



SUCCESS STORY

Pioneering Mobile Money in Haiti

ACCELERATING THE DELIVERY OF AID DURING CRISES AND BEYOND



Alexandre Adeline, a vendor who participated in the mobile money Mercy Corps food program, was very pleased with the result: more customers and more sales. (Photo Credit – Mercy Corps)



"This is a revolution in our country", said Haitian Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe at the inauguration of the Government's Ti ManMan Cheri program on May 27, 2012. (Photo Credit – Digicel)

After Haiti's devastating earthquake in 2010, USAID quickly identified the need for alternative means of delivering aid to victims. Its response was to create the HIFIVE Haiti Mobile Money Initiative¹ in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to encourage the development of financial services delivery by mobile phones. An immediate goal was to use such services to expedite the delivery of aid to earthquake victims. Within two years, mobile money has greatly facilitated disaster relief and benefitted social programs. By the end of 2011, 40% of international NGO programs that had used mobile money for beneficiary payments were doing so in Haiti.²

Initially, NGOs focused on using mobile money services to deliver "cash for work"³ program payments, while others adapted the services for the purchase of food or for other types of social benefit payments. Building on those experiences, NGOs, multilateral agencies, and government of Haiti agencies are creating uses for longer term recovery and social programs. NGOs are using mobile voucher payments to provide food aid to Haitians in poorer regions, while the United Nations Development Program's CARMEN⁴ program uses the mobile voucher payments to provide families the funds they need to repair damaged homes.

These experiences have greatly improved the NGOs' capacity to react to future disasters quickly and more effectively. In 2012, the government of Haiti launched Ti ManMan Cheri, providing payments to mothers in extreme poverty via TchoTcho Mobile⁵ to encourage them to keep their children in school. This program will reach 100,000 families nationwide.

The rapid uptake of mobile money services for use in disaster relief and social benefit payments in Haiti has provided an early demonstration of their value. Benefits include transparency, cost, immediacy, security, convenience, and the ubiquitous availability of both the phone service and the agent network. The knowledge gained and lessons learned in Haiti will also help guide future disaster responses by USAID and other donors. USAID's commitment to emerging technologies through activities like the HIFIVE/HMMI program⁶ is developing local and global solutions to the complex problems posed by disasters and to the longer-term challenges of sustainable development.

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¹ HIFIVE (Haiti Integrated Finance for Value Chains and Enterprises), implemented by WOCCU and FHI 360, is a USAID-funded project working to expand financial inclusion and to improve livelihoods by expanding rural and agricultural value chain finance and the use of information and communication technology to further outreach. HIFIVE manages the Haiti Mobile Money Initiative (HMMI), a joint venture of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID to spur mobile money services in Haiti through a US\$10 million incentive fund and up to US\$5 million of technical assistance grants to develop payment systems.

² Dalberg Global Development Advisors' "Plugging into Mobile Money Platforms: Early Experiences of NGOs in the field," January 2012, p. 4.

³ "Cash for work" programs provide short-term jobs to help stricken communities and their residents after disasters.

⁴ Centres d'Appui pour le Renforcement de Maisons Endommagées (CARMEN) or "Community Support Centers for House Self-Repairs."

⁵ A mobile money service provided by Digicel, a mobile network operator (MNO), and its banking partner Scotiabank.

⁶ HIFIVE/HMMI has provided incentives and technical assistance to a broad range of user groups (NGOs and others) and to the MNOs.