Health and Disease Prevention in Haiti

Disease Prevention

The American Red Cross has been working to prevent the spread of disease in Haiti since 2004. When the January 2010 earthquake injured hundreds of thousands of people and decimated Haiti’s already limited health infrastructure, pre-existing programs were expanded to better provide first aid, reduce the incidence of HIV and launch hygiene education initiatives in camps and communities. Since the earthquake, the American Red Cross has spent or committed to spend nearly $66 million to improve access to vital care and help rebuild healthy communities in Haiti.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, the densely populated camps of Port-au-Prince presented a serious public health challenge, particularly for children and other vulnerable residents. Red Cross volunteers and staff worked diligently within camps and crowded communities to promote hygiene, health and safety among thousands of at-risk residents. The American Red Cross funded a national vaccination campaign that reached nearly 1 million people soon after the earthquake and again in 2012. Depending on age, patients received a combination of vaccinations against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, and/or rubella. Children were also given worm infection treatment and vitamin A supplements to boost immunity.

We continue to work with the Haitian Red Cross and other partners to raise awareness about health issues and to prevent and treat diseases such as cholera and HIV. The American Red Cross has sustained valuable pre-earthquake collaboration with local and international organizations, exemplified by support for an HIV prevention campaign that has benefitted 350,000 people to date. In the wake of the cholera outbreak that began at the end of 2010 and is now endemic in Haiti, the American Red Cross has spent $19 million to stem the spread of this disease, including more than 70 percent of the funds needed to distribute the country’s first-ever cholera vaccine to more than 90,000 Haitians.

Because cholera and other health threats are transmitted through dirty water and poor sanitation, the American Red Cross has spent more than $50 million on projects that have improved access to clean water and sanitation facilities for 545,000 people. Hygiene promotion and other cholera prevention activities have reached more than three million Haitians nationwide.

Public Health Infrastructure Support

The American Red Cross has made considerable investments to strengthen Haiti’s public health system in order to improve the availability of and access to care.

In 2012, the American Red Cross helped fund the construction of Mirebalais Teaching Hospital and partnered with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to rebuild a prosthetics and physical rehabilitation center. Mirebalais will open in Spring 2013 as an energy-efficient hospital with more than 300 beds and roof-mounted solar panels, offering patients high-quality care, while also training new health professionals. The ICRC center, Klinik Kay Kapab, is now assisting some of the thousands of people who were badly injured by the earthquake.

A number of other hospitals and clinics have received assistance since the earthquake. The American Red Cross provided operational support for University Hospital, the largest public hospital in Haiti, Bernard Mevs Project Medishare Hospital, which has one of the few intensive care units in Haiti, and also a field hospital run by the German and Finnish Red Cross Societies. The American Red Cross is now contributing the majority of the funds required for the reconstruction of St. Michel Hospital in Jacmel, the only hospital in the Southeast Department of Haiti.

A prosthetics center patient receives rehabilitation services.

To learn more, visit redcross.org/haiti

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