



MONTHLY UPDATE – MARCH 2012

BACKGROUND

This is the twelfth 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

Two memorandums of understanding were signed with agricultural input providers Bayer and Seagro, providing clients access to improved technology and supplies. The project also signed a contract with the Christian Development Organization of Honduras (OCDIH), which works exclusively in Copán and Lempira, further expanding project reach.

DRIP IRRIGATION TRAINING

Project staff held a drip irrigation training La Zona, Copán for area technicians, including staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Organization for Development of Corquín, World Vision, and university students. Participants received training in fertilizer filtration and application; pressure measurement and dropper unloading; system cleaning and maintenance; and leak repair.

PROJECT VISITS

Representatives from USAID/Washington, El Salvador, and Honduras visited project clients in La Paz, gaining firsthand exposure to the project's integrated approach and its impact on the lives of rural Honduran families.



A group of producers in Santa Bárbara with calendarized production of cucumber destined for local supermarkets.



Broccoli producer utilizes good agricultural practices, Intibucá.

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

Department	Client Households	Beneficiaries	Other Clients *
Copán	2,190	7,311	194
Intibucá	2,207	12,181	186
La Paz	1,780	8,627	378
Lempira	3,190	16,202	325
Ocotepeque	1,999	8,156	197
Santa Bárbara	2,040	7,812	303
Others	24	97	96
TOTAL	13,430	60,386	1,679

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

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PRODUCTION

- An additional 41 hectares were planted with 35 different crops in March, for a cumulative total of 8,259 hectares of production area under the technical assistance program. The new crops planted include snow pea (2.7 ha), sweet pea (2.6 ha), eggplant (0.7 ha), and basil (0.4 ha), all of which are slated for export to the US. Crops planted for local markets included plantain, potato, carrot, cabbage, cucumber, and broccoli. To date, 4,812 hectares have been planted in coffee, 2,511 hectares in basic grains, and 936 hectares in horticulture crops.
- The project carried out 880 workshops on agricultural production with 7,119 participants. The trainings focused on good agricultural practices such as calendarized planting, soil preparation, raised beds, seed selection, seedling production, transplanting, plant spacing, and integrated pest management. Participants in coffee-related events received training in soil sampling, soil preparation and liming, nutrition programs, stumping and pruning.
- 241 participants were trained in 26 events on animal production, including training in beehive management for improved honey and pollen production, forage improvement, and animal feeding practices.
- Field technicians conducted 25 visits to help snow pea and eggplant producers prepare for export; to assist tomato producers install drip irrigation systems; and to introduce calendarized planting to cucumber and carrot producers.
- Technicians visited plots to demonstrate seed collection and washing, and held workshops on drip irrigation in commercial plots to demonstrate water pressure measurement, dripper discharge, and tape and pipe repair.
- Eighteen postharvest training events were held for 139 participants on pea export specifications, potato cleaning, grain drying, and storage using a warehouse receipt system. Twenty-four participants were trained in farm certification and systems procedures.

ACCESS TO MARKETS

- Marketing and logistics specialists trained 48 participants on export requirements, market opportunities for garlic, and the importance of calendarized planting. 67 technical assistance visits were made to buyers and producers on quality specifications, buying procedures, and calendarized planting programs.
- Project clients sold their produce at two events: a fair in La Ceiba in honor of the Prime Minister of the Cayman Islands, and an annual assembly hosted by Fundación Hondureña de Investigación Agrícola (FHIA). Participating in such fairs is important for small producers. Not only do they have the opportunity to promote their products and services and make important business contacts, but they also have the opportunity to learn about competitors, customer preferences, and potential new markets.



Eggplant plantlets transplanted to field, Copán.



Integrated pest and disease identification, Santa Bárbara.



Women learn how to make value-added baked goods, Santa Bárbara.

Profile of USAID-ACCESO families to date

- 8,961 of the 13,430 household clients (67%) are in extreme poverty and 875 household clients (7%) are poor.
- 7,780 of the 60,386 beneficiaries (13%) are children under 5 years in age; 16,666 (28%) are children between 6 and 14 years old; 29,582 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 (31,485) and 48 percent are women (28,901).

BUSINESS AND FINANCE SKILLS

- Business and finance specialists trained 1,324 participants in 230 events on topics such as legal procedures for small businesses, financing requirements and the use of logs for farm records to increase productivity.
- Thirteen clients were trained in plan preparation to access financing from COMRURAL.
- 111 clients participated in seven training events on rural savings bank management.
- 268 technical assistance visits were made to service providers, micro, small, and medium businesses, and rural savings banks.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

- Trained 2,013 participants (1,725 women) in 132 training events. Trainings focused on proper feeding for children under 5 years old, management of household garden plots, diarrhea prevention in young children, and practices such as incorporating iron- and vitamin-rich foods such as bean soups and fortified green tortillas to ensure diet diversity and help prevent anemia in mothers and children.
- Trainings to improve household hygiene focused on cleanliness, waste management, hand washing, and other basic hygiene practices. Project staff made 452 technical assistance visits this month to promote improved nutrition and health behaviors.
- A total of 85 participants received training on the benefits and installation of ecofriendly stoves.

VALUE ADDITION AND MICROENTERPRISE

- 501 participants were trained in 43 events focused on new product development (garlic paste, baked goods, and canned vegetables) and food safety. 82 participants also received training on the development of added value production for potato and snow pea.
- 527 technical assistance visits focused on financial management, recordkeeping, and cost/price analysis.
- Technicians carried out training on forestry products, including techniques for extracting pine resin and producing wood chips, marketing and sales.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- 123 participants were trained on community level environmental management; coffee processing waste management; household waste management; and procedures to legalize groundwater sources. Participants included municipal technicians, water board managers, and client households. Currently, the project is providing technical assistance to 154 water boards in six departments.



Women make plantain chips for sale to local markets, Ocoatepeque.



Fortified tortillas provide important vitamins for the whole family



USAID-ACCESO's technicians introduce a quick test to determine water safety.

Trainings - March 2012

Area	Participants	Events
Renewable Energy	67	6
Business Skills / Finance	1,324	230
Disaster Mitigation	363	19
Postharvest and Certifications	139	18
Processing and Added Value	501	43
Production	7,119	880
ACCESO project	70	6
Market Information	48	3
Nutrition and Health	2,013	132
TOTAL	11,644	1,333



NATURAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION

- Project specialists are helping local emergency committees plan for and practice disaster prevention and response techniques. The project trained 240 participants in eight workshops on how to develop emergency evacuation plans. In one community USAID-ACCESO specialists held a landslide preparedness drill.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

- Trained 67 participants in 6 events on the use of photovoltaic systems to meet domestic energy needs; the installation and use of eco-stoves; and the installation, operation, and management of biodigesters.

A CLOSER LOOK: Biodigesters

Biodigesters ferment manure and other organic matter to produce methane gas, which can be used as cooking fuel. A byproduct of this process is organic fertilizer which can also be used in household gardens and fields. The use of biodigesters will mitigate dependence on increasingly scarce forest resources by reducing the amount of firewood needed for cooking. Biodigesters will also reduce the incidence of respiratory health risks by replacing traditional firewood stoves that emit toxic smoke in the kitchen.

The biodigester promoted by USAID-ACCESO has the potential to produce up to one cubic meter of gas daily which can power a stove for six hours, or enough time to prepare at least three meals. Families are also using the gas to power biogas lamps, allowing them to engage in productive activities after sunset without affecting the stove's functionality.

To date, USAID-ACCESO has installed biodigester systems and provided user training to 15 households in four departments. These biodigesters now serve as the primary source of energy for their homes.

Throughout the life of the project USAID-ACCESO will install a minimum of 890 renewable energy systems to improve clients' living conditions. Thirty-one solar panels, 15 solar dryers, and 40 eco-stoves have also been installed to date.



A family benefits by the advantages of the biodigestor, Copán



A biodigester in use at household level, Copán.



Group of women processing pickled products, Santa Bárbara.

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
Ocatepeque	Eddy Flores	9949-6747
Copán	Hugo Ávila	9923-6826
Santa Bárbara	Leopoldo Aguilar	9997-0130