



# Reaching Out to Solve a Problem

## A Healthcare Center in Haiti Addresses Sexual Violence

*Adesky Moise*

### BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What does it mean to “reach out”? Share some times in your life when you have had to reach out to others to solve a problem.
2. Note that “to reach out” is a verb. The noun is “outreach.” Try using both the verb and the noun in sentences.

### We Faced a Big Problem

Life is very challenging. Making life better for yourself and others helps you feel useful and alive. My community in Haiti faced a big problem with sexual violence. I worked in a healthcare center, and we decided to take action on this problem.

### We Reached Out to the Community

Trying to solve this problem was very complicated, but it was worth trying. We understood that to be successful, we would need the community groups to support us. We invited the community groups to a series of meetings. Some meetings were for high-risk groups, such as young people, girls and boys ages 14 to 25. Other meetings were for parents so they could understand the problem. In addition, we reached out to community leaders: pastors, politicians, leaders of popular organizations, and *hougans* (*vodou* priests).

Reaching out to community leaders was a good idea because it gave us access to resources. For example, we found a radio station that would give us two hours of free broadcast time per week. We also found free places to hold meetings and people who donated food for the meetings. By reaching out to the community, we found many people who agreed to promote the idea of fighting against sexual violence.



*Clinic workers conduct outreach to youth. Photo by Cara McCarthy from pixnio.com.*

### We Asked People to Share their Stories

One of the most important activities we did was to sponsor a writing competition about the topic of sexual violence. We created small groups of people from high-risk groups, and they supported each other to write their stories. A jury of community leaders evaluated the essays. The best ones were published in a booklet. All groups received gifts and recognition for their work. We shared copies of the booklet with other communities, and this allowed other cities to read about the consequences of sexual violence and how to avoid it.

### We Got Results!

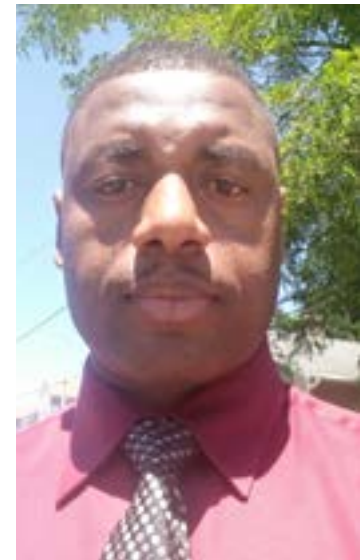
In a short time, our records at the health center showed a reduction in sexual violence cases. We received feedback from many parts of society. People congratulated and thanked the staff for our leadership. It is a good feeling to fight for something and get results!

Sometimes, people need a leader to highlight a problem and then help solve the problem. However, the leader can't do it alone. Our health center used evidence to diagnose sexual violence as a big problem in our community. Then we took action by inviting community members to be part of the solution to this problem. The results were astonishing. We did it together.

#### AFTER YOU READ:

1. What steps did Adesky's healthcare center take to address the problem of sexual violence? Be specific.

2. What forms of communication did they use to reach out to people in the community?
3. What does Adesky say about leadership in the last paragraph. Do you agree or disagree? Read the articles on pp. 3-15 about "leadership and initiative" to learn more about this skill.



Adesky Moise is a student at the Bridge Writing Workshop at the Brockton Adult Learning Center in Brockton, MA. He is from Haiti where he worked as a physician, including 15 years at different public health organizations such as Ministère de la Santé et de la Population (MSPP), Haiti Health Network, and other organizations.

### Examples of Outreach in Your Life

Make a graphic organizer like the one below. Fill it in with information about a problem (large or small) you faced and how you reached out to others to try to solve the problem.

Problem:	To whom did you reach out?	What happened?