

Haiti

School Children's Health in Déssalines

Haiti's situation has improved considerably after the devastating 2010 earthquake, which caused over 250,000 deaths in a population of ten million inhabitants. However, inequality prevails, and extreme poverty affects more than half (54%) of Haitians, especially in rural areas. Cholera disease, spread by lack of clean water, sanitation and hygiene, has become endemic.

For children to be able to learn, they need to be healthy. For that, they need water, nutrition and not to be sick.

In 2012, Save the Children conducted a diagnostic baseline study in forty primary schools of the Dessalines commune in the Artibonite Department: twelve of the forty schools were public, fifteen of them were private, ten were administered by their community and three were religious schools. In 2013, Save the Children performed two additional pieces of research:

- a knowledge and practice survey among 1,096 school children
- a health survey with 838 school children

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools

Twenty-four schools had no existing water point and of the sixteen schools that had water only two schools were disinfecting water with chlorine.

Clean, functional latrines that respect privacy are especially important for keeping girls in school during menstruation. Three schools (7.5%) had no latrine or bathroom whatsoever, thirty-three schools (82.5%) had pit latrines and the remaining four (10%) schools had flush toilets. 60% of the latrines and toilets were poorly maintained or dirty. Thirty percent were more or less functional and only 10% were clean and functional.

Nutrition

Many children had cheilosis, a chronic inflammation at the corner of the mouth that can indicate iron deficiency or vitamin B deficiency. One quarter of the children knew about vitamin A (why it is important and which foods to eat to obtain it), 15% knew about vitamin B, but only 7% knew about iron and 2% about iodine.

Map of Central America and the Caribbean, Haiti in blue.



School Feeding

Seventy-nine percent of school children said they did not eat at home before going to school. These children walk on average between fifteen minutes and two hours one way from home to school.

Due to long walks to school, many children are distracted because they are hungry in class. For these children, school feeding would be important. But the majority (60%) of schools had no kitchen, fourteen schools had some cooking space and only twelve schools had an acceptable space for preparing school meals, including running water for the kitchen. Most children buy food from outside vendors which are often unhygienic and of poor nutritional quality.

Health

Six of 129 tested children (4.6%) had malaria. Although not a prevalent number, malaria can be a deadly disease if unattended. Only three schools (7.5%) had a first aid kit with antiseptics for wound cleaning and basic medicines for pain or fever. Only seven of 239 teachers surveyed had some training in health, nutrition or puberty/sexuality.

Twenty seven percent of children were anemic, which affects their attention and learning capacity. Among the young adolescents, girls were twice as likely as boys to have anemia. If more than 20% of children have anemia, the World Health Organizations calls it a “public health problem” and recommends regular weekly iron supplement tablets in school.

Puberty

While 80% of the fifth and sixth graders had heard about contraception, only half of them had heard about sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

What does Save the Children do?

Save the Children’s School Health and Nutrition program is funded by Individual Child Sponsorship. It contributes substantially to improve these children’s ability to stay and learn in school. The program consists of four major components:

- Access to health services in schools
- Improved school environment, especially for WASH
- Health education
- Community and policy support



School children in Dessalines, Haiti. Photo by Save the Children.

Haiti	2014 activities
Health services in school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14,287 children dewormed • 12,756 children received iron and vitamins • 2,128 preschoolers received Vitamin A • 51 schools with a first aid kit • 2,859 students treated with first aid kit, most of them for epidemic mosquito transmitted and Chikungunya fever • 1,113 children’s vision screened. Children with poor vision are being seated in the front of the class to see the blackboard better.
Improved school environment, especially water, sanitation and hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 new water points in 16 schools • 6 new toilet blocks • 59 schools with hygiene materials (chlorine for water disinfection, portable water dispensers and soap for hand washing) • 12 new community chlorine sales points • 22 school kitchens improved with utensils
Health education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 394 teachers trained on nutrition, deworming, visual screening and hygiene -- cholera prevention • 161 parents trained on hygiene and nutrition • 150 teachers from near-by schools, trained on hygiene • 56 cooks and vendors certified in food hygiene • 13,000 children received at least one health or hygiene lesson • 12,000 children were reached with oral health messages during an “oral health week”
Community engagement	Engaged 50 children’s clubs
Program reach:	<p>Directly SCI supported schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59 schools • Over 13,000 school children <p>Additional outreach during global hand-washing day:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 105 schools • Over 20,000 school children
Gifts in kind from P&G and Americares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 899 toothpastes, 1,713 toothbrushes and 1,990 soaps distributed during summer reading camp activities • 2,163 toothpastes and brushes distributed during oral health week, as an incentive for children who responded well to oral health questions