USAID | HAITI
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET

March 2017

KENDRA HELMER

BACKGROUND

Environmental degradation is a critical concern in Haiti and poses a serious threat to the lives of Haitian citizens. Widespread deforestation, particularly of this mountainous country, has led to flooding, dramatic rates of soil erosion, and subsequent declines in agricultural productivity. Haiti's valuable coastal and marine resources have been degraded by sediment deposit and overfishing, resulting in considerable loss in biodiversity. In Haiti's urban areas, waste management is a major challenge, especially in Port-au-Prince, the largest city in the world without a sewer system. Solid waste clogs urban waterways and leads to the spread of waterborne diseases. Landfills are few and do not meet the needs of most municipalities. Medical waste is frequently left untreated, and with incinerators in disrepair is often dumped into open pits to burn or float away during flash floods.

Haiti's depleted tree cover exacerbates the consequences of storms and hurricanes. Recurring droughts followed by heavy downpours cause frequent flash flooding. In 2016, Haitians finally saw the end of the extreme El Niño drought, the worst in 35 years, which hit the country after two previous years of drought. However, the country was then struck by Hurricane Matthew which devastated parts of Haiti that had been spared the worst of these droughts. The dearth of reliable rainfall in Haiti is not only detrimental to farmers whose crops wilt and die , but also to ordinary Haitians who depend on water catchment systems for their daily water needs.

KEY CHALLENGES

Deforestation: the production of wood-based fuels (firewood, charcoal, and fat-wood) is a primary driver of deforestation, as over 70 percent of Haiti's annual energy consumption is supplied by approximately 4,000 kilotons of wood harvested annually both domestically and in the Dominican Republic. Although charcoal use is high in Port-au-Prince, the primary source of energy for most Haitians is firewood, which is also a threat to air quality.

Lack of Available Weather Data: A scarcity of consistent and reliable science-based data on rainfall patterns and other climate related issues in Haiti hinders the ability of farms and businesses to adapt to changing weather patterns; they cannot make informed choices about when to invest, when to plant or harvest, or have any certainty as to when it is time to switch to alternate crops.

Limits to Government Capacity: The Ministry of Environment in Haiti is a relatively new institution, and it along with local, regional and other national institutions has only a limited capacity to enforce environmental laws and regulations. Poorly defined or enforceable land-use strategies, complicated land-tenure issues, and poor water management systems leave Haitians at risk.

USAID STRATEGY & ACTIVITIES

The strategy of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assistance is to help Haiti protect its fragile environment and conserve its precious resources. This approach is incorporated throughout its development portfolio. Focused on sustainable change, USAID helps improve environmentally friendly business and income-generating prospects for Haitians across various sectors and skill levels. To help build a more sustainable Haitian economy, USAID is focused on growing industries that profit from sound management of natural resources and safeguarding the environment while also improving public sector officials' abilities to respond to this environmental degradation.

Utilizing Technologies in Agriculture: USAID is promoting technologies that increase Haiti's capacity to adapt to /erratic rainfall, droughts and floods. For example, USAID has introduced the use of greenhouses equipped with drip irrigation and solar panels. This technology allows farmers to focus on high-value horticultural crops while freeing up space for agro-forestry and other reforestation initiatives targeting ecologically vulnerable hillsides.

Promoting market-based solutions to environmental challenges: USAID supports small businesses that decrease the drivers of deforestation by producing charcoal from waste biomass from crops rather than trees and that foster recycling efforts and clear city streets of waste.

Finally, USAID is developing a new reforestation program as well as conservation and environmental rehabilitation activities while also building the capacity of the Government of Haiti and Haitian civil society to foster these same efforts.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Renewable "Green" Charcoal: In partnership with Carbon Roots International, the Green Char Campaign program produces renewable ("green") charcoal briquettes from agricultural waste biomass. Green Char's goal is to produce a viable, cost-effective alternative to fuel that reduces deforestation and carbon emissions while improving rural incomes and health outcomes. Initially, "**green charcoal**" production averaged 500 kg per day but in 2016, production rose to 1-2 metric tons per day. Briquettes cost the equivalent of wood charcoal.

Reforestation through agroforestry: The U.S. Feed the Future program in Haiti includes a focus on agroforestry, an approach that works to increase or maintain existing tree cover of mango and cacao, as well as shade trees grown as part of the cacao production system. Improved varieties (e.g. cacao "super-trees") and production techniques resulted in significant yield and quality increases, which makes farming more profitable and farmers likelier to plant more tree crops. As a result, exports of cacao by beneficiary farmers quadrupled between 2013 and 2016.

Critical irrigation system for flood control and farming: The Rivière Grise barrage continues to provide regular irrigation water for up to 10,000 farmers in the Cul-de-Sac Plain. Although damaged by Hurricane Matthew, it was credited by communities downstream with saving homes and lives during the October 2016 disaster and was repaired by December 2016.

Conservation of marine-coastal biodiversity: Through trainings of fishing communities and building capacity for conservation management, USAID supports the Government of Haiti's commitment to protect their marine and costal environment. Three Bays National Park, Haiti's first marine protected area created in 2014, encompasses about 80,000 hectares, containing mangroves and coral reefs.