



COMMUNITY-BASED AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI

CASE STUDY



The issue

Haiti is a country with a precarious economic context, with political instability and extreme vulnerability to natural hazards. Through the Special Development Fund (SDF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) supports the **Government of Haiti's (GoH)** development since its incorporation as a member in 2007. In its eighth and ninth cycles (SDF 8 and 9), SDF resources were targeted toward four strategic sectors: basic and vocational education, agriculture and rural development, public sector capacity building, and environmental reinforcement.

Located approximately 40 miles from the bustling Windward Passage—a key maritime route connecting Asia, the Americas, and Europe—the Northwest Department of Haiti is plagued by chronic food insecurity, particularly in its four lower municipalities. Several factors exacerbate this situation: the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, the Foehn effect, the El Niño phenomenon, community isolation, and weak agricultural outputs—residents' primary income source. Climate change further intensifies these challenges, disrupting rainfall patterns and amplifying prolonged droughts.

The SDF-Backed Project

In March 2016, the CDB approved an \$8 million grant funding initiative for the Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development (CBARD) project under both SDF 8 and SDF 9 cycles. This project, shaped through collaboration with local stakeholders including the BAC of the Northwest, municipal authorities, and the Water User Association (WUA), was designed to enhance agricultural systems by integrating local insights and promoting beneficiary involvement, thus ensuring the project's sustainability.

In response to the development challenges facing the Department of Northwest of Haiti, the Community-Based Agriculture and Rural Development (CBARD) project was approved by CDB in March 2016 with a grant funding of USD 8 Million from SDF 8 and SDF 9. This project, shaped through collaboration with local stakeholders including the BAC of the Northwest, municipal authorities, and the Water User Association (WUA), was designed to enhance agricultural systems by integrating local insights and promoting beneficiary involvement.

CBARD set out to improve access to enhanced and inclusive agricultural production systems in the Northwest Department. The project covered eight areas within two municipalities, focusing on 3,400 families, and encompassed the execution of eight sub-projects of infrastructure and services to improve agricultural productivity.

CBARD was implemented in a complex context marked by unforeseen challenges such as Hurricane Matthew in 2016, violent repression in 2019, the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, and a devastating earthquake later that same year. These events collectively delayed the project's timeline by 24 months.

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I used to grow plantain in this area, which takes nine months. I had no choice but to cut trees to make charcoal to survive in the midtime. Now, I cultivate pepper and okra in addition to plantain. I make good money out my plantation thanks to the disponibility of water.

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Video Report of CBARD project published by Welthungerhilfe on its YouTube channel

The Impacts

Despite these challenges, CBARD achieved significant milestones:

- It rehabilitated and constructed irrigation infrastructure for 405 hectares.
- It built 17.5 kilometers of agricultural roads, nearly meeting the 18-kilometer goal.
- It developed over 800 hectares of land in watershed areas.
- It planted 90,000 fruit and forest trees.
- It trained 3,347 farmers in enhanced agricultural practices.
- It built and strengthened numerous community committees and infrastructure, improving malnutrition management and agricultural productivity.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, it distributed hygiene kits and conducted awareness campaigns.

Thanks to CBARD, farmers diversified their crops, increased yields, and improved their dietary habits. The availability of water resources transformed agricultural methods, allowing for diversification and increased profitability. A local farmer shared, "Previously, I grew plantains which took nine months to harvest. To get by, I resorted to making charcoal. Now, with reliable water, I also grow peppers and okra, significantly boosting my income."

The success of the CBARD sub-projects hinged on a participatory approach that fostered trust and effectively addressed the challenges of beneficiaries. This highlights the necessity for comprehensive feasibility studies before project selection. Effective management and robust support from implementing agencies like Welthungerhilfe (WHH) were crucial, particularly in navigating the turbulent political landscape. The sustained engagement of community leaders is anticipated to help maintain the benefits of these interventions long after the project's completion.

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It is the first NGO coming to this region to sit with us, ask us about our needs and solve them with us and for us... ”

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Lessons learned from the CBARD project

- Participatory approach and the involvement of all municipal stakeholders have positively influenced the success of sub-projects. Beneficiaries reported that it enhanced trust in the project management team and the feeling that the tasks were executed on their behalf, addressing the challenges they had articulated.
- While the participatory approach and the involvement of all municipal stakeholders have positively influenced the success of sub-projects, it remains crucial the need to conduct feasibility studies to select sub-projects.
- Recruiting WHH was a key factor of the project success as stakeholders and technicians from the MARNDR acknowledged that persistent political and institutional crises posed unforeseen challenges, which could have affected the project implementation without the expertise of the WHH office in Haiti.