

COVID-19 Rapid Needs Assessment of older people

Haiti – September 2020

Context

The first cases of COVID-19 were registered in Haiti on March 19, 2020. To stem the spread of the virus the government immediately announced the closure of different sectors. As a result, many people lost their jobs, while others, in the informal sectors, had to break movement restrictions. The health care system was not prepared to deal with the pandemic as it lacks sufficient medical equipment including appropriate protective equipment. As of September 2020, the testing and treating capacity remained limited in Haiti.

Within this context, HelpAge International has initiated an assessment into the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of older people, in order to inform future programming and advocacy. In Haiti, this assessment was carried out by Church World Service (CWS) in collaboration with four associations/organisations.

As of September 22, 2020, the Ministry of Public Health reported a total of 8,646 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 225 deaths. Most of Haiti's older people are hungry, unable to earn any money to buy food, access healthcare or materials to protect them from the virus as a result of the restrictions put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19. Haiti's older population is struggling to cope with the impacts of the virus and in urgent need of support.

Most older people are unable to take the basic steps to protect themselves from the virus. They have limited access to water and soap for hand washing and cannot afford to buy any protective materials or access health facilities.



Measures must urgently be put in place to transfer cash and provide food rations to older people in Haiti, along with age-friendly income generation activities.



Priorities for older people during COVID-19

Priorities	Data
Food	44% say that they need to receive more food as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on their ability to earn any money. 82% had to reduce the quantity food they consume as a result of COVID-19.
Income	Most older people have no way of earning an income and depend on their children or others who are not able to support them at this difficult time.
Health	Almost three quarters of the older population have difficulty accessing health services and 98% do not know where the nearest health facility is for testing and treating people for COVID-19.
WASH & COVID-19	99% recognise the measures they need to take to protect themselves from COVID-19, but 35% are unable to apply the principle of handwashing because of limited access to water, soap and water storage and 56% cannot afford personal protective equipment (PPE).
Wellbeing	Since the outbreak of COVID-19, almost half of older people have felt worried or anxious most of the time about the situation.

Recommendations

- Implement a multipurpose cash transfer intervention, support age-friendly livelihood and quick income generation activities for older people. In rural areas, accompany cash transfer by food rations.
- Offer psychosocial support to older people to manage their worry or anxiety and ability to cope.
- Deliver medication and facilitate transportation to older people if they are unable to access health facilities and health centres.
- Facilitate distributions of soap, chlorine and face masks, as well as installations of water catchment systems, specifically in rural areas.