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SCOPE SUCCESS STORY

HAITI



Marita Noel and two of her children at their home in Marchasse.

USAID/World Relief. Photo by Pierre Mackendy, SCOPE Regional Field Coordinator

NAME AND ROLE

Marita Noel, mother of five

LOCATION

Sud-Est, Belle-Anse, Pichon

SUMMARY

A Community Health Worker's visit helps Marita Noel make better decisions about feeding her children and the importance of family planning.

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BETTER DECISIONS FOR A HAPPY FAMILY

In Haiti, agents de santé communautaire polyvalent (ASCPs, Haiti's cadre of community health workers) intervene in regions with high numbers of maternal-infant deaths per live births and with low-quality, difficult to access primary care services. CHWs trained through SCOPE work to improve access to community-based services, access to family planning, maternal and neonatal care, and the prevention of common childhood diseases. Following their initial training and introduction to local households, CHWs in Belle-Anse are busy maintaining gathering stations and weekly home visits with women in the community. As a result of their efforts, these communities report positive changes on the household level. Marita Noel is a young woman in the Pichon region of Belle-Anse who has been able to shape a better future for her family due to the positive influence of CHWs.

A HOME WITH WELL-FED CHILDREN

Marita Noel is 27 years old and lives in a small community in Pichon, a town located in a remote mountainous region, characterized by riverbeds, flood plains, waterfalls and steep inclines. She is the mother of five children, including a set of twins. In Marita's community, raising children poses a great challenge due to widespread poverty and the lack of availability of health care. She frequently hears sad news of the deaths of women in labor and of newborns, but recent visits from a newly-trained SCOPE-supported CHW brought her hope for her family. The CHW worker taught Marita ways within her reach to preserve her health and that of her children.

This visit from the CHW inspired Marita to make two major changes in her life. First, she began to change her children's diet, focusing on better nutrition. Feeding her children had always been difficult since Marita delivered

her first child as a teenager and managed the household alongside no access to information on nutritious feeding methods, Marita had fought just to fill her children's stomachs daily. The CHW taught Marita that her children's health depends on a nutritious, balanced diet based on the three main food groups, as well as prevention of illness, and early care-seeking when the children fall sick. At first, this information confused her since she had always prioritized avoiding hunger at all costs. However, as the CHW took time to explain, she began to understand that consuming only rice, pasta, or corn would create deficiencies that would negatively affect her child's health. Knowing that Marita could not afford to buy meat often, the CHW provided her with a diversified menu of nutritious foods she could afford to feed her children daily. For example, for breakfast, Marita might make a soup from bread, greens and herring, or ground corn with greens. For lunch, she can cook rice with beans and a little meat. When the meat is unavailable, she can make mashed peas with rice and avocados. For supper, she could cook porridge. Incorporating this balanced diet into her children's routine has given Marita a great sense of fulfillment and pride as a mother every day.

MAKING PLANS FOR A FAMILY'S FUTURE

The CHW also helped Marita plan a brighter future for herself and her children. Having started her family at an early age, Marita had never been taught the importance of child spacing in family planning. She is now aware of the severe risks and economic costs of these successive pregnancies and was receptive to the CHW's recommended family planning advice. As a result, Marita has implemented a planning method that reduces her risk of unplanned pregnancy. Having more control over family planning has given Marita

her husband. With sparse economic means and

confidence to face the future, knowing that she can focus on raising the five children that she currently has. She believes that these improvements to her family's health and future would not have been possible without the assistance of the CHW, especially since her husband initially hesitated to approve the new family planning strategy.

"I realize now that I took a lot of risks by having all of these successive pregnancies. That's why I decided to follow a planning method in order to control my ability to get pregnant. I now know that I will be able to devote myself to raising the five children that I currently have."

- *Marita Noel*

IMPACTING COMMUNITIES ONE HOUSEHOLD AT A TIME

Marita Noel is one example of how SCOPE's CHWs are bringing positive health improvement to communities on the household level. Their commitment to supporting pregnant women and mothers continues to make positive changes in the community. Like Marita, many young mothers now know how to feed their children better. Other mothers have begun to plan with their spouses to adopt a family planning method. Through these impacts, the SCOPE project is progressing towards its goal of contributing to the reduction of preventable maternal and infant morbidity and mortality in Haiti.

This story is written by Pierre Mackendy, SCOPE Regional Coordinator, and Elizabeth Cooper, SCOPE Communications Intern.