

## **Haitian Institute of Health and Environment (HIHE)**

### **Zika Epidemic in Haiti – February 2016**

The **Haitian Institute of Health and Environment (HIHE)** was founded in Haiti by a multidisciplinary team of professionals of Queensland University (UQ). HIHE's main mission is to work for the improvement of sanitary living conditions of the Haitian population and to fight against pollution, environmental and disease. Diseases such as Cholera, Chikungunya, Dengue, Malaria and Zika are now prevalent in the rural and urban areas of Haiti.

Since HIHE's inception, several groups distributed across Haiti have had to provide emergency assistance to rural populations living in remote areas. With the spread of the cholera epidemic, training sessions were conducted for nurses and health workers, specialists in health and in the environment. The cholera outbreak continues to claim victims in Haiti. During 2016 the Haitian Institute of Health and Environment has recorded more than 185 cases of cholera, 235 cases of epidemic Zika in the remote areas of Ferrier and Peaches, Dumas, Kalbasye and other rural areas of Haiti.

The people infected by the vibrio cholera bacteria and by the Zika virus come mainly from remote rural areas of Haiti. However, the Haitian Institute of Health and Environment requests that everyone is vigilant in respect of all the recommended rules of hygiene. It is essential that these are followed to keep cholera at bay and the rising problems caused by Zika.

Recently, Haiti seems to have been hit by an increasing number of illnesses. Indeed, after malarial vectors, malaria and dengue, the country has seen recently the introduction of Chikungunya and Zika. All these diseases are mosquito vector-borne diseases. These vectors are capable of transmitting infection from an animal or human host to another.

The Zika virus has been imported to Haiti fairly recently. This disease is transmitted by the same mosquito as that which carries Chikungunya. Chikungunya was introduced in 2014. The symptoms include fever, headache, joint pain, swelling of hands and feet, red eyes and rashes. Normally these extreme symptoms only last for a number of days, but in more acute cases can be prolonged for some weeks.

Currently in Haiti, the outbreak of Zika is now spreading alarmingly. Of course Zika is now a public health problem of global significance; this is because of its rapid spread and cases of microcephaly registered in newborns whose mothers were infected during pregnancy. In some remote areas, there are few medical clinics and community health centres. Small farmers who are pregnant and become infected sometimes die because of extreme symptoms. The children of infected women have been born with deformities to the head, the eyes or ears. Locally the lack of medical assistance remains a major problem and the lack of financial means to organize transport to get to some remote rural areas of Haiti which have no transport infrastructure.

In some remote rural areas of Haiti, HIHE uses Community Radio stations to disseminate information for the training of the rural population and particularly for pregnant women, and young females of reproductive age.

**The HIHE requests the cooperation and support of all IFEH member organisations to provide assistance to Haitian victims.**

**IFEH and the HIHE has agreed the following:**

**Any organisation wishing to assist the HIHE should initially make contact through the International Federation of Environmental Health – IFEH Hon. Secretary Rod House, email: [rod.house@ntlworld.com](mailto:rod.house@ntlworld.com)**

**Another contact point to the IFEH is through the IFEH member organisation: National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), USA, Director of Programs Sandra F. Whitehead, Email: [SWhitehead@neha.org](mailto:SWhitehead@neha.org)**

**Finally, a contact point to the IFEH is through the IFEH member organisation: Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI), President CIPHI, Ann Thomas, Email: [president@ciphi.ca](mailto:president@ciphi.ca)**

The President of the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) [www.ifeh.org](http://www.ifeh.org) - Mr. Henning I. Hansen (ENVINA Denmark) and the coming President of the IFEH Mr. Peter Archer (CIEH, England, Wales and N. Ireland) together with the Board of Directors of the IFEH in association with IFEH-member organisation NEHA (US) and CIPHI (Canada) are endorsing this endeavour of assisting the Haitian Institute of Health and Environment (HIHE) to overcome and combat the many challenges that Haiti is facing.

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