

THE EFFECTS OF A VERY YOUNG AGE STRUCTURE ON HAITI COUNTRY CASE STUDY

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THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME SERIES

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Introduction

The devastating earthquake that struck Haiti in early January 2010 adds to the string of misfortunes suffered by a population used to fighting adversity. A country earlier renowned for the beauty of its landscape, Haiti has faced fierce exploitation of natural resources by successive foreign occupations and predatory dictatorships. Ongoing political instability has contributed to a sharp decline of agricultural productivity and widespread poverty. In addition, the impact of climate change is particularly salient in Haiti, exacerbated by deforestation and severe soil erosion throughout the country. The destruction caused by the 2010 earthquake adds to that of major storms and hurricanes in 2004 and 2008. These events had already caused huge infrastructural damages in other parts of Haiti and deeply affected the country's economy. Above all, the human toll of these natural disasters and recurrent weather events is devastating to the population. While the human cost of the 2010 earthquake is assumed to be around 250,000 deaths, Hurricane Jeanne in 2004 killed more people in Haiti than did Hurricane Katrina in the United States, for a population thirty times smaller.

As the country and the world look to rebuild Haiti, it will be important to understand and address the demographic dynamics facing the country, notably, Haiti's very young age structure. As large waves of young people enter the labor market in the coming years, taking into account Haiti's age structure is central to achieving long-term development goals. Following the earthquake, long-term recovery efforts to rebuild the country need to empower Haitians to have a stake in the future of their country and to focus on the island's main asset, its youth.

Haiti's demographic characteristics contribute greatly to the country's economic and environmental challenges and opportunities. Ninety-seven percent deforested,¹ Haiti is densely populated with 339 inhabitants per square kilometer. The high rate of population growth for several decades combined with limited arable land has resulted in unsustainable environmental pressure. Currently, with a fertility rate of four children per woman on average, the country can only produce 47 percent of the food it needs, and about one quarter of the population is food insecure.² The United Nations (UN) medium fertility scenario

forecasts further population growth of nearly 50 percent by 2040, and even if replacement fertility of 2.1 children per couple is attained by that time, as projected by the Haitian Institute of Statistics,³ the population will grow further due to the larger cohorts of young people reaching reproductive age.

The median age of the population is 20 years, and almost 70 percent of Haiti's people are under age 30. While other countries in the region have experienced continuously decreasing fertility rates, Haiti's fertility decline has followed a non-linear pattern. As have many other developing countries, Haiti has experienced an intense process of urbanization. The population of the capital, Port-au-Prince, more than doubled between 1982 and 1997, and the urban population is predicted to exceed the rural population by 2015. The lack of attention to rural areas in development strategies has contributed to this intense rural-urban migratory flow.⁴ Meanwhile, the increasing growth in the population and loose regulations have produced unregulated urban development that significantly raised the number of casualties of the earthquake. It has equally produced many slums where violence is the rule. As this report shows, the country's very young age structure has important implications for the political stability and possible economic recovery of the country.

In 2007, Population Action International (PAI) published *The Shape of Things to Come: Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World*. In a 30-year historical analysis, the report found that countries with very young and youthful age structures—those in which 60 percent or more of the population is younger than age 30—are the most likely to face outbreaks of civil conflict and autocratic governance.⁵ While the relationship between age structure and instability is not one of simple cause and effect, demographics can play an important role in mitigating or exacerbating a country's prospects for development and the well-being of its people. *The Shape of Things to Come* makes the case that because of this interplay of factors, demographic issues and the policies and programs that influence them—namely, family planning and reproductive health, education and economic outlets for women, and opportunities for growing cohorts of young people—must be fully integrated into development strategies by country governments and international partners.

Acknowledgements

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Following the publication of *The Shape of Things to Come*, PAI is publishing three detailed studies of Haiti, Uganda and Yemen to further examine the relationship between demographics and development in countries and regions with very young and youthful age structures. These countries were selected because they have the youngest age structures in their respective regions (Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and Middle East). In addition, they clearly illustrate the challenges of individual welfare and national development faced by nations at the beginning of the demographic transition, as well as the opportunities that lie ahead if governments and their partners implement comprehensive and forward-looking policies to shape demographic trends. The political and programmatic responses of Haiti and the other countries profiled in this series provide a diverse array of examples of policies that directly and indirectly affect age structure.

Table 1.
Demographic and Socioeconomic Indicators for Haiti

Population*	1980	5.7 million
	2005	9.4 million
	2025 (<i>medium fertility scenario</i>)	12.3 million
	2025 (<i>constant fertility scenario</i>)	13.3 million
	2050 (<i>medium fertility scenario</i>)	15.3 million
2050 (<i>constant fertility scenario</i>)		20.5 million
Median population age*	2005	20 years
Population under age 15*	2005	38 percent
Life expectancy at birth*	2000-2005	
	Female	60 years
	Male	56 years
Net migration rate*	2000-2005	-3.1 per 1,000 population
Total fertility rate†	2005-2006	
	National	4.0 children
	Urban	2.8 children
	Rural	5.0 children
Contraceptive prevalence rate (modern methods, women in union ages 15-49)†	2005-2006	
	National	25 percent
	Urban	28 percent
	Rural	22 percent
Unmet need for family planning (women in union ages 15-49)†	2005-2006	38 percent
HIV prevalence rate (ages 15 +)‡	2007	2.2 percent
Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)§	2005	670
Gross national income (GNI) per capita (Atlas method, current US\$)**	2007	\$520
Population living on less than \$2/day**	2001	72 percent
Unemployment rate		No data ⁶
Adult literacy rate (population age 15 and over)††	1997-2007	
	Male	60.1 percent
Female		64.0 percent
Arable land per capita (hectares)‡‡	2007	0.1

Sources:

- * *United Nations Population Division 2009*
- † *Cayemittes, Placide, Mariko, Barrère, Sévère and Canez 2007*
- ‡ *Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS 2008*
- § *World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNFPA and World Bank 2007*
- ** *World Bank, World Development Indicators*
- †† *United Nations Development Programme, 2009 Human Development Report*
- ‡‡ *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO Statistical Yearbook 2009*

Methodology

The study addresses the following key questions:

- How has population age structure affected development in Haiti?
- What are the demographic forces shaping Haiti's current and projected age structures?
- In what ways are the government and other stakeholders implementing policies and programs that address the country's demography? What are stakeholders' assessments of the future direction of this policy agenda?
- Considering Haiti's opportunities and challenges related to age structure issues, what policy recommendations can be offered?

In a context of very high fertility, as exists in these three countries, demographic trends are relatively easy to forecast, but the effects of rapid population growth on other sectors are less often considered. The objective of profiling these three countries in-depth is to promote the inclusion of population in broader development policies, including those related to security, good governance, economics and gender equity, as well as to underline the importance of population for the country's ability to adapt to future stresses, such as those caused by climate change. Demographic momentum is a powerful driver of future trends, but age structure is far from static. Government policies and development practices can have major impacts on the forces underlying a more balanced age structure.

Data for the Haiti study were collected in 2008, 2009 and 2010 through a review of available statistics and policies, programmatic documents and published articles and assessments. The information collected in this desk review was supplemented by e-mail, phone and in-person interviews with a number of stakeholders with experience working on population issues in Haiti (see the appendices for further information).

This report begins by briefly describing Haiti's current and projected population age structure before surveying issues of security, governance, economic development, climate change and gender, and assesses how these focus issues might be affected by demography. The report then outlines key demographic trends, such as age at marriage, desired family size, contraceptive use and maternal mortality. To evaluate the response of Haiti's government and other actors to demographic issues, national policies on population and reproductive health are analyzed, and the activities of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international donors in the population sector are summarized. The report concludes with a review of the opportunities and current challenges facing Haiti related to age structure, and offers related policy recommendations for long-term reconstruction and development strategies.

Figure 1
Age Structures along the Demographic Transition, 2005

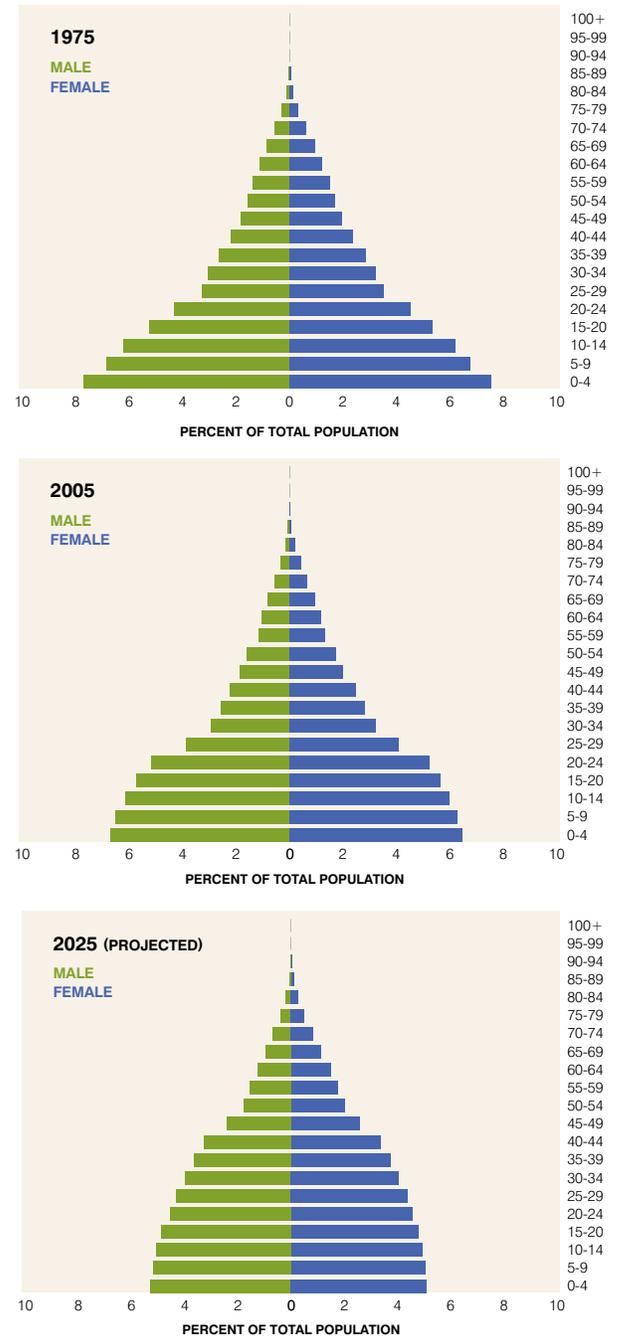


Age Structure

The endurance of Haiti's very young age structure is due to high levels of fertility rates and population growth around two percent annually between 1975 and 1995. Today, nearly 70 percent of its population is younger than age 30, half of its population is under age 20 and Haitian women have on average five children in rural areas and 2.8 children in the cities. The 2005 population of 9.4 million is double that of 1970, and the United Nations forecasts an increase of nearly four million people in the next 25 years even under the assumption of fertility levels below three children per women by 2015-2020.

Figure 2 shows that while the proportion of young people ages 15 to 29 is increasing, some aging of the population took place between 1975 and 2005 as the relative size of the youngest cohorts in the population decreased. As a result, the overall proportion of the population under the age of 30 remains much the same. This combination of youthful population and lower dependency ratios (the proportion of the population younger than age 15 and older than age 65 compared to the working-age population) is often referred to as a demographic window of opportunity for economic growth because a large proportion of the population is of working age and supporting an ever-decreasing proportion of children. If sound policies are in place, this limited window of opportunity can boost economic growth and help recovery after the devastating earthquake, a potential benefit referred to as the demographic dividend or bonus.⁸

Figure 2
Haiti's Age Structures⁹



Age Structure's Impact on Development in Haiti

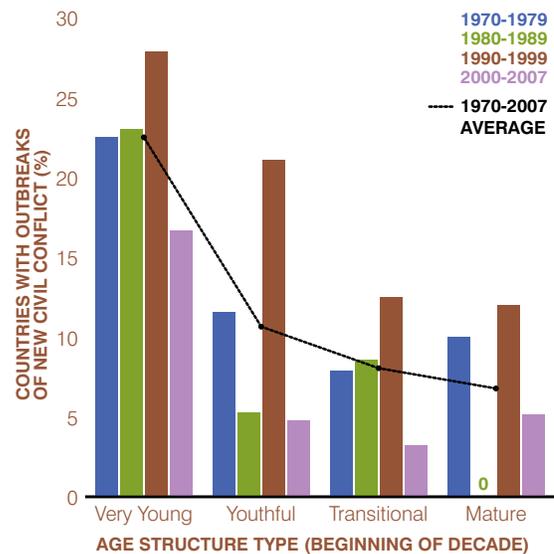
Security

In 2004, youth gangs played a major role in the violent revolt that forced Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president of Haiti since the dictatorship, into exile.¹⁰ After that, despite the presence of UN peacekeeping troops and an improved security situation, state institutions remained fragile and armed violence was still widespread in some parts of the capital. Some have described it as a “war”¹¹ of confrontations between rival gangs as well as between gangs and the UN stabilization forces, with civilians as innocent targets. In Port-au-Prince, particularly in the slums, more than 30 different gangs were trying to control different parts of the city, using kidnapping and drug trafficking as sources of revenue.¹²

The annual urban growth rate has been above three percent for more than 30 years, which is well beyond the country’s average.¹³ The population of Port-au-Prince doubled in fifteen years and unemployment is considerably higher in the capital than in the rest of the country.¹⁴ The rapid urbanization process compounded with political instability, young age structure and poor employment prospects for youth have contributed to a climate of insecurity marked by gang violence. Members of the armed criminal groups often referred to as *Zenglendo*¹⁵ are typically “young, poor men” and the term “has become emblematic of a new kind of youth violence.”¹⁶ Others call themselves *Chimères*, “bad boys” in Creole.¹⁷

The “urban demographic explosion”¹⁸ gives rise to strikingly high densities in the capital, with even sleeping space often rotated in shifts among multiple people.¹⁹ Street children and slave children are a growing phenomenon, and one-fifth of Haitian children do not live with either parent.²⁰ The 2010 earthquake has orphaned even more children and is likely to worsen the problem. However, even in cases where both parents are alive, very high fertility levels combined with poverty produce situations of despair in which slavery and child-trafficking sometimes operate with the support of parents. In 1999, at an orphanage in Port-au-Prince, unfulfilled promises about jobs for the teenagers leaving the orphanage reportedly gave rise to a violent revolt that required the intervention of the national police and conflated street children and youth gangs in the public opinion.²¹ An estimated 1,000 children work as messengers, spies and even soldiers for the gangs. Not incidentally, one of the gangs in Port-au-Prince is called *Lamè San Manman* (“The Army of the Motherless”).²³ As these examples show, development and security cannot be divorced from one another.²⁴

Figure 3
Risk of Civil Conflict by Age Structure Type, 1970-2007²²



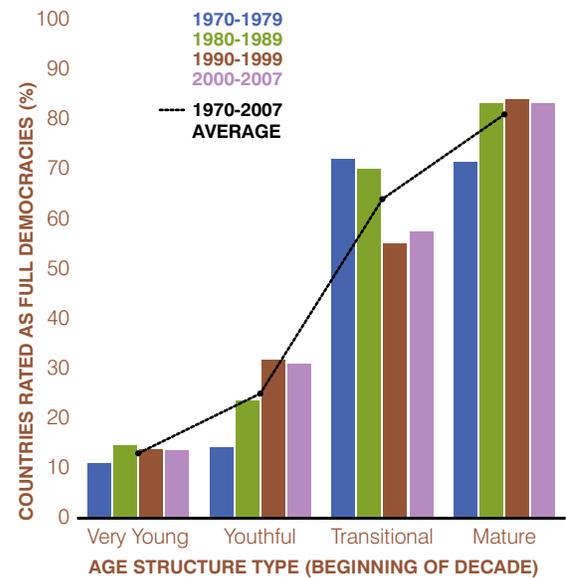
Governance

Crises and situations of political instability are recurrent within the Haitian context. After 30 years of dictatorship, Haiti experienced three coups d'état and fifteen changes of government in the eight years between 1986 and 1994.²⁵ Since then, Haiti has witnessed a succession of political crises, and as recently as spring 2008, hunger riots caused by the rise in global food prices led to the collapse of the government. The following premier, Michèle Pierre-Louis, a former teacher and youth NGO activist who tried to address corruption issues and attract donors, was fired by the Haitian Senate after one year in office. While pledges totaling more than \$300 million at a 2009 donors conference indicated a degree of optimism among the international community toward Haiti's political outlook, delivery of the money has been slow and the ousting of the prime minister amid political struggle later the same year suggests that the country's tradition of political instability still endures.²⁶

Endemic corruption makes Haiti rank 177 out of 180 countries surveyed in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, and it is rated as a mixed authority state, or "anocracy," (based on measures of political participation and executive power) by the Center for Systemic Peace (Polity IV Project) and as "partly free" (based on measured of civil liberties and political rights) by Freedom House.²⁷ Progress has been observed in combating police corruption and improving security since the election of René Prével as president in 2006.²⁸ Still, according to the Brookings Index of State Weakness, Haiti is considered the twelfth weakest state in the world.²⁹ As massive aid is channeled to the country in the aftermath of the earthquake, issues of fund management and corruption are more acute than ever.

Examples of interaction between demographics and political uprising have been observed in the past in Haiti. In 1985, youth played a central role in the demise of the 26-year Duvalier dictatorship. Then, the government was criticized for its obstruction to youth demonstrations at the end of the International Year of Youth, and the issue became a symbol of the government's disdain for the concerns of the youth. Violence erupted and started the cycle of protest and repression that led to the end of the authoritarian regime and a new round of political instability.³⁰ At the country level, this period of young age structure and peak in fertility levels supports findings that countries in the early stages of the demographic transition face disproportionate challenges to sustain full democracy (Figure 4).³¹ With more

Figure 4
Likelihood of Democratic Governance
by Age Structure Type, 1970-2007³²



than two-thirds of its population younger than age 30, Haiti's demographic features are key to understanding the political and social climate of the country. In a 2008 conference organized by the Center for Population and Development in Port-au-Prince, the scientific director of the center called on Haitian authorities to make the connection between population and governance and pleaded for a mobilization around long-term development programs.³³

Economic Development

Compared to Latin American and Caribbean standards, Haiti is experiencing particularly low levels of socioeconomic development. Poverty is widespread, and 6.8 million out of 9.4 million inhabitants in Haiti are considered poor, living on less than two U.S. dollars per day with no social security system, unemployment benefits or subsidized health care.³⁴ Of the eight Millennium Development Goals, only two (universal primary education and promotion of gender equality) are on progress toward being achieved.³⁵ The economic growth rate of only 1.2 percent for 2007-08 was due to the damage caused by that year's hurricane. Still, the growth rate of the prior year amounted to only 3.4 percent.³⁶ As the 2010 earthquake pushes the already fragile Haitian economy to the brink of collapse, massive aid is expected to launch recovery.

One factor missing to spur economic growth is qualified manpower.³⁷ Only six out of every 1,000 people in the labor market have a certificate or a diploma in the technical or professional sphere, and less than two-thirds of the population is literate.³⁸ Although Haitians place a high value on education, many parents cannot pay for tuition, uniforms, books and supplies for their children, and about one-third of children between six and 12 years old (500,000 children for a total population of less than ten million) do not go to school. The importance of a country's age structure is often overlooked when investigating the relationship between population growth and economic growth.³⁹ Yet, each age group has different economic needs and assets, and when one age group is overrepresented in a country, it deeply influences the country's economic development. Given Haiti's young age structure, intensive investment in human capital is required to reap the benefits of a possible demographic dividend. If poorly educated, the youth of Haiti will not be able to contribute positively to the development of the country.

The current age composition means that 73 percent of the population is dependent on those of working age.⁴⁰ While the resulting dependency ratio is still high, it has been declining since the beginning of the 1990s. Together with a significant decline in the infant mortality rate, it is consistent with the concept of demographic transition that indicates that Haiti is on the path toward a more mature age structure and a possible demographic window of economic opportunity.⁴¹ However, despite this indication of demographic change, extremely high unemployment levels make economic recovery particularly difficult. The unemployment rate is about twice as high for young people as the national average, so many young people are therefore engaged in survival economy in the informal sector with little opportunity to plan for the future.⁴² "Brain drain" is a significant issue, and large-scale emigration of highly qualified youth has been an ongoing phenomenon for decades.⁴³ As large numbers of young people enter the labor market in the next five years and beyond, addressing the employment issue should be the nation's highest priority.

As many voices demand a "Marshall Plan" for Haiti's reconstruction, others have put forward a "New Deal" strategy.⁴⁴ In contrast to an approach promoting the image of Haiti solely as a cheap labor country to attract foreign investments, the "New Deal" strategy would address the country's dire need for public infrastructure and take advantage of the opportunity given by its current age structure. By rising to the challenge of providing employment to Haiti's large youth cohorts (for instance through the creation of a national "youth corps"), this could stimulate national demand and at the same time, increase the population's standards of living.

Climate Change

In recent years, Haiti has witnessed shorter but more intense rainy seasons, longer droughts and more frequent tropical storms.⁴⁵ Climate change has exacerbated the country's natural vulnerability to environmental disasters and has increased temperature variation. It has had negative outcomes for agricultural productivity⁴⁶ in a context where more than half of the population is employed in agriculture and depends directly on it for survival.⁴⁷ Haiti faces severe problems of food insecurity,⁴⁸ and these are likely to be compounded as the population grows. Even if fertility rates fall by nearly half, the population would increase by two-thirds by 2050. Already today, the proportion of arable land is negligible; most agriculture is on non-arable land and Haiti's agriculture is the least productive in the world.⁴⁹ As two-thirds of Haitian children are malnourished, Haiti has to import the vast majority of its basic food commodities, and this dependency on foreign production makes the country highly vulnerable to variation in global food prices with negative consequences for the country's political stability as seen during the food riots of 2008.⁵⁰

In 2004, hurricanes, storms and floods killed several thousand people, and a few years later, in 2008, the country was hit by four major tropical storms, causing the death of nearly 800 people and damages amounting to 15 percent of the GDP⁵¹ While Hurricane Jeanne caused at least 3,000 deaths in Haiti in 2004, the neighboring Dominican Republic lost a mere 24 people.⁵² The storm's center of gravity partly explains this difference, but deforestation also plays a major role. In an aerial photograph, the difference in forest cover draws a clear line between Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Figure 5).

Good governance is a prerequisite to face the profound challenges posed by natural disasters, whether those whose frequency increases because of climate change, such as storms and hurricanes, or others, such as earthquakes. The age structure of the population seems to play a role with respect to climate change vulnerability and the country's resilience capacity. Countries with a youthful and rapidly growing population are overwhelmingly likely to be among those considered most vulnerable to climate change, and Haiti is no exception. On average, 59 percent of countries with a very young age structure are also among those least resilient to the impacts of global climate change, both in terms of their sensitivity and their adaptability.⁵³ The implementation of adaptation strategies requires strong infrastructural capacities and stable governance, but in Haiti, as in many countries with large proportions of young people, the effectiveness of the government in implementing these strategies remains limited.⁵⁴ The severe damage caused by the earthquake to the country's already fragile infrastruc-

Figure 5
Aerial photography of the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic⁵⁵



ture (not least the destruction of the presidential palace and numerous centers of power) further increases the challenges facing Haiti's adaptation capacity.

Over the past 50 years, high rates of population growth and the extensive use of charcoal as an energy source have compounded to create large-scale deforestation. Trees have an important function in reducing the risk of flood. They preserve the thickness of surface vegetation and allow more rainwater to soak through the soil. Because the country is 97 percent deforested,⁵⁶ the rain falls on the denuded mountains and sweeps down directly to the coastal plains, causing floods, destroying housing and devastating the lives of families living in the coastal zone. Not only does deforestation negatively impact the country's capacity to face the increasing frequency of natural disasters, but it also affects the country's ability to absorb carbon emissions.⁵⁷ Compounded with global warming, deforestation causes a wider variation in temperature than the global average. Studies show an average increase of one degree Celsius over the last thirty years, as well as an increase in the length of the summer season. Today, with very little forest cover left, more than two-thirds of the Haitian population still uses charcoal as fuel, and rapid demographic growth causes the accelerated cutting of trees, both in rural and in urban areas.⁵⁸ The government refers to sustained population growth as a major element of environmental pressure. Still, none of the adaptation strategies suggested in the country's National Adaption Plan for Action to cope with climate change includes population as a part of the solution.⁵⁹

Gender and Social Context

Although no formal provision restricts the role of women in Haiti, discrimination on the grounds of sex is not prohibited. The “Ministère à la Condition Féminine et aux Droits de la Femme” (Ministry for the Status and the Rights of Women) established in 1994 has had mostly a “symbolic impact” on women’s situation, according to the Social Institutions and Gender Index of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.⁶⁰ Women in Haiti face a climate of gendered violence: More than one in four women report having been victims of physical violence at least once since the age of 15, and 16 percent have experienced violence during the 12 months preceding the Demographic Survey from 2007.⁶¹ Stakeholders refer to unemployment and economic hardship to explain violence against women, and put the blame on the low esteem and frustration it engenders among men. According to one respondent, “The men unburden their frustration on women.”⁶² However, statistics indicate that men are often the target of violence too, and that Haiti’s problem of domestic violence goes beyond the gender dimension and partly reflects high levels of violence in the society more generally.

Haiti has a specific pattern of marital union characterized by five distinct types of unions. Two of them (*placée* and *mariée*) are close to what is globally designated as “marriage,” including cohabitation and financial support. The remaining three (*rinmin*, *fiancée* and *vivavek*) include sexual union but do not require the man to financially support his mate.⁶³ Only 18 percent of women report themselves as being married, compared to 59 percent who are in a union. The differences in the institutional framework related to the different types of union are likely to have an impact on the partner’s respective bargaining power within the couple and interaction with domestic violence. For instance, women in union without cohabitation have the highest risk of experiencing some kind of physical violence.⁶⁴ Haiti’s union pattern also impacts the lives and rights of children born from these unions. In a society where 70 percent of children are born outside of wedlock (mostly in consensual unions) and 10 percent of births are not declared at all, thousands of children are left without their birth certificates and the ensuing possibility of defending their rights. Even though the Haitian Constitution refers to the obligation of the state to protect all families whether in- or out-of-wedlock, the current legislation makes a distinction among

children.⁶⁵ In addition to the need for legal reform, experiences of small-scale projects seeking to increase fathers’ involvements in childcare have proven successful, and involving men in maternal health projects is essential according to several stakeholders.⁶⁶

While it is common and generally accepted for men to have several partners at one time, women are expected to be monogamous in each relationship. Most men have at least two current partners, and women often have each child with a different man.⁶⁷ With a gender structure associating virility with the number of offspring, fertility choices are made amid a knot of contradictory values.⁶⁸ Fertility levels vary significantly according to women’s education level and even more so according to their socioeconomic status, with the poorest women having on average three times as many children as women belonging to the highest economic quintile.⁶⁹ As much as they wish to limit their fertility for economic reasons, many women simply cannot afford not to have children if this increases the risk of losing financial support from their male partners. Therefore, if women wish to use contraceptive methods, they usually have to do it without their regular partner knowing.⁷⁰ Haiti’s gender structure and dynamics are at the root of the country’s high fertility and very young age structure.

During the last two decades, Haiti has illustrated the degree to which political violence makes it difficult for any health care system to work properly. The issue of “brain drain,” a serious concern for Haiti in general, is particularly acute in the health sector. Dr. Paul Farmer, founder of Partners in Health and Harvard professor, notes that, “Haiti produces doctors, but its history of repeated coups and brutal dictatorships makes it next to impossible for the country to keep them.”⁷¹ The social and economic turmoil ensuing from the 2010 earthquake is likely to precipitate the emigration of more qualified Haitians if clear signals of rapid recovery and future professional prospects are not given to the educated portion of the population.

However, even in the absence of political, social and economic turmoil, the poor majority of Haiti does not have access to health care, especially in rural areas, and sexual education is missing from most schools’ programs.⁷² This appalling situation of health care services in Haiti is best illustrated when looking at maternal health. Haiti is the only country in the Western Hemisphere classified as “high risk” when it comes to pregnancy and

childbirth, and a woman in Haiti has a one in 37 chance of dying while giving birth during her reproductive ages.⁷³ Depending on sources, figures of average maternal mortality are estimated between 630 and 670 deaths per 100,000 births (1999-2006), an upward trend compared to previous period (1993-2000).⁷⁴ These rates are more comparable to sub-Saharan Africa than to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and several factors, such as access to qualified care and widespread early pregnancies, explain them. Pregnancy at an early age carries higher risks for the mother and infant, yet by the age of 19, 29 percent of women in Haiti have already had a child or are pregnant, and three-quarters of women deliver in the hands of untrained attendants.⁷⁵

Many stakeholders have linked high fertility with lack of opportunities available to youth. Discouragement and frustration about limited economic opportunities prevent young people from making plans about their futures, both on the professional

level as well as on the personal, family level.⁷⁶ The lack of hope for a bright future in Haiti negatively affects how Haitian youth view their own country and themselves as inhabitants of such a country. A rural nurse explained this issue in the following terms:

Those young people who are a little thoughtful want to leave. It is too difficult to get by at home. The local way of life is viewed with contempt. Everyone dreams of modernity North American-style-myth kept alive by the money, goods and pictures that exiled Haitians send back. Migration means moving from the country to the city and it often implies spurning agricultural life.⁷⁷

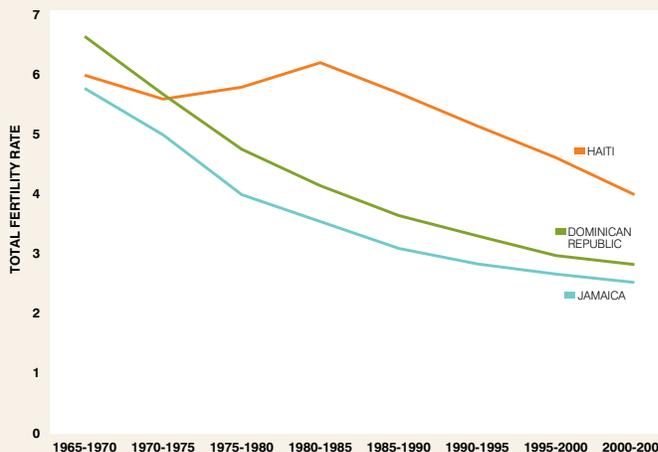
Post-earthquake recovery offers a unique opportunity to address this concern by ensuring active and meaningful involvement and participation of Haitian youth as a cornerstone of the nation's reconstruction efforts.

Fertility in Haiti

The evolution of fertility patterns in Haiti is unusual for the region. Haiti started with lower fertility levels than its Dominican neighbor in 1965, and by 1975 the fertility levels of the two countries were very similar (Figure 6). However, while fertility has declined steadily in the Dominican Republic over the past 30 years, Haitian fertility only started a steady decline over the past 20 years, after rising between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. In 2005, women in the Dominican Republic had 2.8 children on average, compared to four in Haiti.

While the average fertility rate for Haiti is four children per woman, it varies greatly between rural (5.0) and urban (2.8) areas. Although there is a high level of awareness among Haitian women of modern contraceptive methods, 57 percent of women have never used any modern family planning method. Only 25 percent of women in union are using a modern contraceptive method, and 38 percent have an unmet need for family planning.⁷⁸ Misconceptions and lack of information about the side effects of contraceptives are often referred to as explanations for the low use of contraception in Haiti.⁷⁹ However, the lack of access to family planning or health care facilities seems to be one of the major impediments for wider use.⁸⁰ A comparison of actual and desired fertility levels for previous births shows that if all unwanted births were avoided, the actual total fertility rate of Haiti would be 2.4 instead of four.⁸¹

Figure 6
Average Number of Children per Woman in Haiti and Neighboring Countries, 1965-2005⁸²



Demographic Issues and the Government's Policy Agenda

Haitian demographers have long called attention to the effects of rapid population growth. In the years following the 1950 census, at a time when Haiti's population amounted to only three million, they tried to attract attention about high population growth outweighing available resources.⁸³ However, with the exception of some attempts made by private organizations, little was done in terms of family planning programs or policies before the presidency of Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") Duvalier in 1971.⁸⁴ At that time, a National Family and Population Council was established as well as the Division of Family Hygiene within the Ministry of Public Health to separate family planning from health care. The Division of Family Hygiene was funded almost exclusively by foreign agencies, and Haiti's family planning initiatives were directed by organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Pathfinder Fund, the Population Council, the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Pan American Health Organization.⁸⁵ By the end of the 1970s, efforts were made toward more integration of national family planning programs into the Ministry of Health and Population in order to strengthen rural health delivery. As a result of the integration, the Division of Family Hygiene gradually lost the control of key decision-making functions along with its semi-autonomous status within the ministry, which had a negative effect on the existing family programs. As the health system grew weaker and access to family planning fell, fertility rose, as shown in Figure 6.

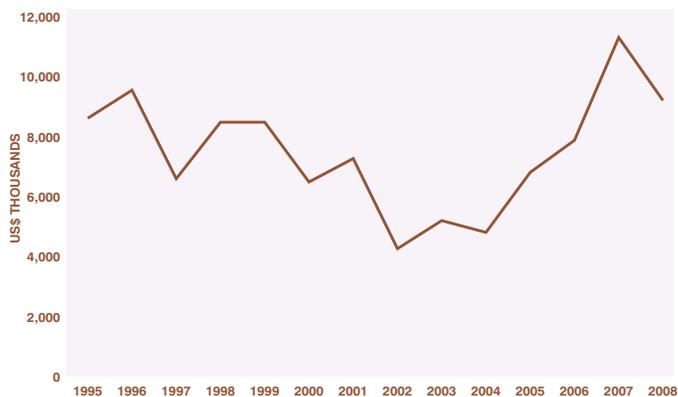
The end of the dictatorship and the ensuing economic and political turmoil had more negative effects on the sustainability of public health services. The state was unable to fund even basic services, leaving the private sector the main provider for health care after 1986.⁸⁶ The military coup of 1991 and the subsequent embargo further complicated the task of implementation. The general economic situation and the desperate search for any kind of income became so critical that some reports suggest that "women could no longer take time out from their income-generating activities to seek out reproductive health care."⁸⁷

Challenges in implementation exacerbated the poor quality of services. For example, within a project funded by USAID in the early 1990s, high dropout rates were attributed to poor record-keeping, counseling and follow-up of contraceptive acceptors. Furthermore, the treatment by providers was often disdainful, described as "hurried, abrupt and rude."⁸⁸ Still, during this time, contraceptive prevalence went up and fertility rates went down, a testament to the strong desire among Haitian women to control their own fertility. Between 1995 and 2004, USAID funding followed a decreasing trend (Figure 7) while the population of Haiti continued to grow. In recent years, together with an increase in funding, USAID has shifted its project orientation to work more closely with the government, while continuing to support NGOs. In 2007, USAID launched a three-year program that includes a focus on technical leadership by decentralized units of the Ministry of Health.⁸⁹ Another feature of USAID's programming is its performance-based funding approach. As part of this strategy, Management Sciences for Health and its collaborators are implementing the Quality Basic Health Services Project using an all-Haitian team. The project's approach is multisectoral and aims to improve the health of vulnerable populations in Haiti "by increasing the availability of essential social services, reducing internal conflict, enabling productive livelihoods that contribute to Haiti's economic growth and development, and building capacity as the foundation for progress."⁹⁰

The various governments in the 1990s and early 2000s (with exception of the democratically elected Aristide government) showed little interest in family planning activities. Only since 2006, along with increased political stability, did the political elite in Haiti truly demonstrate a will to face the issue of population growth. Several projects have been launched in collaboration with donors on the initiative of the Haitian government.⁹¹ Several NGOs and stakeholders report a fundamental change in the Ministry of Health and Population's approach to family planning. In May 2009, a new National Family Planning Plan was drawn in collaboration with multilateral donors and NGOs, and implementation has been launched. A stakeholder describes the government's new orientation as "very interesting and very promising."⁹² A new director has been nominated recently at the head of the Direction de la Santé Familiale (Direction for Family Health), a directorate within the Ministry of Health, and according to several stakeholders, she has given new life to the unit.⁹³

Haiti's recurrent situation of political crisis and weak state structure had until recently not facilitated the adoption of long-term, strategic population policies. As major reconstruction efforts are likely to be channeled toward health care capacity-building, it is of utmost importance not to lose the momentum for reproductive health and family planning in Haiti. In times of crisis, the need for family planning is more acute than ever to enable women and men to plan for their futures, raise healthy families and give the best opportunities possible to their children. Giving women the means to have the number of children they want is all the more critical in Haiti as the country reconstructs.

Figure 7
USAID Family Planning Funding in Haiti, 1995-2008⁹⁴



Demographic Opportunities and Challenges

This study focuses on the powerful demographic forces at play in Haiti. It shows that age structure has an important role in every step of the development process and also influences security. The phenomenon of repeated crisis through political instability and natural disasters compounds with broader demographic factors to explain the structural problems of development in the country. In particular, Haiti's experience demonstrates the importance of a certain degree of stability for any successful long-term family planning program. The recent earthquake only exacerbates the infrastructure and governance challenges faced by the country, and potential political instability can be a major obstacle for delivery of family planning services, especially in rural areas. Therefore, policymakers have to integrate reproductive health strategies into a broader development frame and be far-sighted when taking population processes into account.

While fertility levels can be very responsive to population policies that ensure access to rights-based, voluntary family planning, demographic processes unfold at their own pace, depending on the age structure of the population. Policymakers have an important role and responsibility in addressing the urgent demographic issues facing Haiti. As President Bill Clinton has commented in the aftermath of the earthquake, "The Haitians have the first chance they've had to escape their own history."⁹⁵ Given Haiti's young age structure, there is an urgency to invest in Haitian youth if this opportunity is not to be missed.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve short-term recovery strategies and long-term development goals, Population Action International recommends that the U.S. government, working in coordination with the Haitian government, other donors and in-country civil society partners:

1 Increase total family planning and reproductive health funding in Haiti.

In a country with a very young age structure, a top policy priority should be addressing women's unmet need for family planning, which stands at 38 percent in Haiti. The government should be supported by donors in its focus on improving health care and expanding access to high-quality family planning at the same time that NGOs continue to provide clinic and community-based services. Haiti's past failure to integrate family planning into broader health care highlights the importance of management. Careful monitoring systems are essential to identify and correct weaknesses in programs.

2 Support programs that respond to the needs of a large number of youth and focus on education, vocational training and jobs.

Haiti's age structure could be the country's best opportunity for development, but intensive training is essential to give the country's large youth cohorts practical skills that can translate into an engine for economic growth. Providing employment to Haiti's large youth population could stimulate national demand, and at the same time, increase the population's standards of living. For instance, large-scale civic service corps enrollment in infrastructure reconstruction or re-forestation projects could employ youth in the formal and public sector. A possible demographic dividend in Haiti will only materialize with a well-functioning labor market, higher standards of living and improved economic equity. Poor employment prospects do not allow young people to plan for their futures. Together with family planning services, stable employment allows youth to have a strategy for their futures and plan for healthy families.

3 Include age structure and broader demographic factors in efforts to foster political stability and security.

Given the serious security and governance challenges facing Haiti as the country reconstructs, attention to the country's young people is particularly critical. Uncontrolled urbanization plays a key role in understanding the demographic-security nexus as youth in the metropolitan areas experience far higher levels of crime and violence than the rest of the country. High inactivity rates for young people ages 15 to 30 are likely related to the development of street gangs in the slums of

Port-au-Prince and show that security is linked to economic opportunities. In a context of a very young age structure and high population growth, the prevalent sense of hopelessness among young people must be transformed into tangible future opportunities.

4 Support policies and programs that promote gender equity and advance the legal rights of and economic opportunities for women.

Gender dynamics and relationship patterns that result in women bearing children with new partners to retain economic support from them are at the root of high fertility in Haiti. Reforming laws to promote gender equity, ensuring economic opportunities for women and stopping gender-based violence are important steps the government should take in reconstruction. When women are able to take control over their lives and support themselves economically, they will be able to have the number of children they desire and can support. A focus on gender equity also means empowering both women and men to act on their fertility choices. Men need to be better served by reproductive health programs and encouraged to support their partners' reproductive health and fertility choices. Programs that promote responsible fatherhood should be expanded. Any long-term family planning policy should therefore include gender transformative approaches and elaborate programs embedded in a broader dimension of structural change.

5 Develop and fund integrated approaches to climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability that include family planning and reproductive health.

Considering the ways in which high population pressure affects the availability and renewability of natural resources, in particular the process of deforestation, any climate adaptation strategy needs to take demographic factors into account. Haiti's national adaptation planning should include strong emphasis on expanding access to family planning and reproductive health.

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Appendix 2. Country Study Contacts

Positions listed are those held at the time of interview.

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Shannon Bledsoe, Country Manager of Population Service International (PSI/Haiti)

Bette Gebrian, Director of Haitian Health Foundation (HHF)

Père Jacques, Director of CARITAS Hinche

Jessica Jordan, Midwives of Haiti

Antoine Ndiaye, Project Director, Management Science for Health, Haïti (MSH)

Dr. Jean Renold Rejouit, Technical advisor SR/FP Leadership, Management and Sustainability / Management Science for Health Haïti (LMS/MSH).

Nandita Thatte, Office of Population and Reproductive Health, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Endnotes

- 1 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 2005.
- 2 World Food Program (WFP) 2009.
- 3 Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI) 2007.
- 4 Maguire 2010.
- 5 Leahy, Engelman, Vogel, Haddock and Preston 2007.
- 6 The World Bank has no unemployment data for Haiti (World Bank 2009). While the Living Conditions Survey reports an estimate of 27 percent unemployment for the population total, other estimates go as far as 60 percent, 70 percent or 80 percent (Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances (MEF), Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI) and Institute for Applied International Studies (FAFO) 2003 ; BBC 2009 ; Flintoff 2009 ; Ministry of Environment 2006).
- 7 The demographic transition is the gradual shift from a population with high death and birthrates to higher life expectancy and smaller family size.
- 8 Bloom, Canning and Sevilla 2003.
- 9 United Nations Population Division 2009. Age structure for 2025 is drawn from the medium fertility variant of UN population projections.
- 10 Amnesty International, International Action Network on Small Arms and Oxfam 2006, p.3.
- 11 Ali Besnaci (Médecins sans Frontières) cited in Amnesty International, International Action Network on Small Arms and Oxfam 2006, p. 2.
- 12 Kapstein and Converse 2008; Kovats-Bernat 2008, p. 87-92; School for a Culture of Peace.
- 13 Haitian Institute of Statistics (IHSI).
- 14 Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances (MEF), Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI), Institute for Applied International Studies (FAFO) 2003.
- 15 "Zenglendo is a compound of *zenglen* [shards of broken glass] and *do* [back] and was originally used in an old folktale told to children about the *djab*, a demon. In the story the *djab* is described as the malicious trickster, bent to the torment of children. Always seeking ways to lure youngsters into despair, the *djab* takes the form of an older person who appeals to a child to massage the tired muscles of his back. When the child obliges and begins to rub the back of the elder, the *djab* transforms himself into *zenglendo*, the glass-back. The muscles of the creature's back ripple into a twisted mess of broken glass, horribly cutting the hands of the child." Kovats-Bernat 2008, p. 86.
- 16 Kovats-Bernat 2008, p. 90 and 95.
- 17 Farmer 2004(a), p.26. School for a Culture of Peace.
- 18 Louis-Naud Pierre cited by Daudier 2008.
- 19 Maternowska 2006, p. 46.
- 20 Lupin 2008; United States Department of State 2005; United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2009.
- 21 Kovats-Bernat 2006, p. 95
- 22 Conflict analysis drawn from: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and Centre for the Study of Civil Wars, International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) 2008 and Gleditsch et al 2002.
- 23 Kovats-Bernat 2006, p. 86.
- 24 Maguire 2010.
- 25 Maternowska 2006, p.6.
- 26 Carroll 2009.
- 27 Center for Systemic Peace 2008; Freedom House 2008.
- 28 Bertelmanns Stiftung 2008; Freedom House 2009; Center for Systemic Peace 2008.

- 29 Rice and Patrick 2008.
- 30 Ferguson 1987, p.93-94.
- 31 Leahy, Engelman, Vogel, Haddock and Preston 2007; Cincotta 2009.
- 32 Democracy ratings drawn from Center for Systemic Peace 2008.
- 33 Geffrard and Gauthier 2008.
- 34 Flintoff 2009.
- 35 Millennium Development Goals Monitor 2009.
- 36 Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI) 2009.
- 37 Rémy Montas, economist (previously head of the Haitian Central Bank) cited by Serant 2007.
- 38 Literacy is more common among younger ages, with 75.4 percent of Haitians ages 15 to 29 able to read and write. (Commission de Préparation du Document de Stratégie Nationale pour la Croissance et pour la Réduction de la Pauvreté, Secrétariat Technique de la Commission de Préparation du DSNCRP, Ministère de la Planification et de la Coopération Externe (MPCE) 2007).
- 39 Bloom, Canning, Sevilla 2003, p.20.
- 40 United Nations Population Division 2009.
- 41 Data from the United Nations Population Division 2008; World Health Organization (WHO) 2008.
- 42 Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances (MEF), Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI), Institute for Applied International Studies (FAFO) 2003 ; Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI) 2009.
- 43 Serant 2007; Fernandez 2008.
- 44 Maguire 2010.
- 45 Ministry of Environment 2006, p. 8-10.
- 46 Ministry of Environment 2006, p. 10.
- 47 Ministry of Environment 2006, p. 7.
- 48 World Food Program (WFP) 2009.
- 49 According to UNDP envoy Joel Boutroué cited in *The Economist* 2009.
- 50 Wargny 2008; Chatterjee 2008.
- 51 *BBC News* 2009; *The Economist* 2009; D' Agostino 2004.
- 52 Swiss Re 2004.
- 53 Malone and Brenkert 2009.
- 54 Ministry of Environment 2006, p. 8.
- 55 NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center, Scientific Visualization Studio.
- 56 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 2005.
- 57 Ministry of Environment 2006, p. 10.
- 58 Institut Haïtien de Statistique et d'Informatique (IHSI) 2005.
- 59 Ministry of Environment 2006.
- 60 Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) 2009.
- 61 Cayemittes, Placide, Mariko, Barrère, Sévère and Alexandre 2007.
- 62 Interviews, 15 May and 19 June 2009.
- 63 Cayemittes, Placide, Mariko, Barrère, Sévère and Alexandre 2007.
- 64 Cayemittes, Placide, Mariko, Barrère, Sévère and Alexandre 2007.
- 65 Demographer Jacques Hendry Rousseau, UNFPA, cited in *AlterPresse* 2008; Constitution of Haiti 1987, article 260.
- 66 Interview 14 May 2009; *AlterPresse* 2007.
- 67 Maternowska 2006 p. 51; Interviews, 12 May, 15 May, 19 June, 23 June, 21 November 2009.
- 68 Interview 21 November 2009.
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