



Rebuilding Haiti's Medical Schools

In January 2010, Haiti experienced a major earthquake and the country is once again trying to overcome a devastating tragedy. Before the earthquake, health conditions in Haiti were alarming. According to the last Study on Mortality, Morbidity and the Utilization of Services (EMMUS, 2005, 2006) in Haiti, the maternal mortality rate remains the highest in the world, with 630 deaths per 100,000 living births. With respect to the child mortality rate, one child out of 12 risks dying before reaching the age of 5, and only 26% receive care by trained health professionals. The child vaccination rate remains very low, at a mere 40%. Fever, diarrhea and respiratory infections (URI) are the major medical issues leading to child mortality.

Compounding these issues is very poor access to health services, financial barriers to access, and a serious shortage of qualified professionals. In 2009, there were an average of 5.9 physicians and nurses per 10,000 inhabitants and only 6.5 health care professionals per 10,000 citizens. The WHO minimum standard is 25 per 10,000 inhabitants. The situation has unfortunately worsened since the events of January 12, 2010.

Following the earthquake, the Haitian government presented the international community with an Action Plan for National Recovery and Development of Haiti (APNRDH, March 2010) incorporating all development programs and initiatives. To help coordinate the APNRDH support and implementation, an interim Haitian recovery commission was set up. Canada is taking part in reaching the Haitian reconstruction objectives as a member of the ICRH. In addition, the G8 Muskoka Initiative (Canada, June 2010) reaffirms the role Canada wants to play in improving maternal, newborn and child health across the globe. In this area, Canada confirmed its contribution and support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) during the summit in New York City held last September.

This nationwide project, coordinated by the Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada (AFMC), is part of the Haitian government's PARDN project and is designed to align with the Muskoka initiative and the MDG objectives. It is designed to improve health conditions for Haitians, especially women, children and the most vulnerable, by consolidating the four medical schools recognized by Haiti's Ministère de la santé publique et de la population (department of health and population) and clinical clerkship settings in order to provide programs and care that are adapted to the health needs of Haitians.

The Ministère de la santé publique et de la population, the four recognized medical schools in Haiti, the Haitian senate and the office of the Prime Minister of Haiti have all expressed their desire to see this project realized (see appendices). Canadian faculties of medicine, along with their partners (Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, College of Family Physicians of Canada, Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada) have come together to create this project proposal in order to provide comprehensive and coordinated assistance to resolve the major issues facing Haitian faculties of medicine.

This project support will help:

- improve infrastructure for the training of physicians and providing clinical care in recognized Haitian clinical training settings;

- increase Haitian faculty member competency in the four faculties of medicine and their network of clerkship settings;
- adapt medical training programs (undergraduate, graduate [including clerkships] and specialized training [also called residency]) to the health needs of the Haitians, specifically mothers, children, and the most vulnerable;
- provide physicians with greater access to continuing professional training on health needs;
- improve the governance of initial and continuing medical in Haiti.

The financial resources needed to support this six-year project are estimated at 24 million dollars to support short, medium and long-term reconstruction efforts.