



MONTHLY UPDATE – JANUARY 2012

BACKGROUND

This is the tenth 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 and the main investment by USAID in Honduras.

USAID-ACCESO will assist more than 30,000 clients in the departments of Copán, Intibucá, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque and Santa Bárbara. The goal of the project is to improve the conditions of 18,000 rural homes that are currently living in extreme poverty by moving them out of poverty and malnutrition through financial development, increased incomes, and new jobs.

USAID-ACCESO CLIENTS

In January, USAID-ACCESO provided assistance to 10,352 client households and 1,216 additional clients including businesses and community organizations. These groups are not directly linked to the project's overall target of 30,000 impacted households, but contribute to the project's principal goals. Most of these clients are permanently located in the target geographical regions, expanding USAID-ACCESO's reach and sustainability.

This client group can be broken down as follows:

- 380 micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) clients, of which 104 are rural savings and loan associations.
- 246 Atención Integral a la Niñez en la Comunidad (AIN-C) mothers' group clients in the communities with the highest malnutrition indexes.
- 198 business development services clients, of which 30 are input and equipment providers.
- 154 community association and organization clients, of which 144 are community water organizations' committees.
- 71 counterpart organization clients, including 27 nongovernmental organizations, and another 69 municipalities, with whom the project coordinates comprehensive training and technical assistance activities.
- 50 households are receiving nutrition and hygiene assistance only. These households are located in areas that lack agricultural potential, but are being integrated into components of the project that fit their needs.
- 27 buyers who have made at least two purchases from ten project-supported households.



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Farmer shows off healthy carrot harvest, Zacapa, La Paz.

USAID-ACCESO client households, beneficiaries and other clients, January 2012			
Department	Client Households	Beneficiaries	Other Clients *
Copán	1,695	4,258	167
Intibucá	1,946	10,752	127
La Paz	1,474	6,853	247
Lempira	2,254	11,785	234
Ocotepeque	1,508	6,617	140
Santa Bárbara	1,452	6,565	212
Others	23	47	89
TOTAL	10,352	46,877	1,216
*Includes: MSMEs, buyers, input and service providers, Municipal Corporations, counterpart organizations, among others			

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.

PRODUCTION

- An additional 59 hectares were planted in January, for a cumulative total of 7,169 hectares of project-supported production area. Of the total, 3,991 hectares are planted in coffee, 2,331 hectares in basic grains, and 847 hectares in horticultural crops. Beans (11.7 ha), potato (10.3 ha), watermelon (9.4 ha), and cabbage (6.6 ha) are the biggest horticultural crops.
- 4,607 participants were trained in 671 events in agricultural production. The trainings covered best practices for coffee and horticultural crops; soil management and preparation; planting and transplant; fertilization; nutritional requirements; and integrated pest management. The project also arranged field days and activities.
- Thirty-six training events were held for 350 participants in animal production. Participants received training in feeding practices, construction of chicken coops, low-cost feeding and drinking stations, pork production, appropriate storage, de-worming techniques, and the use of vitamins.
- Thirty-six field visits were carried out with 298 participants to promote the adoption of best practices and improved farming technologies. Lead farmers gave testimonials and demonstrated the impact of improved practices for the production of passion fruit, snow peas, tomatoes, coffee, and others.
- Eighty-six participants were trained on postharvest handling in nine training events. Five of these events focused on farm certification processes. Others included quality standards for packaging, use of logbooks, product selection, and pest control.

ACCESS TO MARKETS

- Conducted 31 technical assistance visits and three training events for 56 participants. The workshops covered market opportunities for snow peas, cucumber, beans, aromatic herbs, oriental vegetables, plantain, and horticultural crops for the El Salvador market.
- Technical assistance was provided to USAID-ACCESO client households in marketing, sales, packing, and quality assurance for garlic, cucumber, green beans, cassava, lemons, and pastries.
- Project staff conducted market surveys and identified new market opportunities with Salvadoran buyers.
- Fifteen client households signed agreements with an oriental vegetable exporter for the United States market.
- A contract between a radicchio/snow pea exporter and a packing company, expected to be finalized in February, will benefit 200 client households in Intibucá.

BUSINESS AND FINANCE SKILLS

- Business and finance skills specialists held 92 events to train 802 participants in available financing sources and credit options; organization and training of rural savings and loan associations; functions of boards of directors and loan committees; development and implementation of internal regulations; use of logbooks and accounting records.
- USAID-ACCESO facilitated a memorandum of understanding between EXVECO, an oriental vegetable exporter, and CACIL, a savings and loan cooperative, to set up a triangular system that gives USAID-ACCESO producers the opportunity to obtain loans and a formal market contract.
- The Ministry of Industry and Commerce trained 64 rural savings and loan associations and cooperatives on the laws and regulations of the social sector of the economy. The training improves client knowledge about the formalization process.



Solar panels like this one are helping rural farmers significantly cut their energy bills, Intibucá.



Lettuce production, Ocotepeque.



Farmers in Intibucá examine their potato harvest.

Baseline profile of USAID-ACCESO families to date

- 6,894 of the 10,352 household clients (67%) are in extreme poverty and 685 household clients (7%) are poor.
- 5,927 of the 46,877 beneficiaries (13%) are children under 5 years in age; 12,932 (28%) are children between 6 and 14 years old; 23,053 people (49%) are between 15 and 49 years in age; 11 percent are adults over the age of 50.
- 52 percent of the beneficiaries are men (24,439) and 48 percent are women (22,438).

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

- Provided technical assistance to 246 AIN-C mothers' groups in collaboration with volunteer health monitors from the communities.
- 1,451 participants attended 99 events in January. Popular workshops included: breastfeeding and complementary nutrition practices of children over six months; preparing nutritious food using locally available ingredients; and maintaining a healthy and hygienic household.
- Other nutrition and health interventions included work on home gardens, construction of chicken coops to increase families' protein intake, and family planning sessions.

VALUE ADDITION AND MICROENTERPRISE

- 1,068 participants were trained at 86 events in manufacturing practices, cost and pricing analysis, meat processing, and other value-added opportunities such as baking vegetables to sell as snacks or chips.
- Processing and value addition specialists provided technical assistance to 91 micro-, 65 small-, and seven medium-sized businesses. 499 technical assistance visits took place to client households, businesses, and service providers.
- 87 participants were trained in effective administration practices for their forestry businesses.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- To date, 67 municipalities and 144 community water committees have received technical assistance or training.
- 63 participants were trained at six events. Among the participants were coffee producers and water treatment workers who were trained on the environmental impact of byproduct waste. They discussed alternatives that are both financially viable and environmentally friendly, such as treating coffee pulp with microorganisms to produce organic fertilizer.
- Twenty-five participants were trained on water quality analysis and monitoring. Other municipal workers received training on the effective use of water chlorination tablets.
- Fourteen micro-basin managers were trained in the implementation of a payment model for environmental services.
- Held meetings with the consortium of municipalities in La Paz (MANCEPAZ) to offer support on a new recycling project.

MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION OF NATURAL DISASTERS

- A field visit took place to the community of Santa Elena in La Paz to evaluate the geologic fault in the community of Caraiman, and to recommend ways to prevent damage in the case of a natural disaster.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Investments totaled \$14,910 in 15 solar panels for client households. Each panel costs \$994, of which the client household pays 40 percent, which will be amortized through monthly electricity payments. USAID-ACCESO and partners, Fondo Hondureño de Inversión Social (FHIS) and Solaris, covered the rest of the cost.
- Conducted 24 technical assistance visits on the use and maintenance of solar panels; installed the first biogas fueled lamp.
- Production technicians installed four solar dryers with funding through the partnership agreement with IHCAFÉ.

PRINCIPAL GOALS OF ACCESO

- Bring 30,000 rural homes living in poverty and extreme poverty above the poverty threshold;
- Generate \$ 73.95 million in net profits for clients assisted by the project; and
- Create 10,425 permanent jobs in the assisted communities.



Mothers are learning to prepare nutritious food for their families using ingredients from their own gardens, Santa Bárbara.



Children are improving their overall health and nutrition with foods like this fortified tortilla, Ocotepeque.

Trainings January 2012

Area	Participants	Events
Renewable Energy	12	1
Business Skills / Finance	794	90
Natural Resource Management	63	6
Postharvest and Certifications	110	14
Processing and Added Value	1,068	86
Production	4,957	707
ACCESO Project	141	14
Market Information	56	3
Nutrition and Health	1,451	99
Other topics	95	7
TOTAL	8,747	1,027

ACCESS TO MARKETS

MARKET-LED PRODUCTION

Producers cite the lack of access to markets and credit as their two biggest constraints, both of which USAID-ACCESO addresses through technical assistance in production related activities. In Honduras, there is not a lack of markets but a lack of information on opportunities and market demand. If there is not sufficient demand for what is being produced, it is difficult to develop a profitable and sustainable business. This market-led production approach gives small producers the opportunity to join more formal and stable markets. USAID-ACCESO provides access to market opportunities by developing links between markets and producers, training client households on production skills and technologies, and working on reducing and eliminating administrative barriers to market access.

CALENDARIZED PLANTING PROGRAMS

Identifying market opportunities determined by supply and demand is the marketing specialist's first step to organize producers into calendarized planting programs. This is a dynamic and ongoing task that follows market trends to reduce producers' risk and increase their competitiveness. Market specialists regularly visit local and international buyers and exporters to keep up with market developments.

Local Market

The first calendarized planting programs were developed to supply major supermarket chains and large urban markets. To obtain the necessary volume and incorporate small producers that have diversified into high-value crops after doubling and tripling their yields of basic grains, the project is also working with producers that do not fall under the poverty threshold who can facilitate local distribution. Currently, there are calendarized supply programs for cucumber, carrot, plantain, potato, broccoli, cauliflower, and passion fruit. USAID-ACCESO is also coordinating with existing distribution centers – previously unprofitable due to high management costs and low supply of goods – to distribute smallholders' goods. Additionally, the project is organizing small producer fairs (six to date) in rural municipalities.

Export Market

USAID-ACCESO is developing export for the following crops and regions: oriental vegetables in Santa Bárbara; beans in Copán; horticultural crops in Ocotepeque for the El Salvador market; snow peas and radicchio in Intibucá; organic aromatic herbs in Lempira; and oriental vegetables in La Paz. Through these interventions, 380 client households now have access to the export market.

Calendarized production programs ensure that farmers plan ahead and use available resources more efficiently to obtain additional yields and income from the same planting area.

USAID-ACCESO CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information or if you are interested in receiving assistance, you can request it from the following contacts:

La Paz	Cristóbal Montalván	9978-7117
Intibucá	Denis Ramírez	9996-8903
Lempira	Ali Valdivia	9996-9360
Ocotepeque	Eddy Flores	9949-6747
Copán	Hugo Ávila	9923-6826
Santa Bárbara	Leopoldo Aguilar	9997-0130

USAID-ACCESO beneficiaries learn about production systems and integrated crop management, which allows them to produce based on market demands, making them more competitive and better able to capitalize on market opportunities.



Salvadoran buyers visit a La Paz farm to identify export opportunities for USAID-ACCESO producers.



Cabbage production for the local market, La Paz.



Producers preparing their snow pea crop for export, Intibucá.