the informal sector more than 75 percent of those participating are women. **Agricultural production** is often produced in the garden by the woman and traded in the marketplace for other essentials not produced by the household or manufactured, and constitutes the source of income with which the woman feeds and cares for her children. Produce from the garden and revenue from other marketing remain under the control of the woman. Being a "housewife" includes this marketing responsibility and young girls learn it from an early age.

Human rights concerns

When it comes to **political power** an indicator is the low number of women in parliament, where only 4 % of the seats are held by women. The Constitution of Haiti does not specifically **prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex** but tradition still restricts Haitian women in exercising their rights and prevents them from acquiring the same social and economic status as men. The Haitian Family Code is not favourable to women. The minimum legal age for marriage is 15 years for women and 18 years for men, and early marriage is common. A 2004 United Nations report estimated that 19 per cent of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, divorced or widowed. Although Haiti ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) this convention has had little practical or formal significance. In 1982, Haiti established a landmark decree that makes women equal to men, particularly within marriage. Until 2005 adultery was classified as a second-level crime and women were punished with three months to two years

imprisonment, while men paid only a fine. Judicial reform in 2005 however made the legal **situation more equal in crimes concerning sexual violence**. The physical integrity of Haitian women is not sufficiently protected. Even though Haitian law prohibits and punishes rape and **domestic violence, violence against women** remains a serious issue. Domestic violence is widespread and appears to be on the rise. The association Solidarité des Femmes Haïtiennes (SOFA) estimates that eight in ten Haitian women have been victims of domestic abuse. Rape is a crime in Haiti and is punishable by up to ten years in prison. Women are the main victims of a particular type of political violence in the country. The practice of *zenglendos*, which involves men breaking into a house to rape the female occupants, is frequently used to exert political pressure. **Access to property** is still difficult for women in Haiti, including access to land: just over 10 per cent of women in rural areas work on their own farms. Haitian women have limited access to bank loans but are no reported restrictions on their freedom of movement or freedom of dress.

Key women's organizations in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti

For ensuring that the projects are adapted for seeing to the needs of all beneficiaries the following contact information can serve as an entry point for discussions in implementing the projects.

UNIFEM

United Nations Development Fund for Women
Kalinda Magloire, Resident Coordinator
UNDP Offices in Port-au-Prince
Telephone: (509) 244-9350, extension 2089
E-mail: kalinda.magloire@undp.org
Madame Eveline Magloire Chancy, le Ministre
MINISTÈRE À LA CONDITION FÉMININE ET AUX DROITS DES FEMMES (MCDF)

ENFOFANM

Organisation de Défense de Droits des Femmes
Myriam Merlet, Executive Director
16, Rue de la Ligue Féminine
Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Telephone/fax: (509) 245-0346
E-mail: enfofanm@direcway.com
ENFOFANM is a non-profit organization whose mission is to defend the rights of Haitian women and to promote Haitian women as actresses in the process of national development. It works in four areas: documentation and archives, communications, capacity building and women's rights and advocacy.

FANMYOLA

Collectif Féminin Haïtien pour la Pariticipation Politique des Femmes
Marie Laurence Lasegue, Director
306, Route de Bourdon, Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Telephone: 509) 244-5428; 557-4811; 410-0689
E-mail: fanmyola@yahoo.fr; malizoue@yahoo.fr
FANMYOLA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote women's participation in the Haitian political process.

MOUFHED

Mouvement des Femmes Haïtiennes pour l'Education et le Développement
Jessie Ewald Benôit, Executive Director
22, 1^{ère} rue Wilson, Pacot
B.P. 1295
Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Telephone: (509) 244-4099
www.moufhed.org and moufhed@yahoo.fr
MOUFHED is a non-profit organization whose mission is the promotion of the fundamental rights of women and the family; it is especially involved in women's legal issues, including legal advice and counseling and training.

RÉSEAU NATIONAL DE DÉFENSE DES DROITS HUMAINS - RNDDH

Marie Yolène Gilles, Assistant Program Director

9, Rue Rivière
Port-au-Prince, Haïti
Telephone: (509) 244-1495; 244-1496; 245-3486
Fax: (509) 244-4146
www.rnddh.org and lgilles@rnddh.org

Formerly the National Coalition of Haitian Refugees, this organization is a watchdog and advocacy group for human rights in Haiti and documents and report incidents of various abuse, including those including and affecting women.

SOLIDARITE FANM AYISYEN -- SOFA

Evelyne Larrieux, Director Telephone: (509) 244-7114 45

FEMMES EN DEMOCRATIE

Danielle Saint Lôt, Présidente

No. 137, Rue Louverture

Pétionville, Haiti

Telephone: (509) 550-8826

E-mail: dsaintlot@yahoo.com

Femmes en Démocratie was formed in March 2000, as a non-profit organization inspired by the international movement to support women to their fullest potential in the judicial, social, political and economic domains. Its primary objectives are to promote the emergence of a feminine Haitian leadership; support women to participate in the highest levels of decision-making; communicate and support the exchange of experiences and best practices, and constitute a feminine lobby to national and international decision-makers.

GROUP 184 +

Yannick Lahens, Assistant to the Director

14, Rue Borno

Montagne Noire, Port-au-Prince, Haïti

The Group 184+ is a coalition of close to 300 civil society organizations across the country, including 11 women's advocacy coalitions and umbrella associations.

Telephone: (509) 408-9629

FONDS KORE FANM

Sabine Manigat, Coordinator

08, Rue Emeric, Route de Montana

Bourdon, Haïti – B.P. 15944

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E-mail: sabine.manigat@cgf.ht

This is the Local Management Office for Canadian Cooperation in Haiti exclusively concerned with women's issues and development; it currently has a budget of CDN\$4 million for support to women's issues and groups.

Sources

- IFRC preliminary appeal, 2009-01-13, <http://www.ifrc.org/docs/appeals/10/MDRHT008PrelimAppeal.pdf>
- Womenwarpeace (2007), Gender Profile of the Conflict in Haiti, womenwarpeace.org, 2007
- Gender Assessment, USAID, Haiti, 2006

- Worldbank, Haiti
Data<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/HAITIEXTN/0,,menuPK:338204~pagePK:141132~piPK:141109~theSitePK:338165,00.html>
- MSB Gender Equality Handbook – practical advice for international assistance
- <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/VVOS-7ZPM52?OpenDocument&rc=2&emid=EQ-2010-000009-HTI>

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