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Stall belonging to one of the GBV survivors who received support from IHSA. Photo Credit: Chéríta Zangan

USAID INTEGRATED HEALTH SERVICES ACTIVITY

COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN BENIN

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a major public health issue in Benin. According to the 2017–2018 Demographic and Health Survey, nearly one-third (27%) of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15—a situation that not only impacts their health but also prevents full and active social, civic, and economic participation.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) Integrated Health Services Activity (IHSA), implemented by Management Sciences for Health and its partner APESSA, supports the Government of Benin in this essential work of assisting GBV survivors to enable them to obtain the care and legal and psychosocial support they need and, for those who wish to do so, have the necessary opportunities to be financially independent.

PROVIDING INTEGRATED CARE FOR GBV SURVIVORS

Support services for GBV survivors existed before IHSA was set up through integrated care centers that allow survivors to access a package of services, including medical and psychosocial care. Unfortunately, there are only three centers in the entire country—in Cotonou, Parakou, and Abomey. Due to geographical distances and the time and money required to access them, many survivors are unable to access these services. To address this challenge, in 2019 the project worked closely with the Ministry of Health and the Directorate of Mother and Child Health to bring these comprehensive services to those who need them.

- Health centers, social promotion centers, and legal services located closer to the communities have been set up to provide comprehensive care, facilitate referral for specialized support, and allow survivors to navigate between these different services. All stakeholders learn to work closely together to offer a package of

services comparable to that offered in the three physical integrated care centers.

- As a result of this work, 687 health workers, 140 social workers and 302 criminal investigation police officers in the four departments were trained on the standard procedures for treating GBV survivors.
- In 2021, 3,900 survivors were able to receive the medical and psychosocial care they needed, and 399 of them were able to obtain legal support and go to court (SIDOFFE database 2021).
- While contributing to improving care for GBV victims, the project also raised awareness among actors about the legislative provisions of Decree no. 2012-143 of June 7, 2021, regarding the possibility of reimbursing the costs of medical certificates, from criminal justice fees, in the case of judicial requisition.

The comprehensive management mechanism model for GBV survivors is a sustainable innovation for the country on several levels. It is based on existing structures and staffing, thus reducing costs. It is also easily adaptable while providing access to comprehensive, quality care for GBV survivors.

SUPPORTING THE FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF GBV SURVIVORS

To guarantee economic development and good socio-professional reintegration, social promotion centers help GBV victims receive financial aid provided by the Government of Benin every year after a study of the case files in each department. Unfortunately, this financial relief is often limited because it is not specific to GBV (it also includes disadvantaged children, services for the poor, multiple births, illness, and accidents). As a result, only 6.25% of GBV survivors received this assistance in 2018 in the department of Ouémé. IHSA supported the Departmental Directorates of Social Affairs in reviewing grant applications from survivors who, due to budget limitations, could not benefit from the national relief system. This initiative supports the reintegration of survivors through the development of income-generating activities.

- The first step is to assist social promotion centers and Departmental Directorates of Social Affairs and Microfinance in reviewing business plan proposals to determine the relevance and viability of the proposed project.
- The proposals sent by the survivors include processing raw material and setting up hairdressing, sewing, or weaving workshops.
- Once the proposals have been validated, the project coordinates training sessions on these different income-

generating activities as well as the provision of equipment so that these new business owners can launch their activity.

- In the department of Ouémé, for the first cohort, 73 survivors received guidance on developing income-generating activities, creating working capital, and researching the targeted market sector.
- As a result of this work and after several supervision visits, 56 of the 73 beneficiaries (77%) are now financially independent, and support is still being provided to the remaining 17 beneficiaries.
- The second cohort involved 64 survivors from the Ouémé department and 40 from the Atacora department. Support for these survivors is underway to help them achieve financial independence.
- In the department of Plateau, 53 survivors have been selected and are awaiting material support from IHSA to develop their income-generating activities.

By allowing all GBV survivors to rebuild their lives independently, the Government of Benin ensures that all of its population, even the most vulnerable, can participate in society.



3,900

Survivors were able to receive care



1,129

Key people were trained



77%

Of beneficiaries of income-generating activities are now financially independent

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The five-year Integrated Health Services Activity (IHSA) (2018-2023), funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is implemented in four departments (Ouémé, Plateau, Atacora, and Alibori) in Benin. Its objective is to strengthen local expertise in delivering high-impact malaria, family planning (FP), maternal and child health (MCH), gender-based violence (GBV), and prevention and control of COVID-19 services with strong citizen engagement, to reduce maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent girls' mortality and morbidity. IHSA is implemented by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) in collaboration with four local and one international NGO partners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Dr. Floride Niyuhire, Project Director
Email: fniyuhire@benin-ihsa.org

Dr. Omer Adjibodé, Senior Technical Advisor
Email: oadjibode@benin-ihsa.org

USAID AGREEMENT OFFICER REPRESENTATIVE

Bertille Agueh Onambélé, Health Program Management Specialist
Email: bonambele@usaid.gov

PROJECT PARTNERS

Management Sciences for Health
Dimagi, Inc.
L'Association pour l'Education, la Sexualité et la Santé en Afrique (APESSA)
Le Centre de Recherche en Reproduction Humaine et en Démographie (CERRHUD)

Le Centre de Réflexions et d'Actions pour le Développement Intégré et la Solidarité (CeRADIS)
L'Organisation pour le Développement Durable, le Renforcement et l'Auto promotion des Structures Communautaires (DEDRAS)