

HAITI

SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN PEACE BUILDING AND PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE: COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES



Women around the world face significant challenges to their participation in peace building processes; beyond this, national level legal frameworks around women's peace building or prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) often do not filter down to the community level.

In Haiti, the The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is responding to these two issues in a programme titled: "Supporting Women's Engagement in Peacebuilding and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict: Community-Led Approaches."

This two-year initiative, which was launched in April 2007, is part of a global UNIFEM program funded through a US\$6.5 million grant from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The following six conflict-affected countries are involved in the program: Afghanistan, Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda, Timor-Leste and Uganda.



Member of musical band Krezi leading a school discussion on Violence Against Women with youth.

OBJECTIVES

With a budget of over 1 million dollars, the objectives of the UNIFEM program in Haiti are:

- To support ending cultures of violence and targeting of women and girls through strengthening women's roles in reduction of violence and peace building and through gender-sensitive local security systems;
- To strengthen state accountability and eliminate impunity for sexual violence in justice processes;
- To empower and support women's organisations in their programming, advocacy and outreach in addressing violence against women;
- To promote a gender-sensitive social communications strategy on violence against women.

ACTIVITIES

The program is being implemented in selected communities in the departments of the North, North-east, and South-east, in addition to parts of the Port-au-Prince area. Some of the key activities of this program in Haiti include:

- Outreach and training on the role of women in the reduction of violence and security sector oversight;

- Justice sector trainings and community advocacy on legal options for survivors of SGBV;
- Small Grants Facility to support grassroots women's organizations to better respond to and prevent SGBV prevalence;
- Schools-based outreach campaign to engage youth in discussions about violence against women and violence prevention;
- Awareness raising and working with men as champions in the fight against SGBV.

SGBV IN HAITI

Comprehensive national-level data on SGBV remains a challenge to collect. Recent studies and surveys suggest that in the last 10 – 15 years at least three distinct areas of SGBV have emerged: political rape and other forms of sexual violence, domestic and intra-familial violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse by external security sector actors. Recent data suggests:

- That domestic/familial violence is a primary obstacle to women's effective engagement in public life in Haiti.
- Women are increasingly the prime targets for all forms of physical violence. A Médecins du Monde survey on victims of violence in 15 health centers of Port-au-Prince in 2005 documented 511 such cases. This study shows that 80% of the victims of violence treated are women and that 60% of the cases of aggression were sexual. 86% of the victims filed a complaint, but only 3.3% of the 79% who wanted to take the cases to court (citing a lack of trust in the legal system).

- Economic dependence of women on husbands and other men is seen as a key factor in cyclical violence against women.

CHALLENGES

Most women's rights advocates describe Haiti as having a culture that inherently discriminates against women, where gender-based violence in the home is exceedingly common, and a lack of access to economic autonomy renders women helpless in the face of such dynamics. High rates of violence, HIV/AIDS prevalence and cultural taboos about such violence create a highly complex advocacy environment. A 2007 national study supported by UNIFEM and the IDB on responses to gender-based violence paved the way for increased coherence and prioritization of response measures by UN and government actors in terms of geographic emphasis as well as areas of intervention.

It remains very difficult to discuss issues of peace-building and violence prevention in Haiti, particularly with regard to the effects on women and their participation in prevention. Standard models of peacebuilding have proved ill-suited for the Haitian context and challenge the international community and national counterparts in finding durable solutions. Recent high levels of kidnapping and drug-related crimes have underscored the nexus between political instability, endemic poverty and small arms proliferation.



Poster developed to raise awareness on a woman's right to a life free of violence ("Women's Rights are Human Rights").

UNIFEM seeks to address these challenges and the persistent issue of armed violence through making linkages between SGBV-related priorities and work with the security and judicial sectors. This is an opportunity to enhance and expand UNIFEM's work in this area, and build the link between the peacekeeping agenda and the longer term development agenda while supporting women's rights and the important work of women's rights organizations in Haiti.

PARTNERS

UNIFEM is working with the following partners to implement this program:

- Gender Unit of MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti)
- Ministry of Women's Condition and Women's Rights
- Networks of women's organizations in the South-east and North of Haiti

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

- Increased political will and accountability to end gender-based violence;
- Improved policy and programmatic linkages between national peace and security initiatives and actions to end violence against women;
- Decreased public and private tolerance of violence against women;
- Strengthened institutional capacity of government and civil society to combat violence against women

UNIFEM expects that these positive changes will contribute to supporting the women of Haiti in building peace and preventing SGBV at the community level.

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