



**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

USAID/OFDA HAITI ONE-YEAR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY OVERVIEW – JANUARY 12, 2011

SEED SYSTEMS IN DISASTERS

USAID/OFDA has long promoted analysis of the causes of seed insecurity to guide decisions regarding whether and how to provide agricultural inputs, such as seeds and tools, after a disaster. In the last decade, support to the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and non-governmental organization partners, including Catholic Relief Services, has yielded cutting-edge methodology development for seed system interventions and analyses.

SEED NEEDS IN HAITI

Immediately following the devastating earthquake in Haiti, many agencies feared that the damage that was so visible at the urban epicenter also extended to farming systems. Offers of seed aid began to flood into Haiti, with significant levels of assistance requested for the first and second agricultural seasons following the earthquake. The majority of early need estimates lacked support from credible assessment information and, as a result, risked overstating humanitarian requirements.

The location and impact of the earthquake on urban populations underscored the need for an assessment of the necessity and effectiveness of large-scale seed distributions in rural areas. Through CIAT, USAID funded a Seed System Security Assessment (SSSA) in Haiti in May through June 2010 to examine the seed issue in detail and determine the potential impact of large-scale seed distributions on Haitian farmers. The SSSA also provided data that complemented ongoing development programs in the agriculture sector.

The study indicated that, in the season immediately after the earthquake, farmers planted slightly less seed than normal; however, their reasons for doing so were numerous. The reduced planting resulted from financial constraints, land tenure concerns, routine health problems, and ongoing drought. Lack of available seed did not emerge as a cause of decreased sowing of land. In fact, farmers were able to access seeds from a variety of sources and, despite the sizeable influx of seed aid in Haiti after the earthquake, only 4 percent of all seeds planted were relief seeds. Overall, the assessment found acute seed security issues to be minimal, with the exception of those associated with the general drop in purchasing power. The results validated USAID's decision not to support immediate seed distributions as an emergency agricultural response in Haiti, as they highlighted chronic problems inherent in the Haitian seed system and revealed that such issues predated the earthquake.

BEYOND THE EARTHQUAKE

As Haiti moves into the recovery stage, the SSSA recommends significant medium- to long-term investment in agricultural systems and can inform USAID and other development agency programs targeting longer-term agricultural support. The breadth of analysis and interview case numbers provides information pertinent to all seed practitioners in Haiti, not simply humanitarian organizations. In addition, having the analysis of markets and farmer seed systems at the ready enables USAID/OFDA and other humanitarian agencies to respond efficiently to future disasters in Haiti. When Hurricane Tomas passed over Haiti in November 2010, for example, the SSSA results were available to guide best practices in seed response, should such a response have been needed.