Child mortality: Haiti

One child out of every eight will probably die before the age of five in Haiti - the highest mortality rate among children in the Western Hemisphere. Preventable diseases (like diarrhoea, malaria, tuberculosis and pneumonia), malnutrition, environmental damage and violence are among the main threats that kill 117 children under five out of every 1,000 births in the country.

Violence and natural disasters

Haiti has experienced ongoing violence since 2004. The chaos has made it difficult for basic health and education services and prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching the vulnerable. Also, because of Haiti's high population density and its decaying infrastructure, the country is particularly vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters such as floods, mudslides and hurricanes.

Health

Some 60% of people, mainly living in rural areas, lack access to basic healthcare services. Numerous hospitals have closed because social workers and health providers could not go to work for fear of violence.

A major factor in the low survival rate of children in Haiti is the lack of widespread immunisation. Only 54% of children under the age of one receive vaccinations for measles, compared to over 90% for the rest of Latin America or countries like Australia.

Education

Poverty forces many children to work in the home, or to care for younger children instead of going to school. Only 55% of primary-school age children receive an education and two percent finish secondary school. Only one out of every three young people between 15 and 24 years old can read and write. These children miss out on their right to an education.

With low levels of education, many parents do not understand the importance of good nutrition and hygiene.

Children have the right to good quality health care, to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment, so that they will stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this. (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24)