

Gender-Based Violence in Haiti

Two years after the January 10, 2010 earthquake, hundreds of thousands of women and girls live under precarious conditions in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, without adequate housing, sanitation, healthcare services, lighting or security. Beyond these camps, even more women and girls face similar vulnerabilities. While even in “the best of times,” Haitian women and girls have suffered from high rates of gender-based violence (GBV), evidence from the last twenty-five years in Haiti demonstrates an increase in reports of GBV in times of conflict or disaster. Two years after the quake, many women and girls living in IDP camps and other impoverished communities in Haiti experience an increased risk to these crimes.

Despite many challenges, the Government of Haiti (GOH) has shown its commitment to address GBV. Its Ministry on the Status of Women and Women’s Rights (Women’s Ministry), Parliament and other government offices are actively pursuing legal and policy reforms. With the GOH demonstrating forward momentum, the United States should renew its commitment to Haitian women and children and support the GOH’s own initiatives to improve protection strategies.

HAWG recommends that Members of Congress in the House of Representatives support House Resolution 521, on gender-based violence in Haiti, introduced on January 23, 2012 by Representative Federica Wilson. The Resolution encourages the United States to work with the Government of Haiti to address GBV. Specifically, the resolution does the following:

- Urges the United States Government (USG) to treat the issue of violence against women and children as a priority for its humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in Haiti;
- Asserts support for Haiti’s efforts to pass its first comprehensive law on the prevention, punishment and elimination of all forms of GBV;
- Calls on the GOH to establish a plan to address the needs of vulnerable and unprotected children;
- Calls on the GOH to take steps to implement the recommendations of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued in response to increased levels of sexual violence in IDP camps; and,
- Asserts the USG’s commitment to support the GOH, including the Women’s Ministry in their work, especially in its efforts to assess, amend, and renew its 5-year gender protection plan.

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