



MONTHLY UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2012

BACKGROUND

This is the eleventh 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 US Agency for International Development (USAID). This project is part of the global Feed the Future initiative of the US 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 project is working to lift 18,000 rural households out of extreme poverty and malnutrition conditions through economic development and increased incomes.

AGREEMENTS AND ALLIANCES

Three memorandums of understanding were signed with commercial input and equipment providers. These links give project clients access to technology, technical assistance, discounted prices, and promotions from DISAGRO, DURECO and SEREMA.

In February, the project signed a contract with AHDESA to provide technical assistance on the construction and installation of 500 eco-friendly stoves. These stoves reduce health risks associated with smoke and reduce firewood use, saving time, money and forest resources.

More than 200 client households in Intibucá are using certified snow pea seeds for this year's harvest. These producers are part of a calendarized planting program with an exporter for shipment to the United States.

PROJECT VISITS

In February, the project met with three specialists from the International Food Policy Research Institute who will measure the project's impact in target areas. During their weeklong visit, the specialists went to six departments and were able to witness firsthand the integration of all project components. In addition, USAID/Honduras' Mission Director, William Brands, visited USAID-ACCESO clients in Santa Bárbara.



Carrot and cabbage production by USAID-ACCESO client households in San José, Guajiquiro, La Paz.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

USAID-ACCESO client households, beneficiaries and other clients, February 2012

Department	Client Households	Beneficiaries	Other Clients *
Copán	1,885	5,627	178
Intibucá	2,032	11,484	136
La Paz	1,628	7,791	310
Lempira	2,491	13,361	304
Ocotepeque	1,702	7,648	182
Santa Bárbara	1,646	7,420	263
Others	24	97	96
TOTAL	11,408	53,428	1,469

*Includes: MSMES, buyers, input and service providers, Municipal Corporations, counterpart organizations, among others

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PRODUCTION

- An additional 53 hectares were planted with 32 different crops for a cumulative total of 7,648 hectares of production area. The new area includes 7.5 hectares of eggplant, 6.4 hectares of snow peas, and 3.38 hectares of sweet peas, which are part of export programs. Other crops include beans, potatoes, cabbage, and carrots to be sold in local supermarkets. Of the total area, 4,351 hectares are planted in coffee, 2,423 in basic grains, and 874 in horticultural crops (includes vegetables, fruit and ornamental plants).
- Trained 6,641 participants at 834 workshops in agricultural production. The majority of the trainings focused on five areas: **Basic Practices** (soil preparation, raised beds, calendarization, planting and transplanting); **Soil Conservation** (contour plowing); **Nutrition Programs** (fertilizers and soil amendment); **Irrigation Systems**, (design, installation and management); and **Integrated Pest Management**.
- Forty-eight training events with 522 participants took place in animal production. Participants received training in handling of cattle, pigs, and chickens with an emphasis on production of concentrated, low-cost food. Forty-eight participants were trained on commercial pollen and honey production. Animal production specialists are assisting the Nutrition and Health component with the construction of low-cost chicken coops made from readily-available recycled materials. Families can improve their diets with the extra protein from the chickens.
- Twenty-five field visits were carried out with 374 participants. Six snow pea demonstration plots were used to show best practices to client households participating in an export program. Participants also visited successful cucumber and chili pepper producers.
- Forty-nine participants were trained in postharvest handling in six training events. Topics included best practices for potatoes and plantains, and management and storage of grains. Eighty-eight technical assistance visits took place covering quality requirements for beans, snow peas, oriental vegetables, potatoes, and cucumbers for both local and export markets.

ACCESS TO MARKETS

- The “Incentives for Agricultural Production and Marketing” fair began in San Marcos, Ocotepeque, with 19 participants from three communities. The participants have average weekly sales of 35,000 Lempiras (\$1,837) and are able to sell their products directly to consumers. They also visited other local markets to expand their network of buyers.
- Quality and packing specifications were established with COAPIGOR, an exporter of allspice; and for vegetable products that will be exported to the La Tiendona market in El Salvador.
- A contract was signed between an exporter and a packing plant in La Esperanza for the export of snow and sweet peas. This contract gives 200 client households access to a formal market.



Field day on production of snow peas, Intibucá.



Calendarized production of lettuce, Intibucá.



Green bean production, Santa Bárbara.

Baseline profile of USAID-ACCESO families to date

- 7,882 of the 11,408 household clients (69%) are in extreme poverty and 786 household clients (7%) are poor.
- 6,823 of the 53,428 beneficiaries (13%) are children under 5 years in age; 14,717 (28%) are children between 6 and 14 years old; 26,260 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 (27,906) and 48 percent are women (25,522).

BUSINESS AND FINANCE SKILLS

- Business and finance skills specialists held 137 events to train 1,118 participants. Seventy-three trainings with 379 participants focused on implementation and use of logbooks to help businesses keep track of their incomes and expenses, improving management and reducing costs. A total of 25 trainings with 352 participants were held on finance and access to credit, allowing clients to purchase necessary inputs.
- *Vaca Lechera* was launched to provide financing for clients between 16 and 29 years old who are also receiving technical assistance. There are currently 82 entrepreneurs interested in participating in this project, which aims to increase milk productivity and value. The funds for this project are part of the agreement signed between the Ministry of Labor and USAID-ACCESO, with the participation of the United Nations Development Program, municipal mayor's offices, and savings and loan cooperatives.
- Sixteen clients have received loans from the AgroFacil program, with an additional 29 clients in the approval process from three communities in Santa Bárbara. The initial loan is for 10,000 Lempira (\$525), which can increase when partial payments are made.
- Technical assistance is being provided to 23 financial service providers and 138 rural loan and savings associations.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

- Trained 2,031 participants at 152 events. The trainings included 45 trainings on breastfeeding and healthy foods for children under two; 17 on diet diversity; 16 on healthy household practices such as sealing dirt floors; and 11 on family planning.
- 601 technical assistance visits took place and to date 319 mothers' groups from the AIN-C strategy are receiving assistance. An initial group of 120 communities with malnutrition problems have been identified as beneficiaries for family plots. Production and health technicians will help establish these family plots with nutritious crops to help diversify diets and make sure households are consuming healthy foods.

VALUE ADDITION AND MICROENTERPRISE

- 745 participants were trained at 67 events. The workshops covered fruit and vegetable processing, pickled vegetables, canning, processing peas, and baked goods. Participants also learned good manufacturing practices, and how to establish hygiene and safety norms and fulfill legal requirements for processing plants.
- Processing and value addition specialists provided technical assistance to 117 micro-, 75 small-, and 12 medium-sized businesses. Emphasis is being placed on linking client households with buyers and generating employment.
- Client households are receiving training on food conservation for family consumption.

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.



Training on food preparation for families, Santa Bárbara.



Baking training for a group of women, Lempira.

Trainings - February 2012

Area	Participants	Events
Renewable Energy	38	8
Business Skills / Finance	1,118	137
Natural Resource Management	282	21
Postharvest and Certifications	49	6
Processing and Added Value	808	73
Production	7,163	882
ACCESO Project	200	19
Market Information	10	1
Nutrition and Health	2,031	152
Other topics	11	2
TOTAL	11,710	1,301

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- 282 participants were trained at 21 events focused on water administration for human consumption, including protection of stored water, chlorination, and distribution network.
- The project is assisting 149 water boards. Eighty-eight participants from water committees were trained on administration and chlorination of municipal water networks. In addition, eight workshops took place with 68 participants on water monitoring for human consumption.
- These trainings and technical assistance visits have helped rehabilitate chlorination systems in the department of Copán, benefitting 293 families that now have access to drinking water.
- Twelve women were trained on waste management.

NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION

- Project specialists participated in evacuation training in Marcos de Ocotepeque.
- Technical assistance was provided in Lempira in the management of natural disasters and the activation of Municipal Emergency Committees (CODEM). Project specialists and members of CODEM from Yarula, La Paz visited areas that have been identified as vulnerable in the communities of Tierra Colorada, El Cipres, and Zacate Blanco.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Thirty-eight participants were trained at eight events on the construction and installation of low-cost biodigestors. The participants also received training on maintenance and operation.
- Sixty-three technical assistance visits took place to improve the functionality of solar panels and increase the power generated by turbines, and to increase the capacity of solar dryers.



Tortilla business, Ocotepeque.



Low-cost chicken coops, Copán.



Training on the use of solar dryers for coffee, Santa Bárbara.



USAID-ACCESO participates at a workshop about the annual plan for a municipal water board, Santa Elena, La Paz.

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

SAFE WATER IN COMMUNITIES HAS A SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF USAID-ACCESO FAMILIES

Management of natural resources contributes significantly to financial development and sustainable improvements in health and living conditions. With this in mind, USAID-ACCESO develops activities that focus on adequate and permanent management of natural resources.

In order to ensure sustainability, USAID-ACCESO works in collaboration with community organizations, producer groups, and municipalities to create technical and administrative systems and the necessary bylaws that will guarantee functionality and surveillance of activities.

One of the most important activities under this component is improving water systems, from the source to the faucet. Improvements should be based on the quantity and quality of water and the most efficient way to manage water use in poor, rural communities.

Project achievements to date include:

- Mitigation activities, such as filter cleaning, to avoid contamination of micro basins in Santa Catarina and San Marcos de la Sierra, Intibucá; Catulaca, Lempira; and Cabañas, Tierra Colorada, and Yarula, La Paz. These activities benefit more than 1,200 families.
- Technical assistance in construction and rehabilitation of hypochlorators in Santa Rita, Copán and Copante and Tomalá, Lempira. Improvements and repairs made to hypochlorators in several other communities, benefitting a total of 3,200 families in the assisted areas. There are currently five systems under construction in the departments of Ocotepeque and Copán.
- Assessment of water distribution networks conducted in several communities. Technical solutions were provided to make the necessary repairs.
- Comprehensive evaluations and diagnosis of water systems in 16 communities. Developed an action plan for 2012-2014 in collaboration with the municipal water committee, the municipality, FAO, ACRA, and ADEC in Santa Elena, La Paz.
- Developed or assessed municipal bylaws linked to water-related topics to guarantee that communities in Lempira, Santa Bárbara, and Intibucá have safe water. The municipal bylaw on water quality in Jesús de Otoro, Intibucá was revised and approved.
- Conducted trainings on how to calculate water charges with more than 20 water boards, guaranteeing sustainable maintenance of public water systems.

Next Steps

Most of the activities to date have focused on analyzing the current situation of water systems in the project-supported communities and on improving equipment and systems to ensure good water quality and effective delivery. The process moving forward will be focused on:

1. Training water committees on system maintenance, cost analysis, and management.
2. Developing and approving municipal bylaws to ensure water boards carry out their obligations.
3. Improving the distribution network (from tank to household).
4. Providing safe water for homes.
5. Managing residual waste water.

Natural resources specialists and the USAID-ACCESO technical team provide technical training and assistance in the following areas:

- Assessing community drinking water systems and improving water quality and availability.
- Managing solid and residual waste and domestic waste water.
- Developing natural resource management plans.
- Assisting with reforestation of water sources.
- Reducing migratory agriculture.
- Introducing efficient stoves to reduce lumber use.
- Assisting programs that reinforce local ordinances.
- Assisting water boards improve their management systems.
- Introducing environmentally friendly techniques such as low-cost greenhouses, contour plowing, and composting.



Maintenance of water intakes in San Marcos de la Sierra, Intibucá.



Training on chlorination of water systems in Tomalá, Lempira.