

# “Nobody Remembers Us”

Addressing Gender-Based Violence Across Humanitarian Development in  
Haiti

Amanda M. Klasing, Researcher, Women’s Rights  
November 15, 2011, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

*We live in this camp, in the dirt ... and nobody  
remembers us.*

—Charlise, camp in Delmas 33, Haiti, November 2010

---



# Gender-Based Violence in Haiti Before the Quake



- ▶ Various regimes in Haiti have used sexual violence as a tool of repression
- ▶ The UN estimated in the 2004 to 2006 political conflicts, up to 50% of girls living in conflict zones were victims of rape or sexual violence, with reports of widespread collective or “gang” rape.
  - ▶ A survey of the metropolitan area found that 3.1 percent of women and girls, or an estimated 35,000, were sexually assaulted from February 2004 to December 2006
- ▶ More than a 25% of Haitian women and girls reported being victims of physical violence at least once since the age of 15, and 16 percent reported experiencing violence in the 12 months prior (2005-06 EMMUS IV survey)
  - ▶ In the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, 9.9 percent of women reported experiencing sexual violence.



# Health Impact of GBV

---

- A 2000 study found a correlation between the experience of spousal abuse and poor reproductive health outcomes.
- Another study found the odds of a terminated pregnancy were significantly higher for women who report intimate partner violence.
- A 2009 study of youth aged 15 to 24 found sexual violence to be a significant risk factor for pregnancy.
- Amnesty International found in 2008 that approximately 20 percent of girls seeking treatment for rape at a medical facility in Port-au-Prince became pregnant.



## Data on GBV after the Quake

---

- ▶ The Small Arms Survey and the University of Michigan: approximately 3% of sample identified themselves as victims of sexual assault in the first 3 months after the earthquake.
- ▶ A Harvard study of the camp at Parc Jean-Marie Vincent found that 4.1% of survey respondents reported that they or someone they knew had forced sex.
- ▶ UNFPA found approximately 1% of women reporting sexual violence; 1.7 % of 20 to 24-year-olds.



## Data on GBV after the Quake (cont.)

---

- ▶ NYU's CHRGJ found that 9% of respondents reported one or more members of their household had been “raped or forced to have sex when they did not want to” in the year since the earthquake.
- ▶ Solidarity of Haitian Women (SOFA) reported treating 718 women and girls for gender-based violence in the 6 months after the earthquake: 114 were victims of rape.
- ▶ The grassroots group Commission of Women Victims for Victims (KOFAVIV) reports helping 640 victims of rape in the year after the earthquake.



# Pregnancy and Rape

---

- ▶ SOFA reported that of the 114 sexual assaults it treated from January to June 2010, 6.36 percent resulted in pregnancy.
- ▶ The grassroots group, Centre d'Appui pour les Femmes Victimes d'Abus Sexuels (CAFVAS), reported that of rapes it recorded from February to March 2010, a full 20% resulted in pregnancy.
- ▶ Several women and girls Human Rights Watch interviewed reported their pregnancy was due to rape; 3 were adolescent girls, aged between 14 and 15.



## Post-Rape Medical Care

---

- ▶ This suggests that women and girls do not have access to the reproductive and sexual health services they need after they have been victims of sexual violence, namely access to emergency contraceptive and prophylaxis for STIs, including HIV.
- ▶ Two primary reasons for not accessing post-rape care: lack of information and shame.







# Obstacles to Post-Rape Care

---

- ▶ Prior to the quake, 26% of women who experienced sexual violence in Haiti reported that they had sought assistance from their own relatives. Victims identified mothers as the single most important source of help, followed by friends and neighbors.
- ▶ In contrast, 2% of survivors of sexual violence reported seeking assistance from the police, a lawyer, or a doctor.
- ▶ Many social networks were damaged or destroyed by the quake.
- ▶ HRW found a general lack of information pervades all aspects of the lives women and girls displaced by the earthquake—this includes knowing where to go to access post-rape care.





# Lack of Information

---

- ▶ Human Rights Watch found that it had an impact on the realization of a wide range of rights.
- ▶ Women and girls have little or no information on:
  - ▶ Health and available health services;
  - ▶ How to participate in decision-making – from community to national level;
  - ▶ Plans for the camps where they lived; and,
  - ▶ Plans for the reconstruction generally.
- ▶ Also lacking information necessary to seek accountability or to report or seek redress for problems.



## Addressing GBV in the current context

---

- ▶ Address gender inequalities and vulnerabilities that can exacerbate violence.
  - ▶ Develop and communicate a gender policy consistent across all ministries and government policies. The policy should require:
    - A focus on the rights of women and girls;
    - That all data be disaggregated by gender;
    - The inclusion of gender-specific analysis in program and policy design, implementation, and monitoring;
    - Establishment of concrete gender-specific benchmarks and indicators;
    - Clear avenues for women's and girls' participation.
- 



## Addressing GBV in the current context

---

- ▶ Identify and implement measures that can be put in place to ensure adequate oversight, monitoring, and reporting of programs to allow accountability between rights-holders and the state, as well as between the state and donors.
- ▶ This is essential to assess whether responses on the ground are effectively meeting human rights obligations and if not, what remedial action should be taken to fulfill those obligations.



## Addressing GBV in the current context

---

- ▶ Design programs to increase women's and girls' access to information, including availability of post-rape care, availability of medical services, and general information about the reconstruction effort.
- ▶ The draft violence against women bill takes initial steps to recognize the importance of access to information.



*We have no information. Nothing. I would like to know  
what will happen to us.*

—Vyola, resident of a camp in Delmas 33, November 11, 2010

*We are ready to move on, but we don't know how they  
[the government and NGOs] will get us into this  
process.*

—Claudine, resident of a camp in Cite Soleil, January 31, 2011

---

