



TESTIMONIES

SEEING THE FUTURE DIFFERENTLY THROUGH BLINDNESS

At 14, Louise, fatherless, was forced to leave school to beg alongside her blind mother. Hurricane Matthew did away with the small amount her mother had saved to send Louise to school and her hopes of re-enrolling her. Thanks to a comprehensive kit for school reintegration and an income-generating activity, Louise and her mother could look differently into the future, to share a dream through blindness. Now Louise can be seen smiling and playing in her uniform on the school playground, with her brand-new backpack.

THE CASE OF MIRLANDE DÉCOSSA: ANOTHER WAY OF SEEING AND RAISING RESILIENCE

*"Only God knows what will happen to me and my two children.
 I have lost my trade and all my resources, and I can no longer send my children to school."*

Mirlande Décossa

Mirlande lost everything after Hurricane Matthew and took refuge with her two children in one of *Les Cayes'* most vulnerable neighborhoods. After trying desperately to meet the food needs of her children, Mirlande was registered with the Income Generating Activity (IGA) list to prevent family separation and meet certain child protection needs. Each child received a comprehensive kit for school reintegration, and now Mirlande is proud to accompany them to meetings of parents of students at the community school. She hopes to manage her IGA with the utmost care to continue to support her children.



The rubble of Mirlande's old house



The challenges of accessibility



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In October 2016 Hurricane Matthew severely worsened the pre-existing humanitarian situation in Haiti, affecting more than 2 million people, with 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Despite the immediate hurricane response provided, humanitarian needs persist: more than 2.35 million people are experiencing severe acute food insecurity; 31 camps are still hosting 46,691 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the 2010 earthquake; and there are 6,941 cases of cholera. To date, humanitarian aid amounts to US\$56,934,126.

The government is making efforts to put in place social protection mechanisms. Existing social benefits are mainly focused on social assistance and social insurance, with low coverage relative to national need. The most noteworthy include:

- School subsidies (Programme de scolarisation universelle, gratuite et obligatoire - PSUGO);
- School feeding (Programme nationale de cantines scolaires - PNCS);
- Food security (Kore Lavi, Sécurité alimentaire - SECAL);
- Cash transfers for older persons and persons with disabilities (Caisse d'assistance sociale - CAS); and
- Social security and old-age insurance (Office d'assurance accidents du travail, maladie et maternité OFATMA; Office nationale d'assurance-vieillesse - ONA).

Existing interventions remain fragmented, and the relevance and feasibility of a social protection system closely depends on a solid institutional anchoring. To that end, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST) is currently leading a process for the development of a National Social Protection Policy.

PROMISING PRACTICES

1- CAPACITY BUILDING:

Drawing experience from the *Kore Lavi* food security program, trained teams from the MAST were deployed in the areas affected by Hurricane Matthew. The teams ensured oversight of social interventions, including follow-up of aid delivery in targeted communes. An understanding of targeting mechanisms allowed the teams to effectively support networks of community-based organizations to identify beneficiaries, resulting in beneficiary lists for distributing humanitarian aid.



2- CHOOSING THE RELEVANT APPROACH FOR THE RESPONSE:

After Matthew, various actors, in particular CARE and WFP, carefully coordinated their response strategy as regards social transfers. CARE and WFP's experience in disaster management, combined with local know-how, in particular the involvement of local authorities and community-based associations in targeting beneficiaries. This allowed for a tailored strategy for social protection interventions. An assessment of essential commodities in local markets helped define which interventions –cash or in-kind– were best suited to the local context: in areas where public markets were still supplied, cash transfers were implemented, while in other areas, feeding kits were distributed instead.

3- DATABASE ON VULNERABILITY:

A database for targeting purposes is available for *Kore Lavi*. However, it does not cover vulnerability to natural disasters where needs tend to be multidimensional, beyond food security. Indeed, in addition to the poorest families already identified in the *Kore Lavi* database, the hurricane also affected wealthier families who needed immediate assistance. A system for classifying families according to the level of exposure to different types of natural disasters, for example through community targeting facilitated by a scorecard, could help to reduce risks of exclusion in social protection emergency responses.

KEY MESSAGES:

- Joint, comprehensive analysis of vulnerability assists with responses during crises and during 'normal' times too;
- Common program processes and systems (for instance for targeting) by both social protection and humanitarian actors should lead to improvements.

MAIN CHALLENGE(S) AHEAD AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Challenges persist, and these comprise: lack of coordination, insufficient human and financial resources, absence of a unified social registry, weak infrastructure – all of which limit access to affected people and delay the delivery of aid. Hurricane Matthew revealed a need to strengthen contingency planning, budgeting and links to the social protection agenda in Haiti. The National Social Protection Policy will consider the need for a shock-responsive social safety net, as well-planned social transfers can be an effective and rapid instrument to assist affected households following a natural disaster.

USEFUL RESOURCES

[Humanitarian Response](#)

[World Food Programme Haiti](#)

[UNICEF Haiti](#)

[Ministry of Work and Social Affairs, Haiti](#)

[Ministry of National Education and Professional Development, Haiti](#)