

OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (USAID/OFDA)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA



USAID/FFP staff monitor an emergency food distribution in Haiti. Photo by Irene Gago, USAID/OFDA

USAID Responds to Heightened Humanitarian Needs in Haiti

Ongoing socio-political unrest in Haiti since mid-September 2019 has increased security concerns, constrained humanitarian access, and resulted in deteriorated humanitarian conditions in Haiti, with as many as 1 million people expected to face Crisis—IPC 3—levels of acute food insecurity in the coming months.¹

In response to heightened humanitarian needs, USAID/OFDA provided \$1 million to support UN World Food Program (WFP) logistics efforts in early January, assisting the UN agency to continue humanitarian operations in the country, including air, sea, and road transport of aid to vulnerable Haitians despite insecurity and access restrictions.

USAID/OFDA support for WFP also includes storage for relief supplies, as well as coordination and information management activities to improve the efficiency of humanitarian operations. WFP is the largest humanitarian logistics actor in Haiti and

maintains a robust supply chain network across the country.

In addition, in November 2019, USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) authorized the release of 2,000 metric tons (MT) of emergency food assistance pre-positioned in Haiti, including peas, rice, and vegetable oil, to assist the most vulnerable households. This WFP-distributed emergency food assistance had reached nearly 75,000 people as of December 22. USAID/FFP provided associated funding for the transportation, handling, storage, and distribution of the food commodities to address humanitarian needs.

USAID/FFP is also working with WFP to distribute an additional 2,200 MT of food scheduled to arrive in Haiti in the coming weeks, which will allow WFP to reach an additional 100,000 people with emergency food assistance.

Improving Cash-Based Response Capacities in Haiti

Globally, cash-based approaches have become an increasingly common strategy for the provision of humanitarian assistance as it offers people affected by a crisis the flexibility and dignity to purchase preferred goods and services, while also boosting local market systems. This type of aid can have an economic multiplier effect that benefits the entire community, as it helps increase consumption, strengthen local businesses, and create jobs.

However, the quick and efficient delivery of cash-based relief activities requires robust coordination between implementing organizations and government institutions, as well as pre-existing relationships with financial service providers. It also requires standard operating procedures and coordinated information sharing on cash-feasibility, response analysis, and accountability systems.

To improve cash-based response programming in Haiti, USAID/OFDA partnered with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Mercy Corps, which are training relief actors, coordinating cash programming, and improving cash transfer processes in Haiti.



USAID partner CRS provides cash-based assistance to vulnerable households in Haiti's Grand Anse Department. Photo courtesy of CRS

Continues on page 2

¹ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a standardized tool that aims to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, comparable across countries, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5.

Cash-Based Capacities continued from page 1

“By improving organizations’ capacity to implement cash-based programs, we can reduce disaster response time and increase the resilience of disaster-affected communities where markets are functional and capable of meeting beneficiary needs,” said USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

With USAID/OFDA funding, Mercy Corps, which is co-leading the Cash Working Group in Haiti, is facilitating the adaptation of cash transfer quality standards, providing targeted training to humanitarian actors, and reinforcing partnerships between public and private sector actors. Mercy Corps’ capacity building program combines training activities with field-based pilot testing to provide the humanitarian community with tools to successfully integrate cash into future responses, including in both rural and urban settings. In addition, in response to a series of economic shocks, Mercy Corps is providing cash assistance to nearly 1,500 vulnerable households for three months and micro-grants to 50 small vendors selling essential items in Haiti’s Croix-des-Bouquets commune, Ouest Department.

Moreover, USAID/OFDA partner CRS is conducting market system assessments, designing and adapting standardized tools for cash programming, and establishing a minimum expenditure basket to identify the appropriate cash transfer amount following a disaster in Haiti. CRS is working in close coordination with Mercy Corps and other key actors, such as government agencies and donors, to create an environment where the necessary data and tools are available to ensure rapid and effective cash-based responses.

In line with USAID/OFDA’s objectives, the two projects will provide the necessary basis to allow organizations to quickly launch cash-based responses to meet the immediate needs of individuals affected by a disaster in Haiti.



CRS provided MPCA to 1,250 small farmer households in Grand’Anse’s Abricot commune, whose harvest-ready crops were impacted by heavy rainfall. Photo courtesy of CRS



With USAID/OFDA support, CRS provided MPCA assistance to Exanta, a single mother of four young boys, who lost her harvest-ready crops. Photo courtesy of CRS

Providing Cash-Based Assistance to Vulnerable Families in Haiti’s Grand’ Anse Department

The economic crisis in Haiti has highlighted the adverse situation of low-income households, who lack resources to access appropriate food or purchase critical relief commodities and have already exhausted their coping mechanisms.

In April 2019, USAID/OFDA partnered with CRS in Haiti to support affected households in Grand’ Anse Department by providing them with multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA). Between April and July 2019, CRS provided MPCA to 1,250 small farmer households in Grand’ Anse’s Abricot commune, whose harvest-ready crops were impacted by heavy rainfall. These families were able to use the assistance to meet their basic needs with dignity and without having to adopt negative coping strategies.

MPCA is an assistance modality which offers people impacted by an emergency the possibility of choosing how to cover their basic needs, offering a greater degree of flexibility and dignity. MPCA allows disaster-affected populations to make the most of in-kind goods and access services, contributing to more successful relief interventions.

Exanta, a single mother of four young boys who was recently widowed, struggles to put food on the table for her family. She relies solely on subsistence farming to meet her family’s food needs, but heavy rainfall has negatively impacted yields from previous harvest seasons. With the MPCA, Exanta was able to meet her basic needs and save money to pay her children’s school fees, an accomplishment she says that her husband would be very proud of.

The MPCA transfer amount was based on the draft Minimum Expenditure Basket, an estimate of the cost of the goods and services needed for a family of five to meet its basic needs for one month. The cash ensured that mothers like Exanta could afford the unique variety of goods and services that she and her family needed.

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Tel: +(506) 2290-4133
E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov
Internet: www.usaid.gov