



MONTHLY UPDATE – APRIL 2011

INTRODUCTION

This is the first edition of the USAID ACCESO monthly update, with information on current and future project activities. USAID ACCESO is a four-year initiative funded by the people and government of the United States of America through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This project is part of the global “Feed the Future” initiative of the United States government.

PROJECT FOCUS

The goal of the project is to improve the conditions of 18,000 rural families that are currently living in extreme poverty. ACCESO will improve economic access and nutrition through financial development and increased incomes. ACCESO has six main components to achieve this goal:

1. Technical assistance and training to enhance the poorest households’ capacity in production, management, and marketing skills ;
2. Improving access to markets for farmers and develop links with producers and other MSMEs to determine which crops to produce, when to produce them, and production volumes according to market opportunities;
3. Expanding financial services in rural areas through existing financial intermediaries, rural loan associations, commercial banks, and service and input providers;
4. Preventing malnutrition through training to improve the use and consumption of food;
5. Sensible management of the environment and natural resources;
6. Assistance to eliminate administrative barriers that hinder access to business opportunities for rural homes.

The main beneficiaries of project assistance are poor or extremely poor households in poverty stricken rural departments, municipalities, and communities. Priority is assigned to households in extreme poverty and those with women as head of households.

ACCESO focuses on the western regions of Honduras, specifically on the municipalities of the Intibucá, Lempira, La Paz, Copán, Ocotepeque, and Santa Bárbara departments. The selection of municipalities in these departments is based on both average levels of poverty and potential to transition to small-scale commercial agriculture (determined by access to land, adequate soils, water and moderate topography, as well as the operation of MSMEs outside the farms).

ACCESO’s secondary beneficiaries include business owners and employees (mostly MSMEs) operating in agricultural value chains. Although their households may be above the poverty line, their participation is critical to the creation of jobs and income opportunities for those living below this line.



Introduction of USAID ACCESO services to families in the community of La Unión, Copán.



Introduction of USAID ACCESO services to groups of producers in Las Vegas, Santa Bárbara.

USAID-ACCESO

This monthly update was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The content is Fintrac’s responsibility, the main implementing partner of USAID-ACCESO, and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of USAID or the United States government.

ACCESO establishes market led production programs that link small producers with local, regional and international buyers. The program also focuses on high-value and added-value crops including horticulture crops, roots and tubers, fruit, and coffee. As part of a “whole farm” system, ACCESO also works to increase productivity and adding value to traditional crops (corn and beans) on beneficiary farms.

This “whole farm” system emphasizes improving nutrition, maximizing income sources for all productive family members, reducing risks through crop and income diversification, reaching a balance in the use of natural resources, increasing access to better health services, and promoting renewable energy technologies.

ACCESO will coordinate its activities with the Honduran government, the private sector, NGOs, and other counterparts to guarantee that the project’s goals are accomplished through a unified effort from all the partners, maximizing impact on Honduran homes.

ACCESO is also partnering with organizations working at the community level that have technical knowledge to provide coordinated assistance to small producers and rural MSMEs.

ACCESO is a program that provides comprehensive technical assistance with multidisciplinary strengths, including agricultural extension, access to technology, market contacts, development of value chains, business skills, postharvest, creation of group organizations, investigation and development, rural credit, management of natural resources, prevention and mitigation of natural disasters, renewable energy, nutrition education and coordination of health services.

ACCESO is being implemented by the US agribusiness firm Fintrac, Inc., in association with Fundación Hondureña de Investigación Agrícola (FHIA), Escuela Agrícola Panamericana (EAP-ZAMORANO), Fundación para el Desarrollo Empresarial Rural (FUNDER), CARE International, and the Global Village Project.

Fintrac has successfully implemented technical assistance programs in the agriculture sector in Honduras over the past 11 years, financed by USAID and MCC. Fintrac has established guidelines for other projects based on the results and impact achieved in the field and sector. ACCESO will also partner with private businesses, associations, local NGO, and public entities to increase the program’s reach, impact and sustainability.

ACCESS – TECHNICAL SERVICES MENU

Production Technologies and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)

- Crop selection
- Soil preparation
- Production of plantlets
- Adequate fertilization (including fertigation)
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Conservation of water and soil
- Hybrid seeds
- Low-cost drip irrigation
- Low-cost greenhouses
- Investigation and development

Postharvest Handling and Processing

- Design and operation of packing plants, cold rooms and processing plants
- Food safety protocols
- Feasibility studies for new added value investments

Development of Markets

- Market analysis and information
- Introduction to new crops and products
- Links with buyers from local, regional and export markets
- Food safety, GLOBALGAP and other certifications
- Raw material supply logistics

Business and Credit Operations

- Farm management and control of records
- Business plans and loan applications
- Development of producer associations
- Development of new credit and other financial products
- Training of small producers and credit providers
- Development of non-agricultural MSMEs

Health and Nutrition

- Family plots
- Health, nutrition and hygiene education
- Mother and infant nutrition
- Micronutrient supplement

Management of Natural Resources and the Environment

- Eco-friendly stoves
- Small scale solar energy, wind, hydroelectric and biomass
- Improved environmental practices on farms (IPM/ICM) and businesses
- Management of natural resources at the community level
- Mitigation of natural disasters at the community level

MAIN GOALS OF ACCESO

- Bring 18,000 rural households living in extreme poverty above the poverty threshold;
- Generate \$73.95 million in net profits for the clients assisted by the project; and
- Create 10,425 permanent jobs in the assisted communities.

The USAID ACCESO Program will assist 31,800 clients in the six previously described departments, distributed as follows: 18,000 households in extreme poverty, 7,000 households in poverty, 5,000 coffee producers, 1,000 commercial scale producers of horticultural crops, and 800 rural businesses not related to agriculture.

ACTIVITIES

Fintrac began implementing the project on April 1st, hiring and deploying management and technical teams including field technicians in production, marketing, postharvest, and business skills, to the targeted zones of assistance. During the first month of operation, sub-contracts were signed to create the consortium tasked with implementing the program. Fintrac provided the induction to the initial team, defining clear goals, and identifying responsibilities, structure, work zones, tools, and logistics. The technicians began work in their respective departments to identify communities, producers, and other beneficiaries interested in receiving technical assistance from the program.

Other April activities included:

- Purchases of vehicles and necessary equipment for efficient and professional implementation;
- Development of work, performance, monitoring and evaluation, marketing, and gender mainstreaming plans.
- Presentation of the program to the Ministry of Agriculture (SAG) and discussion of areas for collaboration.
- Assistance to SAG with activities related to *Honduras is Open for Business*.

During the month of May, interviews will be held for the technical personnel that will be hired by the consortium in June. In addition, stakeholder consultations will be held with local NGOs interested in being part of ACCESO.

The first technical assistance visits and trainings will begin in May, targeting mostly basic grain producers. Technicians will assist producers to change traditional production practices by training them to improve soil preparation, increase planting densities, and better control weeds. These basic practices increase productivity, reduce the risks of climate-related losses, and serve as the starting point for diversification to more profitable crops. Initial beneficiaries will also serve as demonstration farms for other producers.



Training of producers on population densities and planting distances, Santa Bárbara.



On-farm technical assistance for onion crop to determine options for improvement, Copán.

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For more information or if you are interested in being assisted by the program please contact:

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Regional offices will open in Santa Bárbara, Copán and Intibucá during the month of June.