



Monthly Update – May 2012

BACKGROUND

This is the fourteenth 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 client households in the departments of Copán, Intibucá, La Paz, Lempira, Ocotepeque, and Santa Bárbara. The project is working to lift these rural households out of poverty, extreme poverty and malnutrition conditions through economic development and increased incomes.

AGREEMENTS AND ALLIANCES

Letters of understanding were signed with the Ministry of Health in Copán, Lempira, and Ocotepeque to strengthen the project's nutrition and health component, with specific emphasis on maternal/child health and household conditions.

“OPERATION CLEAN UP”

With the goal of promoting project key messages, strengthening ties with communities, and promoting basic hygiene practices, the health and nutrition component began a new initiative with schools called “Operativo Limpieza” (Operation Clean Up).

Operation Clean Up is a weekly activity where students, teachers, volunteers, and project staff spend a couple of hours picking up trash in their community. Even the youngest students are empowered to care for their environment and serve as examples for other members of the community. USAID-ACCESO is organizing and implementing these cleanup activities in all six departments where it works.

PROJECT VISITS

Representatives from USAID/Honduras visited project clients in Santa Bárbara, Ocotepeque, and Intibucá who are receiving technical assistance in crop diversification and calendarized planting, as well as access to markets and export opportunities.



Snow pea producer, Intibucá.



“Operativo Limpieza (Operation clean up)”, Santa Bárbara.

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

Department	Client Households	Beneficiaries	Other Clients *
Copán	2,246	7,613	223
Intibucá	2,547	13,664	252
La Paz	2,087	9,651	454
Lempira	3,358	17,531	357
Ocotepeque	2,369	9,066	260
Santa Bárbara	2,075	8,061	416
Others	23	97	97
TOTALS	14,705	65,683	2,059

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

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PRODUCTION

- An additional 352 hectares with 42 different crops were planted during May for a cumulative total of 9,679 hectares of production area under the technical assistance program. The main crops were corn, 129 hectares; high altitude corn, 126; bean, 23; watermelon, 11, rice, 9; and pickling cucumber, 8 hectares. Other minor crops planted during the month included carrot, cabbage, beetroot, potato, sweet potato and passion fruit. To date, 5,666 hectares have been planted in coffee, 2,938 hectares in basic grains, and 1,075 hectares in horticulture crops.
- The project trained 8,947 participants in 997 production events covering basic production and cultural practices for horticulture crops, soil preparation and contoured beds and transplanting of various crops.
- 506 participants were trained in 67 events on basic production practices for coffee, including exchange visits with other growers to observe tissue management practices and soil liming. Other important workshops included the use and management of basic practices for high density corn planting and procedures for mixing and safe use of pesticides.
- 10,279 technical assistance visits were given in horticultural production and 148 visits in livestock production. In the technical assistance for animal production participants were shown how to revise and move beehives and how to construct drinking and feeding containers for chickens.
- 68 participants were trained in 10 postharvest events on harvesting, grading and packing snow peas for sales on the local and export markets, and preparing sample shipments of fresh organic basil for export to the USA.

ACCESS TO MARKETS

- Several field visits were made with potential buyers to show the technified production systems being used by project growers with calendarized vegetable plantings. The first cucumber and watermelon shipments from project growers in Santa Bárbara were shipped to El Salvador. Marketing and logistic specialists trained 61 producers in 2 mayor events on market opportunities, requirements and new crop potential.
- Project specialists also provided assistance to eggplant producers and an exporter to diversify the export product lines.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- 28 NRM and disaster mitigation training events were carried out with 644 participants. Videos and dynamics that encouraged producers' participation with personal and previous experiences enabled real risk and accident scenarios to be developed at the community level.
- In selected communities, project clients were provided support to develop their community potable water management plans, while others received training in the use and management of household water filters.



Pest sampling in cucumber plants, Lempira.



Passion fruit quality revision, Intibucá.



Visit with FHIS representatives, community water boards and USAID-ACCESO to assess water sources, Lempira.

Profile of USAID-ACCESO families to date

- 9,831 of the 14,705 household clients (67%) are in extreme poverty and 953 household clients (6%) are poor.
- 8,456 of the 65,683 beneficiaries (13%) are children under 5 years in age; 18,046 (27%) are children between 6 and 14 years old; 32,288 are between 15 and 49 years in age (49%); 10 percent are adults over the age of 50.
- 52 percent of the beneficiaries are men (34,240) and 48 percent are women (31,443).

BUSINESS AND FINANCE SKILLS

- Business and finance skills specialists held 89 workshops in which 612 participants learned about improved business practices through the use of basic tools, including as production logbooks, inventory records and daily sales controls.
- 77 participants were trained on accessing finance, managing loans and compliance with micro-credit loan application requirements.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

- The Health and Nutrition component carried out 118 training events with 1,722 participants, including teaching parents to prepare meals rich in iron and vitamins to improve their children's health and development.
- Though activities and the use of visual aids, 75 participants were trained in the importance of food diversity and the use of the feeding guide to illustrate and define feeding schedules and appropriate quantities for their children, with emphasis on children under 2 years of age.
- 694 technical assistance visits were held in order to communicate key nutrition messages, the benefits of using an ecofriendly stove and the potential improvements in the households. Training was also provided to health volunteers as an integral part of the activities.
- 6 events with 125 participants were held to promote exclusive breastfeeding with infants from 0-6 months, together with the correct introduction of food to children 7-12 months old, with the use of leafy greens in fortified tortillas and yellow colored fruits.

VALUE ADDITION AND MICROENTERPRISE

- Processing specialists trained 385 participants in 54 events including confection workshops held to produce tablecloths, baskets and local crafts.
- Numerous events for the development and commercialization of new products were carried out, introducing food products to local markets such as plantain chips, soft cheese and pizza.
- In forestry, technical assistance was provided to demonstrate the use of sub-products from sawmills and other wood categories to build furniture for sales on the local markets.



Basil harvest, Lempira.



Plantain chip production and packing for retail sale, Copán



Eco-friendly stove installation, Santa Bárbara.

Trainings: May 2012

Area	Participants	Events
Renewable Energy	4	1
Business and Finance Skills	612	89
Natural Resource Management and Disaster Prevention	644	28
Postharvest and Certifications	68	10
Processing and Value Added	385	54
Production	8,947	997
ACCESO Project	50	6
Market Information	61	2
Nutrition and Health	1,722	118
TOTAL	12,493	1,305

IMPROVING NUTRITION THROUGH FORTIFIED TORTILLAS

USAID-ACCESO's nutrition and health strategy is designed to improve the access and use of food, prioritizing children under 2 years of age and pregnant women in order to achieve a balanced daily diet that supplies the calorie, protein and vitamin requirements.

Income generation is the base to assure access to food, while training and technical assistance in nutrition and health practices ensures the correct use of the food and the prevention of illnesses. In this process, project technicians and health volunteers use a range of tools to reduce nutritional problems in prioritized communities, establishing access and trust through continuous home visits and trainings.

THE FORTIFIED TORTILLA: A CORN-BASED TORTILLA FORTIFIED WITH LEAFY GREENS OR CARROTS, RICH IN IRON AND VITAMIN A.

The tortilla represents one of the most popular basic foods found in the daily diet of rural homes. It is rich in carbohydrates, easy to prepare and it is accepted by all the members of the family. When fortified it is a great source of iron and vitamin A. This simple process uses the iron found in selected green leaves and vitamin A found in orange-yellow fruits and vegetables. Once these components are mixed with the tortilla base, they provide minerals and vitamins to complement the balanced diet necessary for adequate child growth.

The green leaves used to fortify tortillas can be easily found in areas and gardens in local communities. Most of them grow as weeds and are now being planted in household family plots as part of the project's nutrition and production components.

Empowering families in workshops and food preparation trainings, the fortified tortilla has had a positive acceptance in children under 2 years of age, as well as with the mothers, due to its easy preparation and ingredient availability in their communities.



Tortillas fortified with leafy greens and carrots.



Children eating fortified tortillas, Intibucá.



Little boy benefited from the food preparation training, Intibucá.

Nutritional content of a tortilla	Total input per day (three meals)
77 calories	231 calories
2 g protein	6 g protein
16 g of carbohydrate	48 g of carbohydrate
60 mg of Calcium	180 mg Calcium
0.5 mg of Iron	1.5 mg of Iron
47 mcg of vitamin "A"	141 mcg of vitamin "A"
8 mg of vitamin "C"	24 mg of vitamin "C"

FORTIFIED TORTILLA PREPARATION

1. Select green leaves that are pest and disease free and clean them carefully.
2. Wash them one by one with clean water.
3. Dip them in water with chlorine for 10 minutes.
4. Grind the leaves with a rock grinder (used with the corn).
5. Put the corn mix in an adequate container. Make a hole and place the ground leaves with the juice inside of it.
6. Mold it with semi wet hands until achieving a tortilla consistency.
7. Heat the tortilla pan and prepare them of the size you desire