

Hurricane Georges Recovery Program Final Report

Executive Summary

Hurricane Georges swept across Haiti in September 1998, leaving 400 casualties and \$180 million in damages. The US Government responded in three phases: 1) \$1.25 million for immediate relief items and emergency food assistance, 2) \$12.5 million for rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure such as irrigation systems and provision of planting materials to affected farmers, and 3) \$9.8 million for longer-term recovery. The third phase, called the Hurricane Georges Recovery Program (HGRP), was funded from supplemental funds appropriated by Congress in May 1999. Activities under the HGRP ended December 31, 2001.

Major Activities and Results

Designed to help targeted rural communities, mainly in the Southeast but also in the South and West Departments, become more resilient in the face of recurring disasters, the HGRP met or exceeded its targets. Targeted communities received an integrated package that included raising agricultural productivity and revenues; rebuilding infrastructure; protecting small watersheds; and providing training and public awareness on disaster mitigation, preparedness and response. By the end of the HGRP, twenty-two rural communities had improved their ability to cope with the economic effects of disasters and reduced their vulnerability to recurring natural disasters.

Agricultural Production

The greatest accomplishment under this component is the increased use of improved, commercial quality bean, corn and sorghum seeds. According to a target area survey conducted in October 2001, the use of these seeds among households in the HGRP assisted communities increased from a baseline of 1% to 19%. Farmers have reported healthier plants and higher production from improved seeds. The HGRP produced 708 metric tons (MT) of commercial quality seeds of a cumulative target of 715 MT. The difference of 7 MT is due to unfavorable weather conditions. Because of the timing of the planting seasons in Haiti, of the total seed production, only 463 MT were distributed to farmers by December 2001. An estimated 41,000 families received these seeds mainly in the West, South and Southeast Departments of Haiti. The remaining 272 MT of seeds have been transferred to the local non-governmental organization (NGO) implementing the seed program in order to continue seed production and distribution after the end of the HGRP. This local NGO was an active partner under HGRP, receiving institutional support and technical assistance to build its capacity to produce and distribute seeds.

Research carried out in conjunction with the seed production activity resulted in two new bean seed varieties being introduced to Haiti. In field trials, these varieties had higher yields than the commercial seeds currently being produced and distributed in Haiti. They are drought and disease resistant. Research activities initiated under the HGRP will continue under the USAID/Haiti Hillside Agricultural Program (HAP). Finally, twenty

farmer volunteers from the U. S. shared their expertise in aquaculture, coffee production, corn grit processing, and vegetable and garlic production with individual farmers, community groups and farmers associations in ten locations. Overall, 1,888 farmers directly benefited from this two-year exchange program.

Infrastructure

Two farm to market roads (22.5 km), 7 irrigation systems enabling irrigation of over 3,090 hectares of land, 10 potable water systems benefiting approximately 33,750 people, and 25 schools benefiting approximately 7,500 students (at an average of 300 per school) were rehabilitated. The school rehabilitation program has generated a great deal of interest among private U. S. companies conducting business in Haiti, who contributed over \$45,000 to repair four additional schools. The social and economic benefits of this component include being able to farm irrigated land during the dry season; get produce to market during the rainy season; hold classes in safe, dry schools; transport patients more quickly to health facilities; and have access to safe drinking water. The program raised awareness of the need for maintenance of the repaired infrastructure.

Environment

Over 1,000 hectares of land and 85 km of ravines were protected with improved soil and water conservation structures. Though not measurable under the short timeframe of this program, it is anticipated that these structures will reduce rainwater runoff and potential local impacts from flooding as well as increase agricultural productivity as they have in other USAID/Haiti programs. The US Department of Agriculture will implement a study in Haiti in FY 2002 to monitor the impacts of these structures.

Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation

More than 5,000 people were trained in disaster preparedness & mitigation. Seven volunteers from Florida came to Haiti to help with training at the local level and to refine a National Disaster Response Plan. Twenty-two disaster mitigation and preparedness committees (called civil protection committees) were established. These committees have developed disaster action plans for their communities and are formally linked to the national Civil Protection Directorate (DPC) through departmental committees. Not only are these committees established but, according to a household survey conducted in October 2001, 50% of the respondents were aware of the committees and 25% were aware of the contents of the disaster plan. In those communities where the HGRP has been implemented, 90% of the participants in the household survey were able to name at least one action that can reduce the effects of a natural disaster; 33% could name three or more. People in these resilient communities now know that they can help themselves to be more resistant to the whims of nature and will take action both before and after a disastrous event. Building on the success of this component, the Mission has funded a follow-on award for technical assistance to local and municipal committees to begin implementing their action plans before the beginning of next year's hurricane season.

Program Management

The special objective (SpO) for the HGRP was authorized on September 9, 1999. USAID/Haiti signed a Cooperative Agreement with PADF on September 27, 1999 to manage the HGRP, who in turn entered into 10 sub-agreements with U. S. and local NGOs. PADF and its sub-grantees worked at the local level with fifteen strong community-based organizations (CBOs).

USAID/Haiti also signed a personal services contract for the program manager at USAID and a contract with Mérové Pierre, a local CPA firm affiliated with Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG), for a concurrent audit.

A direct Participating Agency Service Agreement (PASA) with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was signed for engineering TA and river basin studies. The U. S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) signed Interagency Agreements (IAAs) with the USAID/LAC Bureau in Washington for activities in six countries affected by Hurricanes Georges and Mitch. FEMA allocated \$500,000 to Haiti to implement disaster mitigation and preparedness activities. USDA had \$171,000 with which to implement watershed protection activities in Haiti. USAID/Haiti collaborated closely with other USG agencies to ensure synergy with the HGRP. Thus, their results contributed to and/or added value to the HGRP objectives.

Monitoring & Evaluation

A separate contract was signed with the Southeast Consortium for International Development (SECID) to carry out household surveys in the program-assisted areas, hold focus group sessions and conduct a final evaluation in order to monitor progress toward meeting the objectives and develop lessons learned and recommendations. SECID's surveys provided quantitative data on program accomplishments. The focus group sessions provided valuable insight into how the beneficiaries perceived the impact of the program in their communities.

The Regional Inspector General conducted a performance audit in January 2001, which had only one recommendation pertaining to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Because USACE was so far behind schedule, the RIG recommended shortening the life of and reducing the budget for the USACE PASA. USAID/Haiti modified the PASA in compliance. The GAO reviewed the program in Haiti in March 2001 and gave a positive report of the program.

Constraints & Challenges

The HGRP was hindered, but not prevented, from accomplishing its objectives by constant concerns for security of outside technical experts and local staff due to political unrest and high crime. Congressional holds on ESF funds affected HGRP partners and caused a delayed start up of some activities. The challenge of ensuring sustainability was

met through maintenance training and capacity building of CBOs and local disaster committees.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

The SECID final evaluation, partners' reports, as well as retreats and meetings among partners and SpO team members have generated several lessons learned. Among these are: 1) the value of the umbrella grant mechanism for a short-term reconstruction program, 2) the need for a strong SpO team, 3) the value of working with strong, experienced, community based organizations and NGOs and contractors already established in country. Close coordination among partners was essential to the successes achieved by the program. The generation of community funds using the 3-2-1 formula (See Annex 3) was an innovative means of ensuring ownership of the activities by the communities and a resource for community based organizations. It has been recommended that these positive aspects of the program be repeated in another reconstruction program.

USAID learned that start-up takes time no matter how short a timeframe has been set for completion of the program. USAID and its partners also learned that a concerted effort was needed to increase interest in and usage of commercial seeds. In future reconstruction programs, more care needs to be put into planning expenditures and early communication with beneficiaries about the program.

Overall, the program was a success.