

Success Story/Lessons Learned

Operating Unit: USAID/Haiti

Providing Vital Assistance to Storm-Struck Haitians

A series of four tropical storms lashed Haiti from late-August until mid-September 2008, requiring immediate, extensive assistance from Haitian authorities and the international aid community. Believed to be the worse disaster Haiti had faced in decades, an estimated 793 Haitians perished, over 800,000 Haitians were reported to have lost their livelihoods, and damage and destruction amounted to nearly \$900 million. By September 2, U.S. Ambassador Janet A. Anderson issued a disaster declaration followed immediately by USAID sending an Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)-chartered aircraft to Haiti full of hygiene kits, water containers and plastic sheeting for thousands of families. By September 18, USAID/OFDA had already contracted the delivery of nearly \$30 million in emergency relief supplies and logistical support distributed to nearly 20,000 families by a wide range of relief organizations such as the Pan American Health Organization, International Organization for Migration (IOM), the American Red Cross and others. The USG also provided 4,620 metric tons of emergency food to the World Food Program for immediate distribution to needy storm victims.

Because of badly damaged or destroyed roads or bridges, for many weeks, access to key areas in the south and the city of Gonaives, were cut off from receiving immediate assistance ordinarily delivered by land. Nevertheless, as early as September 17th, World Food Program, re-directing food commodities with extensive USAID consultation and support, had distributed 316 metric tons of food, including 27 metric tons of high energy biscuits, to nearly 152,000 people in Gonaives. Reaching other isolated communities beyond Gonaives required USAID/OFDA coordinating closely with U.S. Navy teams to identify priority sites for delivery of emergency relief supplies as well as IOM and other primary relief partners to use other organizations' in-field presence to develop immediate working relations to expedite the delivery of emergency food and non-food items.

One of USAID's emergency assistance partners that became responsible for assisting such smaller communities was ACDI/VOCA which had recently started a Food for Peace (FFP)-financed food security program in southern Haiti. ACDI/VOCA, in collaboration with the Haitian partner Bureau de Departement du Nutrition (BND), served as one small but important example of immediately responsive, USAID-supported emergency providers. While ACDI/VOCA had hardly started its new program, within two days it was able to distribute USAID/FFP-donated emergency food supplies accompanied by hygiene kits, water purification tablets, and jerry cans obtained through IOM and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) to 750 families affected by the 2008 hurricanes in Bainet, La Vallée, and Jacmel. The

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distribution was planned with the active engagement of the local authorities and was a success not only in getting life-saving food and relief supplies to the people who most needed it, but also in terms of ensuring security, safety and efficiency.

Beneficiary families became extremely grateful to the USG for these goods. During a distribution in La Vallee, where one community which suffered more than a week of isolation due to cut roads, Mrs. Jere, the grandmother in one of the impacted families, brought her 12-month-old granddaughter, Julienne, to receive assistance after they lost their home. The baby girl came to the distribution site with a piece of sugar cane that her grandmother had given her to ease her hunger. After receiving the food and other items, Mrs. Jere said, “Thanks to the American people, I’ll be able to feed my granddaughter well today!”

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a USAID Title-II MYAP/SYAP Food Security partner and having a sub-office in the town of Les Cayes, was well-placed for a rapid response to the hurricanes in the South and Grande Anse Departments.

With USAID Title-II SYAP resources, CRS was able to provide 5,245 families in some of the hardest hit areas with a 15-day emergency ration. CRS, along with its partner Caritas Haiti, also provided food kits for 10,078 families valued at \$705,460 and hygiene kits (including water and mattresses) for 5,424 families valued at \$298,126 in 9 out of the 10 departments in Haiti with funds provided by Digicel, Cordaid, and private funds. In Gonaives, CRS provided a 15-day emergency ration from its Title II SYAP stock to 240 families in the beginning of its ongoing response in this flood-devastated city. CRS has since opened an emergency office in Gonaives and with a Gates Foundation grant are implementing a project to clear mud from 45 schools, provide shelter support to families in transitional shelters, and provide support to families returning home.

USAID’s Title II programs, even before the arrival of these storms, expanded to assist over 1.5 million beneficiaries or approximately 15% of Haitians, a vital contribution to providing life-saving relief and maintaining Haitian social stability. While such emergency assistance programs may be phased out in the months ahead, with USAID support, ACDI/VOCA will be working on advancing small-farmer agricultural production and food security issues in southern Haiti, expecting that as many as 27,000 farmers will benefit from improved food security interventions over the next several years.

Pullout Quote:

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Background Information:

Humanitarian Assistance, Protection, Assistance and Solutions, 5.1

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Photographs (optional, but recommended): *Photographs bring a story to life. The photo should be colorful, depict action, capture people's attention, and feature a main character prominently. Please attach only a .jpg, .bmp, or .gif file with at least a 300 dpi (dots per inch). The photo should be shot with at least a 3-megapixel resolution. Please include photographers name, organization, and caption for the photo.*

