



U.S. Agency for International Development

Bureau for Global Health

COUNTRY PROFILE

HIV/AIDS

HAITI

Haiti is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, and outside of sub-Saharan Africa, is the country most affected by the AIDS epidemic. In 1999, AIDS was the leading cause of death in Haitian women aged 15 to 49, and AIDS accounted for more than 5 percent of all deaths. As recently as 2001, 30,000 Haitians died from AIDS, and 200,000 children became orphans because one or both parents died from AIDS.

Estimated Number of Adults and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (end of 2001)	250,000
Total Population (2001)	8,270,000
Adult HIV Prevalence (end of 2001)	4.5%
HIV-1 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas	
Population most at risk (i.e., sex workers and clients, patients with a sexually transmitted infection, or others with known risk factors)	—
Population not at risk (i.e., pregnant women, blood donors, or others with no known risk factors)	3.8%

Sources: UNAIDS, U.S. Census Bureau, 2001 Ministry of Health seroprevalence survey

A widely used source on HIV prevalence in Haiti is the December 2000 report of sentinel surveillance conducted by Institut Haitien d'Enfance and the Haitian Group for the Study of Kaposi Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections (GHESKIO) Centers, under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Health and Population. The study, conducted in 12 antenatal clinics in ten regional departments, reported an estimated national adult seroprevalence of 4.5 percent, which was down from 6.0 percent in 1996 and 6.2 percent in 1992. Major declines occurred in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien.

The rate of infections among 15- to 24-year-olds, however, increased from 1996 to 2000, and the higher prevalence in this group indicates Haiti's epidemic may not be under control.

Even though indications are that HIV infection rates are no longer rising and may be declining in some areas and among the general population, the reduction in prevalence between the past two national studies should be interpreted with caution because epidemiological surveillance methods and behavioral studies either do not exist or are inadequate.



Map of Haiti: PCL Map Collection, University of Texas

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has allocated \$67 million over a five-year period for Haiti, and funds will be disbursed directly to nongovernmental organizations. However, the following factors may interfere with efforts to implement HIV prevention and AIDS mitigation and care efforts in Haiti:

- Acute stigma against people living with HIV/AIDS and their families;
- Few screening and voluntary counseling and treatment services for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV;
- A weak epidemiological surveillance system;
- A shortage of health care facilities and services in rural areas;

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- Haiti's lack of participation in international AIDS forums and dialogues in recent years; and
- Haiti's relative isolation from the rest of the Caribbean, both economically and culturally.

Haiti is also one of the 14 focus countries in the President's International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative, which have recently been folded into the larger President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. This plan is a \$15 billion, five-year program that includes up to \$1 billion for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief encompasses HIV/AIDS activities in more than 75 countries and focuses on 14 countries in Africa and the Caribbean to develop comprehensive and integrated prevention, care, and treatment programs. Within five years, the 14 countries will treat more than two million HIV-infected persons with effective combination antiretroviral therapy, provide care for ten million HIV-infected persons and those orphaned by HIV/AIDS by 2008, and prevent seven million new infections by 2010.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

The first and second medium-term plans for Haiti's national AIDS campaign were comprehensive and ambitious, and they called for a range of prevention, care, and support activities. The Ministry of Health finalized and adopted an HIV/AIDS strategic plan in 2002. The national program has focused on prevention of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and mother-to-child transmission; ensuring safety of the blood supply; vaccine research; and care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. With recent emphasis and funding for care and treatment activities in Haiti, the Ministry of Health has revised the national strategic plan to include this important new focus.

USAID SUPPORT

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is the largest bilateral donor in Haiti, having allocated \$4.75 million in 2003 for HIV/AIDS activities, and an additional \$3 million to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission.

USAID's HIV/AIDS program in Haiti includes a comprehensive set of HIV prevention and education activities, as well as programs to provide care and support for those living with the disease. In 1995, USAID/Haiti developed the Health Systems 2004 Project, an integrated health and population program to increase the effectiveness of its assistance to nongovernmental organizations and to provide assistance to the public sector. Ultimately, responding to the generalized HIV/AIDS epidemic in Haiti requires a dual approach: to provide decentralized prevention and care services throughout the country, and, at the same time, to ensure extra coverage in high-risk settings where transmission is occurring most rapidly.

USAID provides assistance in Haiti to indigenous nongovernmental organizations through American contractors and private voluntary organizations. USAID does not provide direct assistance to the central government, although there is frequent and substantive interaction with the government in the health and education sectors. Under the Health Systems 2004 Project, Management Science for Health, the principal contractor for USAID in Haiti, channels resources through grants and subcontracts to a network of 33 local nongovernmental organizations, many of which (e.g., Haitian Health Foundation, Service and Development Agency of the African Methodist Church, Hospital Albert Schweitzer) are affiliated with philanthropic organizations based in the United States. CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, and Save the Children are additional cooperating partners. USAID also implements several activities through the IMPACT Project, managed by Family Health International, by providing grants to a growing number of indigenous nongovernmental, faith-based, and community-based organizations for a range of prevention, education, care, and support activities. The IMPACT Project provides clinical training support as well as renovations of clinical infrastructure. Specific activities include: a behavior surveillance survey; voluntary counseling and testing programs; prevention of mother-to-child transmission; prevention and education programs aimed at vulnerable and at-risk populations (i.e., youth, orphans and vulnerable children, commercial sex workers, homosexuals, and migrant populations); and a national public education campaign.

Behavior change communication

Although most Haitians are aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS, denial, stigma, and discrimination are major obstacles to behavior change efforts that include voluntary counseling and testing to know one's serological status and to act on that

knowledge given negative social perceptions. Myths and inaccuracies abound, particularly with regard to means of transmission and risk factors. USAID has implemented a comprehensive behavior change communication effort with the following objectives in mind:

- Dispel myths and improve the accuracy of knowledge of HIV/AIDS;
- Reduce fear, stigma, and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS;
- Promote a greater frequency of care-seeking behaviors;
- Create a supportive environment that reinforces healthy choices by those at risk for infection;
- Promote the perception of self-risk and the use of appropriate risk-reduction strategies;
- Stimulate community-based care for people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS; and
- Work with health professionals to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities concerning HIV/AIDS issues, including stigma and discrimination.

Through the Health Communication Partnership, USAID is helping to coordinate and scale up activities in all these areas. The Health Communication Partnership, together with 30 other grantees, coordinates this broad range of activities in accordance with the Ministry of Health's national communication campaign for HIV/AIDS.

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs is a partner under the Health Systems 2004 Project and has paved the way, together with Population Services International and other organizations, for providing and diversifying a multimedia prevention campaign, now focusing more broadly on the ABC (Abstain, Be faithful to one partner, or use a Condom) approach to reducing transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Capacity building

A dependable epidemiological surveillance system that meets Haitian and international standards does not exist. With USAID funding, the Futures Group, through the POLICY Project, develops and presents data on the implications of population growth and HIV/AIDS, and prepares news bulletins on population, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS. The POLICY Project has also worked with the Ministry of Health to analyze recent sentinel surveillance data and to update HIV/AIDS projections for the 2002–2006 national AIDS plan, as well as a situational analysis of gender-based violence as it relates to maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS.

Condom use

USAID implemented a successful condom social marketing program in Haiti through the AIDSMark Project, which is managed by Population Services International. The *Pante* brand condom is widely promoted and sells locally for less than 20 percent of the price of popular commercial brands. More than 15 million *Pante* condoms were sold in 2003. The AIDSMark Project introduced the *Reality* female condom in Haiti, and more than 13 million units were sold in less than a year.

Cross-border issues

USAID staff in Haiti collaborate closely with staff in the Dominican Republic to coordinate joint efforts to provide information and services to mobile and at-risk populations in so-called hot spots along the Haiti/Dominican Republic border, and to build constituencies at the national and regional levels for better HIV prevention, care, and support measures. This effort involves nongovernmental organizations on both sides of the border.

International and community-based organizations

Although USAID channels funds to more than 30 nongovernmental organizations in Haiti, additional grants and cooperative agreements were recently negotiated with local organizations to provide better supervision and operational support for the tuberculosis program and to strengthen the technical capacity, quality, and coverage of HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, and child health referral services in subnational departments. USAID-supported work in maternal and child health is closely coordinated with UNICEF, as are USAID's efforts under the President's International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative.

Orphans and vulnerable children

Community support groups for orphans and people living with AIDS, recently found in just one region, are being extended to all regions in Haiti. This assistance has facilitated more effective linkages among organizations that target people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as orphans and vulnerable children and institutions that aid them. USAID support has improved basic health services in orphanages and established community networks through which orphans are placed with extended family members. New grants are being made to associations of persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS to promote their involvement in orphan protection and support. A situation analysis will be conducted as soon as new census data become available in 2004. Additional monies (through the international food emergency assistance fund under U.S. Public Law 480 Title II) are being used to improve Haitians' access to quality nutrition and health services. Assistance is directed to segments of the population at the highest risk for malnutrition (children under five, orphans, pregnant and lactating mothers, and those with special health needs such as patients with tuberculosis or AIDS). All partners work through existing Ministry of Health community units and are expanding their services to remote locations through community "rally posts" and mobile clinics. With USAID funding, CARE International implements a pilot care and support program for people living with HIV/AIDS, using an integrated family and community approach. Other pilot activities are being tested.

Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, much broader interventions will make it possible to reach orphans and other vulnerable children in rural and urban areas, through community- and faith-based organizations, as well as through other networks.

Community care and support

The Health Communication Partnership, the POLICY Project, and the Technical Steering Committee chaired by the Ministry of Health have drafted a strategy and implementation guide for community care and support. This includes necessary advocacy at the national level and operational plans at the departmental and community levels. Training is ongoing with faith-based organizations and other already organized groups that can catalyze community responses.

Voluntary counseling and testing

Voluntary counseling and testing is becoming the cornerstone of national HIV prevention strategies because it provides information to individuals, and when linked to support and care services, empowers them to take control of their own health and protect others. Dependable voluntary counseling and testing services are now available at only four sites in Haiti, all in the private sector.

Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, HIV counseling and testing programs will be expanded to offer care and treatment services. USAID's activities under the President's International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative have greatly improved Haitians' access to voluntary counseling and testing in rural and urban facilities through public and private partnerships. As of 2003, 26,000 persons have been tested and have received counseling at these centers.

This effort began with USAID support to the Haitian Group for the Study of Kaposi Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections (GHESKIO) in the management of a voluntary counseling and testing program, and the training of professionals in the regional centers. GHESKIO provides training for counselors to provide information and support to individuals with HIV, and supports a system for coordinating counseling activities with other health services. GHESKIO conducts research, and provides services for persons living with HIV/AIDS and treatment for opportunistic infections.

Mother-to-child-transmission

USAID focuses on a comprehensive approach to preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission that includes improvement of antenatal services; HIV voluntary counseling and testing services; short-course antiretroviral prophylaxis for HIV-infected pregnant women; counseling and support for safe infant feeding practices; and stronger health, family planning, and safe motherhood programs. USAID/Haiti is supporting 25 sites throughout Haiti to promote prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission. By the end of 2008, USAID will be supporting 70 such centers.

The President's International Mother and Child HIV Prevention Initiative was launched in Haiti on July 21, 2003. The program aims to accomplish the following in its first year: provide mother-to-child HIV transmission prevention services to 17 percent of Haitian pregnant women, establish these services in 8 percent of U.S.-sponsored HIV counseling centers, initiate five new prevention of mother-to-child transmission sites, strengthen drug delivery systems, provide training in drug and commodity management, and train 200 community-based volunteers. As part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, many sites will scale up to provide enhanced prevention of mother-to-child transmission services, which will include antiretroviral therapy for the mother and her family, and which will lead to general antiretroviral services for adults. In addition, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief will expand HIV counseling and testing programs to offer care and treatment, expand prevention programs, and strengthen health care systems.

Important Links and Contacts

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USAID HIV/AIDS Website for Haiti: http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/Countries/lac/haiti.html

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For more information, see www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids or www.synergyaids.com.

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