



Coridon, October 10

SITUATION REPORT: HURRICANE MATTHEW RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT

October 8-12, 2016

NORTHWEST ARTIBONITE, COMMUNES ANSE ROUGE, TERRE NEUVES

Overview

While the heaviest impact of Matthew was felt by the South of Haiti, other departments such as the Northwest Artibonite were hit by 10' high waves, flashfloods, and strong winds which left behind destruction- from the coastal areas to the mountains. A total of 55,000 people have been estimated to be directly impacted in the two northwestern communes of the department where AMURT's activities have focused for the past 12 years. The damage includes destruction of houses particularly in the coastal region, farms and irrigation canals in the inland areas, salt basins, and infrastructure. The lack of seed reserves and the diminished livelihood opportunities as a result of the loss of harvests and salt basin productive capacities combined with the impact of a 3-year drought period preceding this Hurricane have resulted in a humanitarian situation that has raised the vulnerability of this region to critical levels. The needs assessments of the impacted communities reveal the most urgent needs to be NFIs, food and shelter, sanitation, and child protection.

NORTHWEST ARTIBONITE - COMMUNES ANSE ROUGE, TERRE NEUVES

The northwest corner of the Artibonite department is occupied by Communes Anse Rouge and Terre Neuve. The area is socio-economically extremely isolated, dependent on subsistence livelihoods such as traditional low yield salt production, farming, and charcoal production. The migration rates are extremely high as a result of a lack of livelihood or educational opportunities. The lack of even basic infrastructure, the absence of government or NGO presence, and the poor state of roads further exacerbate the region's isolation. Even before the passing of Matthew the two communes had entered a level of high vulnerability as a result of the prolonged drought caused by El Nino, which has depleted the seeds reserves, diminished the water available for irrigation, and increased the deforestation rates. As a result, migration has further increased, malnutrition is widely prevalent, livelihoods have been severely affected and charcoaling rates have rapidly increased.



AMURT-Haiti has been based in the two communes since 2004, when it first responded to the impacts of Hurricane Jean through a food security emergency response, followed by a series of multi-year agricultural, environmental and livelihood initiatives. Its primary focus has been on salt production livelihoods, irrigation and portable water systems, sustainable agriculture, large-scale watershed protection, women's entrepreneurship, and capacity building of local leadership structures. It currently has a logistical and coordination base in Commune Anse Rouge, and a staff of 80 implementing a Cash-for-Assets initiative funded by WFP/USAID benefiting 5,200 vulnerable households.

Immediately before Matthew the two Communes had already faced a looming food insecurity crisis caused by the drought, and after Matthew this insecurity has been pushed into a humanitarian crisis which affects the vast majority of the population. Matthew has destroyed 90% of the coastal salt production basins, which have been the main source of livelihood for Commune Anse Rouge, and which supply more than 75% of Haiti's salt. 80% of farms and irrigation perimeters have been affected, and it is expected that a major food insecurity crisis caused by the combined impacts of Matthew and the drought will push the majority of the population to rely on the only other livelihood available in the region – charcoal production, thus rapidly accelerating the environmental degradation of this already deforested region. Further concerning is the extremely high probability for the return of the cholera epidemic and the noted rise of child malnutrition rates. And a growing concern is that the exclusive focus of all disaster relief efforts on the South of Haiti which experienced the heaviest damages will skip completely the needs of the northwest Artibonite, thus creating all the conditions for a humanitarian crisis of extreme proportions to deepen in the very near future for this very vulnerable corner of Haiti.

Based on AMURT's and DPC preliminary assessments the impact of Matthew on the region can be summarized by the following points:

- The coastal areas are hardest hit in terms of material damage caused by 10' high waves. The damage is most evident in the villages of Coridon, Point-des-Mangles, and the waterfront of Anse Rouge, with a total of up to 950 families losing their homes and belongings. Many communities do not have access to clean water or sanitation, and have to walk long distances to find water.
- The salt production areas in Commune Anse Rouge have been almost completely devastated. More than 90% of the salt basins have been filled with mud, leading to a loss of the most significant livelihood in the area for the unforeseeable future due to the very high cost of basin rehabilitation.
- Our assessment has revealed that already within a week following the Hurricane the coastal communities which have traditionally relied on salt production have begun clear-cutting and producing charcoal to survive, walking longer distances to the mountains, and rapidly increasing social frictions between communities.
- The damage extends inland – 60% of the tertiary roads have been eroded and 30% are impassable, 80% of farms have been heavily impacted by flashflood erosion, 70% of crops have been lost, and significant parts of the irrigation systems have been severely impacted.





Photos of Anse Rouge and Coridon, October 10. Demeter Russafov for AMURT.

Recommended Interventions (in order of priorities):

- Distribution of NFIs and shelter kits to all families who have lost their homes and belongings
- WASH activities (sanitation and drinking water)
- Nutritional assistance program- including distribution of dry food and hot meal canteens for the most vulnerable groups (children under 5, pregnant and nursing mothers, elderly, and handicapped), combined with a Child Friendly Space program focused on psycho-social activities for children 5-12 years of age
- Food security program – both emergency and livelihood, focused on restarting the heavily impacted farming and salt production through vouchers, seed, etc.
- Livelihoods program – through Cash for Assets (CFA) and other large-scale income generation initiatives focused on salt production rehabilitation / watershed protection
- Reconstruction programs – focused on schools, drinking and irrigation water systems, shelter, roads, etc.

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About AMURT-Haiti

AMURT-Haiti is a chapter of AMURT-USA (Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team). Its mission is to strengthen local capacities through a participatory approach while fostering Universal values. It has been active in Haiti since 1994, and focuses on long-term development programs in innovative education, sustainable agriculture and protected environment, women leadership and rural entrepreneurship. Its mandate tasks it to respond to disasters through a holistic approach, linking relief for those who are most vulnerable to durable and self-sufficient development. For more information please visit www.amurthaiti.org.