

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



LIMITED  
E/ICEF/L.557  
17 February 1954  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Programme Committee

HAITI

Recommendation of the Executive Director  
For an Apportionment for Maternal  
and Child Welfare Training

1. In this paper the Administration recommends, subject to the availability of funds, an apportionment to Haiti of \$5,000 from the Latin American Regional allocation for supplies and equipment for courses for the training of lay midwives practicing in the rural areas of the country. If this recommendation is approved, it will constitute the first UNICEF assistance to Haiti for a programme of this type.  
Midwifery services in Haiti
2. One of the important problems in the improvement of rural health services in Haiti is the need for improved attention to mothers during pregnancy and delivery. As in most underdeveloped countries, such attention as there is is most often provided by untrained midwives, known locally as "matrones". The results in terms of disease and death of mothers and new-born infants have been too often described to need expansion here.
3. With a view to improving services prior to and during childbirth, the Government has drawn plans for the large scale training of midwives throughout the country and has, during the latter half of 1953, been carrying on a pilot course at La Croix des Bouquets, with a view to improving the level of competence of the lay midwives.
4. At the outset there was considerable suspicion on the part of the matrones, who feared that the real purpose of the Government was to deprive them of their living, but by meeting with them in small groups and by integrating their work into that of the rural health center, it has been possible to overcome this fear, and to obtain the entire cooperation of the group attending the pilot course. This course includes 31 practicing lay midwives who have been divided into classes of about 6 in order to allow a maximum of individual attention to each student.
5. The success of this pilot course has been such that the Government now feels that it can and must extend similar courses to cover further areas of the rural part of the country. To this end it is asking UNICEF assistance in the provision

of equipment for the courses and of kits for the midwives once they have finished their training.

#### Proposed Plan of Operations

6. The purpose of the programme is to raise the level of competence of lay midwives in the rural areas by offering them regular courses in which the basic elements of modern practice would be explained. The overall plan is to hold courses in 20 selected locations throughout the country, of which 18 have been already designated: Grand Goave, Anse a Veau, Port a Piment, Thomazeau, St. Michel de l'Attalaye, Jean Rabel, Trou du Nord, Limbe, Marigot, Miragoane, Aquin, Arcahaie, Petite Riviere de l'Artibonite, Gros Norne, Grand Riviere du Nord, Guanaminthe, Bainet and La Croix des Bouquets. The present project, which represents a first step in the overall plan, is to set up courses in six of these localities, each of six months duration.
7. Courses will consist of eight classes of about 6 midwives each making an average of some 50 midwives to be trained at each locality. Training will be given by the staff of the local rural health center, in part by the doctor in charge, in part by the public health nurses attached to the center. Courses are given in the local creole dialect and reproduce as nearly as possible the conditions under which the midwives actually have to work.
8. Instruction is under seven general headings:
  - a) Cooperation of the lay midwife with the doctor
  - b) Importance of medical supervision
  - c) Role of the lay midwife in relation
  - d) Elementary hygiene, notions of asepsis
  - e) Preparation of the mother and of the child.
  - f) Duties of the lay midwife in the course of delivery.
  - g) Care of the new-born child, care of the eyes of the new born.
9. The dangers of the use of force during childbirth are pointed out and great importance is given to the fact that the lay midwife should limit their service to normal births at full term. Every effort is made to have the midwife bring her clients to the health centers for medical examination during pregnancy, and these examinations are carried out in the presence of and with the assistance of the midwife so that she may be fully familiar with the medical details of each case at the time of delivery.

10. Considerable time is given to instruction in the hygiene of pregnancy. Practical demonstrations, followed by open discussions with the students giving them a full understanding of the elements of this subject. This method of discussion in small groups, where the midwife, after a demonstration by the instructor, comments on and criticizes the demonstrated method, comparing it with the methods she had previously used, has been found to be extremely useful in clarifying the demonstrations and in getting the students to understand the reasons behind the practices recommended.
11. The whole aim of the courses has been to give the lay midwives, most of whom are illiterate, a sufficient amount of instruction to permit them to reduce the high mortality among newborn infants due to umbilical tetanus, and the high mortality among mothers due to infection from unhygienic methods and to forcible and dangerous practices during childbirth.
12. The success of the pilot course where the midwives have attended with laudable regularity in spite of the absence of any obligation or any promise of material reward, augurs well for the proposed programme. The trainees have brought an increasing number of their clients to the health center for a prenatal medical examination and many of them have voluntarily come to the doctor at the center even outside the days of training classes, to ask advice about the handling of cases under their care. It is still too early to determine statistically in terms of reduced mortality of mothers and infants what the results of the pilot course have been, but all indications are that the results are good.

#### UNICEF Commitments

13. UNICEF aid would be given in setting up the courses; the midwives, once trained would be given a kit which will not only enable them to improve their methods but would also provide an incentive to complete their training and thereafter to cooperate with the rural health centers. UNICEF would provide basic training equipment for six courses and 300 simple midwife kits for distribution to the students at the completion of their courses. This will involve an expenditure of about \$2000 for training supplies and about \$3000 for midwife kits.

#### WHO Technical Approval

14. This programme has been drawn up with the assistance of the Zone Office of WHO in Mexico and WHO has technically approved it.

Government Commitments

15. The Government will provide all premises and personnel for the courses, as well as all supplies and equipment not provided for by UNICEF.. No separate budget is provided but an expenditure of 11,300 gourdes (US \$2,260) for six months is foreseen in the health budget. This will cover the Teaching Center, nurses' expenses, transportation etc.

Target Time Schedule

16. It is planned to begin courses in the various centers as rapidly as supplies can be made available, using the personnel, doctors and nurses, already available in the centers. Each class will last for a period of six months so that it is expected that the whole of the programme herein recommended can be completed within a period of not more than two years.

UNICEF Agreement and Representation

17. The Government will be assisted in this programme by the UNICEF Area Office for Central America and the Caribbean. A basic agreement was signed with Haiti on December 20, 1949.

Total UNICEF Aid

18. UNICEF aid to Haiti to date totals \$745,000 as follows:

	<u>Approved</u>	<u>1949-1953</u>	<u>Shipped</u>	<u>1954 and after</u>
Yaws Control	Nov. 1949, Apr. 1952	\$475,900		\$104,100
Insect Control	Oct. 1952	<u>145,200</u>		<u>19,800</u>
		\$621,100		\$123,900

Recommendation

19. The Administration Recommends subject to the availability of funds:

- a) The apportionment to Haiti of \$5,000 from the Latin American Regional allocation for equipment and supplies for the training of lay midwives in the rural areas in Haiti;
- b) That the Administration be authorized to approve a plan of operations as outlined above.