



SUCCESS STORY

Rural Haitian communities design land-use planning maps

Community mapping contributes to participatory land-use planning, natural resource management and economic growth in Haiti's Limbé and Montrouis watersheds.



The "Comité de Développement Bassin" displays their community map of Bassin, one of DEED's target communities in Haiti's Limbé watershed. The targeted economic development activities in this zone are vegetable production and fish culture.



Tessy Vilcius, President of the Federation of Peasant Planters of Piatre, discusses the comparison between the community-drawn and GIS maps of Piatre – a mountain community in the Montrouis watershed in Haiti's west. Mr. Vilcius says, "the maps teach us more about our territory and help us think as a group about what we need to do to take care of our environment". Another farmer and federation member, Walmé Baptiste, spoke up at this community meeting saying, "When I was young, this whole area was covered in mango and other trees. It is our responsibility to sit down and think, talk, and plan for how we can preserve our land. We need to design projects and activities for our communities to earn money and to protect our environment at the same time".

USAID prioritizes substantive stakeholder participation in all of its natural resource management work. USAID/Haiti's DEED project, (Economic Development for a Sustainable Environment), works in two watersheds – 90,000 hectares around Montrouis and Limbé – focusing on environmentally sustainable economic development through commercial agriculture, alternative livelihood development, natural resource management and environmental recovery. DEED works with target communities in the watersheds – selected based on their environmental significance, their potential for economic growth, and the identification of strong community groups with which to collaborate.

DEED is developing participatory land-use maps with an initial 12 target communities, (DEED will work with 48 target communities by project-end), that the communities then use to collectively manage their land in a more sustainable manner. There are several important steps in this participatory land-use mapping. First, the communities hand-draw maps of their territory, including any geographic features, (forests, rivers, mountains, cultivated zones, etc), and landmarks, (schools, hospitals, etc). Next, using Global Positioning Systems devices, (GPS), and Geographic Information Systems technology, (GIS), Haiti DEED maps all of the features and landmarks identified by the communities. The communities then compare their hand-drawn maps to the GIS maps, learning more about their territory in the process, and determining criteria for the designation of priority zones for conservation or production. From here, the communities determine how to reorient their land-use in highly vulnerable zones, and how to increase income generating opportunities for the community members while preserving their land and its natural resources to the greatest extent possible.

Taking a "bottom-up approach", these community maps will inform watershed preservation plans to be designed in collaboration with the Haitian government. In this way, the community leaders are playing a key role in determining the direction Haiti will take in its national approach to environmental stabilization in these two important watersheds.