

B.6 Haiti - 2008 - Flooding

Case study:

Distribution, cash and training

Full case study

Disaster:

Hurricanes and tropical storms

Disaster date:

1st September 2009.

Number of people displaced:

165,337 families; half of the population of Gonaives were displaced.

Project target population:

Initially 60,000 people in collective centres. Later programmes targeted smaller numbers of those who had not returned
1000 family cash distribution
1222 families in timber framed shelters (735 half kits, 487 full kits) and cash to cover transport

Shelter size:

Cash was provided to support families to rent a room for six months.
Transitional shelter kits provided materials for an 18m² shelter

Occupancy rate

Unknown



Project timeline



Summary

These shelter projects were in the complex urban environment of Gonaives, Haiti. Multiple approaches were used to support families living in collective centres and temporary sites to return. Initially programmes focussed on distributions of shelter items and toolkits. Later programmes diversified to include cash to support families that were renting, and shelter materials and support for those who had identified land.

Strengths and weaknesses

- ✓ Programmes were able to adapt over the course of the emergency, taking into account changing conditions and learning from previous programme successes and challenges
- ✓ The programme ensured that families living in collective centres had options for return.
- ✓ Use of different sized transitional shelter kits allowed for support to be scaled according to needs
- ✓ Cash for those who rented shelters allowed families without land to be supported by the programme.
- ✗ By supporting families in collective centres and camps early on in the response, people were encouraged to remain displaced.
- ✗ Shelter tool kits were found to be of limited use for families who previously rented houses or whose houses remained buried.
- ✗ When distributions of return kits were made, it was

not clear that those who received them would not qualify for future support in displacement locations. As a result, many families took the return kits but did not return.

- Despite prolonged negotiations, it was not possible to identify safe land on which to relocate those families whose houses remained at risk from future flooding.
- The funding was extremely limited for the response. This limited options and reduced the capacity of international organisations to provide support
- As the result of challenges in beneficiary identification, the project was not able to support host families to provide much of the shelter. However there were separate food distributions, cash for work, clean up programmes and water and sanitation programmes in the host communities within Gonaives.



Damage in Gonaïves
Photo: Joseph Ashmore

Before the flooding

In 2004, the city of Gonaïves was hit by tropical storm Jeanne. The ensuing flooding killed over 2000 people.

By 2008, the city of Gonaïves, had an estimated population of 300,000 people

After the flooding

In 2008, hurricanes and tropical storms Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike led to severe flooding. Eight percent of the Haitian population, were affected, 793 people were killed and crops were destroyed.

The town of Gonaïves was most severely affected. 80 percent of the city was submerged under two metres of water. Although the death toll was lower, the damage was greater than in the floods of 2004. The receding flood waters left more than three million tons of mud.

Over half of the population of Gonaïves was displaced, finding refuge with friends and family or in over 200 collective shelters in schools, churches and warehouses.

Major clean-up operations ran for many months. Many families were not able to return to their houses until the mud was cleared.

The response was significantly underfunded; the United Nations appeal reached only 40% of its target.

First return kits

In the first months after the flooding, relief items were distributed, with a focus on families living in collective centres.

The government kit consisted of one foam mattress, one sleeping bag, one blanket, one hygiene kit, and one jerry can.

The organisations involved agreed to distribute return kits which were intended to support

families to repair their houses. These kits contained one reinforced tarpaulin, five corrugated iron sheets, and a tool kit (one saw, a hammer, a shovel, a trowel, 1kg of nails and two polypropylene sleeping mats).

Unfortunately, a significant number of families who received return kits remained in the collective centres. The kits proved to be of limited success because:

- Many families did not own a house that they could repair
- The kits were distributed unconditionally so that families were able to receive them and remain in collective centres awaiting further relief distributions
- The kits were suited to timber frame construction. In the city many of the shelters were built with blocks or masonry.

Collective centres

The need to restart schools and further pressure by the owners of the buildings that were being used as temporary accommodation led to pressures to evict the affected families, but many had no other options. The closure of the first collective centre led to the establishment of temporary sites with tents for shelter.

The implementing organisation supported the families on these tented sites by improving the site layout, and improving the drainage.

Finding a solution for those living with host families was a lower operational priority due to reduced risk of evictions, as well as significant challenges in identifying families.

As the programmes took place in an urban environment, identifying who actually lived where was challenging. Many families left a single family member in displacement sites to receive additional dis-

tributions. In some cases families had members in several sites.

Registration

Two months after the disaster, a survey was conducted to gain a better understanding of what was preventing families from returning home. All of the major organisations operating in Gonaïves took part in these surveys, and registered the families. Teams surveyed families in the collective centres between 3am and 4am to ensure that those surveyed were in fact resident in the shelters.

Once families were registered, additional families would not be added to lists and would not be able to receive support.

Exact address and mobile phone numbers of those in collective centres were collected and houses were visited one by one to assess damage. Houses were assessed as being either destroyed or damaged.

When it was not possible to verify property titles through paperwork, ownership of houses was verified by discussions with those in the neighbourhood

The transparency of the process was a key part of it being accepted by the displaced families.

Implementation

After the registration, just over 2000 families were found to be remaining in the collective centres and sites. For these families two approaches were adopted. Depending



Hotel used as a collective centre
Photo: Joseph Ashmore

upon their circumstances, families would either:

- receive cash for rental or
- support with transitional shelter materials and construction.

Cash distribution

Approximately 1000 families remaining in collective centres received cash, up to an agreed value. This value was equivalent to a one year rental of a room for a family. To qualify for this, families living in collective centres either:

- were tenants prior to the disaster, and hence did not want to repair a houses belonging to someone else, or
- were owners whose home was still flooded or covered in mud or they lived less than 10m from a main city canal.

The distribution was conducted in partnership with another international organisation who distributed to approximately half of the families, using identical distribution and verification systems. The process for cash distribution was:

- Once assessed, families had a maximum of four days to rent a room for one year. People did not have any problems in finding somewhere to rent.
- The families would bring a signed a pre-agreement with landlord stating the rental rate. From this the maximum amount that the organisation would pay was agreed. The organisation would only pay rent up to an agreed maximum.
- The organisation would visit the house and verify with the landlord.
- The organisation would give agreed lists to the banks for the rental allowance to be paid direct to beneficiary.

Transitional shelters

Two types of repair or reconstruction kits were developed. These included materials to build an entire timber framed shelter (full reconstruction kit) or a reduced set of materials to repair damaged shelters (half repair kit). These kits were combined with technical assistance, and some cash for transport.

1,222 families (54% of the targeted families) living in non-school temporary shelters and tent sites received repair kits. Of these, 735 families received the smaller (half repair) kits and 487 received full reconstruction kits.

All kits were purchased by the implementing organisation and distributed with the assistance of partner organisations in three different sites in the city. Some of the materials were distributed through vouchers that the families could redeem for agreed shops within an allotted timeframe.

Given the various constraints, including budget deadlines and limitations it was decided that materials would be distributed in a one-off distribution rather than with a phased approach. This led to several families not building or completing shelters with the materials.

There were several cases where vouchers and distribution cards were faked. The organisation noted that harder-to-copy vouchers would be required for future programmes. The short time periods in which they could be redeemed helped to reduce the risk of forgeries.

The distributions were conducted in conjunction with one partner organisation provided technical support. There was additionally follow up and monitoring of families who had moved.

Closure

The programmes had proven very labour intensive, with multiple processes depending upon on previous processes. This did lead to delays but proved largely effective in offering families options away from collective centres.

Following the cash and materials distributions as well as public information, the numbers of people remaining in camps and collective centres was very small. Targeting the final families was then very easy.

As a result of the cash programme, rents did rise, but not excessively.

With the closure of collective

centres, the organisation began a programme to rehabilitate them. This was followed by a nationwide assessment of building that could be used as collective centres in case of other disasters. Of these 40 were targeted for use as hurricane shelters. These buildings were repaired and upgraded to improve preparedness for future disasters.

Materials list

A full repair kit given to each family, allowed for construction of a floor slab, a frame and a roof of approx 18m². It was not enough for rendering the walls,

Material	Quantity
Wood (roof) (1" x 3" x 16')	10
Wood (frame) (2" x 4" x 12')	4
Wood (roof) (1" x 4" x 12')	6
Nails (3" 75mm x 3mm)	0.5kg
Nails (roofing) (3" 75mm x 3mm)	0.5kg
Cement	4 bags
Corrugated iron (1.8x0.9m)	16
Flat sheet for roof ridge	1

Families were responsible for masonry and sand. If rocks were not available they need 240 construction blocks (30x20x15 cm).

Tool kit to be shared between 5 families:

Material	Quantity
Spades	2
Wood saw (750mm)	2
Claw hammer	1
Bucket	2
Roll of wire	3
Tape measure	1
Trowel	2
Pick axe	2
Pliers	1
Sack	1



Prototype transitional shelter
Photo: Joseph Ashmore