



International Child Care

grace!

WINTER 2003

AT WORK IN HAITI & THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Birth Rates

Haiti

4.3 children/woman



Dominican Republic

2.94 children/woman



United States

2.07 children/woman



Canada

1.6 children/woman



Total Fertility Rate/World Factbook 2002

ICC Launches a New and Improved Website!

International Child Care is excited to announce that our website has been recently updated and revised! Thanks to Kurt Repola of KurtRepola.com, who volunteered his time and expertise to redo our existing site, ICC now has a plethora of current information, including up-to-date program materials, newsletters and photos available right at your fingertips!

Log on today and explore ICC's updated site at

www.intlchildcare.org

ICC Improves Child Health and Survival through Reproductive Health Education

As an organization committed primarily to the promotion of health for children, International Child Care intentionally seeks to meet the needs of women as well. It is a well-known fact that in the developing world women bear the greatest burden of responsibility for their families and that the health of children is directly influenced by the health and well being of their mothers. Many studies have documented the strong relationship between a mother's history of childbirth and the survival chances of her children. Infants and young children have a higher risk of dying if they are born shortly after a previous birth, or if their mothers already have many children.

Traditionally, Haitian families have many children with the sad expectation of having to replace children who may die. The grim reality is that one out of every five children will die before the age of five due to curable diseases. In Haiti, children play a critically important role in the family and community. Older children are often the caretakers of younger siblings while the parents are off to the market or tending the farm, trying to support their families. Children are also responsible for domestic chores such as fetching drinking water and assisting with meal preparation. In communities where many of the adults are illiterate, the child who attends school and learns to read and write becomes a critically important tool. Overall, children are considered "petit se riches," which translated means a thing of value or riches. Therefore, abortion (which ICC does not promote or support) is abhorrent in Haitian culture and family planning goes against centuries of strong Haitian tradition.

In comparison, studies show that over half of the women in the Dominican Republic use modern methods of contraception, which is a relatively high contraceptive prevalence rate for a developing nation. Female sterilization is the most popular method, as Dominican women prefer to marry young, have their children in quick succession, ▶





and then opt for the procedure. Temporary contraceptive methods are not as readily available or as popular, as many men believe it threatens their masculinity. This limited choice and discontentment with temporary methods, which can have high failure rates, leads to unplanned pregnancy. Although abortion is illegal in the Dominican Republic, unfortunately it is widely practiced.

International Child Care has been offering reproductive health services to women and families in Haiti and the Dominican Republic since 1983. Through Grace Children's Hospital and the Integrated Community Health Program (ICHP), ICC is helping women and men understand the importance of child health and survival through family planning. Educating that if they plan the number, spacing, and timing of births, while using safe and affordable contraceptive methods, they will reduce the number of unwanted and unsafe pregnancies, and improve the health of their present children. ICC is helping moms and dads realize the additional hardships they may face with higher numbers of children.

International Child Care's reproductive health services, coupled with extensive health education, are assisting in the decline of fertility and infant and maternal mortality rates, and increasing knowledge and use of contraceptives. Most importantly, ICC's programs are improving the health of thousands of women and children in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. ■

Integrated Community Health Program (ICHP) and Adolescent Pregnancy:

Young Haitian girls often become mothers before reaching an age of sufficient maturity and before acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for the important role of parenting. Therefore, conception among girls aged 15-19 is of special concern for a number of reasons. To begin, children born to adolescent mothers are more likely to be undernourished than the children of older mothers. Births to teenagers are also more likely to be unplanned and premature. Adolescent childbirth is associated with greater risks of complications during delivery and higher infant and maternal mortality rates. Having a child during adolescence also limits a girl's opportunities for better education, jobs and income.

Many Haitian girls, especially in the rural sectors, have babies as early as 14, 15, and 16 years of age. It is unusual if a 20-year-old girl in the village hasn't had a baby yet. Haitian girls are ashamed when they get pregnant too young. They realize that, unless the father will marry them, it may ruin their chances for marriage. Sometimes, they will wrap their abdomens very tightly, so that it is not possible to tell that they are pregnant. Thankfully, although this binding makes the girl uncomfortable, it doesn't do any permanent damage to her or the baby. Often, the girl will find a way to deliver the baby in secret. She may go to another village where she is not known and give the baby to someone else to raise.

Reproductive health is a topic of earnest discussion in the village Reflection Groups, facilitated by ICC. Through ICC's Integrated Community Health Program in the North of Haiti, Community Health Workers provide important reproductive health education to over 16,000 women, encouraging girls to wait until they are older to have babies and to only have as many children as they can care for. Due to the fact that family planning goes against strong Haitian tradition and frequently the wishes of extended family and society at large, ICC understands that it is not enough to just make contraceptive methods available or provide basic health education. Through the Reflection Groups, ICC is able to create an ambiance in which Haitians help Haitians embrace new beliefs and make healthier decisions for themselves and their children. ■



A Visit to GCH's Reproductive Health Clinic:

When a woman visits the Reproductive Health Clinic at Grace Children's Hospital (GCH) she begins her appointment by seeing the receptionist. As a new patient, she is required to pay 25 gourdes (\$1.00 US) and a medical file is created. Although Grace Children's Hospital does charge a minimal fee for medical services, to ensure treatment will be valued, the fees are very inexpensive and no one is ever turned away. A return patient, like Ketteline Ifrais, simply retrieves her existing file from the receptionist and moves on to the next waiting room, awaiting her turn to consult with the appropriate nurse or doctor.



Osnile Noël supervises the counseling area of the Reproductive Health Clinic. She began working with ICC in 1995 as a Community Health Worker.

Ketteline, who lives at Delmas 31 with her sister and one-year-old daughter, waits her turn to meet with Florence Jèvère, the nurse in charge of administering contraceptives at the clinic. Ketteline has returned this day to receive her second dose of Depro Prevera. Depro Prevera, a shot given in the hip, is the most commonly requested method of contraceptive distributed at Grace. Ketteline learned of GCH's Reproductive Health Clinic through a neighbor. She is thankful that her partner encourages her to use contraceptives and that GCH offers a choice in range of safe and affordable methods.



Ketteline

New patients, who come to receive contraceptives for the first time, consult with Osnile Noël, supervisor of GCH's reproductive counseling area. Once they receive health education and it is decided which contraceptive method would be best suited for each situation, the women then meet with Nurse Jèvère.

On average, 50 - 60 women are examined each day at Grace Children's Hospital's Reproductive Health Clinic. The United Nations and USAID donate the contraceptives distributed through the clinic at Grace Children's Hospital and the Integrated Community Health Program. ■

Contraceptive Methods offered through GCH's Reproductive Health Clinic:

- Birth Control Pill = 5 gourdes (\$.20)
- Condoms = 5 gourdes (\$.20)
- Depro Provera = 10 gourdes (\$.40)
- Norplant = 60 gourdes (\$2.40)



Ketteline has returned to GCH's Reproductive Health Clinic to receive her second dose of Depro Prevera from Nurse Jèvère.

How you can make a difference...

Support ICC in our efforts to:

- Educate women and men on the importance of child health and survival through family planning
- Train Community Health Workers to provide reproductive health services in Northern Haiti
- Empower Haitian communities to embrace new beliefs and make healthier decisions for themselves and their children through reproductive health education

Amazing Grace!

Lud Milla Fleurival, a 23-year-old living at Delmas 31, is a patient at Grace Children Hospital's Reproductive Health Clinic. Unable to conceive, Lud came to the clinic to consult with Dr. Emmanuel Louis Charles about her infertility.

After running some tests, Lud's lab results came back positive for chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease. Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID), a serious complication of chlamydial infection, is a major cause of infertility in women of childbearing age. Dr. Charles prescribed oral antibiotics for Lud and recommend that her partner, of three years, be treated as well to prevent reinfection and further spread of the disease.

Lud was relieved to learn that her condition was curable. Hopefully, after the treatment is complete, Lud and her partner will be able to start a family.



Lud consulting with Dr. Charles

REFLECTIONS

From the Joint Ministry Council President

In many parts of the world it is women that bear the greatest responsibility for their families and the health of their children. This is especially true of women in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Like us, these women have the same desires that all mothers have; to provide water, food, clothes, education and health service to their children, for it is the child that holds the future for the family, community and country.

Since 1978, I have had the opportunity to experience the work of ICC, first hand, on an annual basis. I have personally watched ICC's expansion of reproductive health services for women. Over the years, I have seen the gratefulness in the eyes and the smiles of women receiving reproductive health services through International Child Care. It makes me proud to represent ICC and the many donors that provide the funds that allow these programs to improve the health and wellbeing of thousands of women in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. God bless all of you for your gifts, service and prayer.

Ellen L. Palmer, RN PhD
Assistant Clinical Professor
University of Texas
at Arlington
School of Nursing



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Grace! is published quarterly for friends of International Child Care. ICC is a Christian health agency working in Haiti and the Dominican Republic to change conditions which make people sick, hungry, unemployed and afraid.

ICC depends on individuals, churches, and donor agencies for the financial means to serve. A response card and envelope are enclosed for your contributions. Your gift will be accepted for income tax purposes.

Carol Hunsberger: Graphic design, photography

ICC/USA
3620 North High Street, Suite 110
Columbus, OH 43214
1-800-72-CHILD / 1-614-447-9952
E-Mail: ICCUSA1@aol.com

ICC/Canada
2476 Argenta Road, Suite 113
Mississauga, ON L5N 6M1
1-888-72-CHILD
1-905-821-6318
E-Mail: canada@intlchildcare.org

www.intlchildcare.org



UMCOR Advance Projects:

Grace Children's Hospital: 418520-7
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418847-3
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418242-1