



HOW BUSINESS MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

Hurricane Season 2013: Strong Ports Save Lives

April 30, 2013

Author: [Teo A. Babun and James F. Smith](#)

A coalition of organizations that provided relief in Port-au-Prince following the Haiti earthquake have joined together to systematically apply the lessons learned from past disasters. They have created the Port Resiliency Program, or PReP, a public-private partnership that aims to work with Caribbean and Latin American airports and seaports to strengthen their ability to respond to and recover quickly from a crisis.



Strong, resilient airports and seaports are at the heart of effective response and recovery following a hurricane or other natural disaster. The tragic aftermath of Hurricane Georges demonstrated just what happens when ports fail. In 1998, category 4 Hurricane Georges

swept across the Caribbean, devastating Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba, and the United States, causing 604 deaths and nearly \$6 billion in property damage.

Sadly, severely damaged ports greatly complicated the distribution of relief supplies and personnel, slowing the pace of life-saving humanitarian aid. Incapacitated or poorly-functioning ports further delayed the recovery of fragile island economies, creating a ripple effect that deepened the distress of stricken communities.

PReP facilitates significant, cost-effective improvements by focusing on fortifying current capabilities and building on existing knowledge and relationships. The program assists ports in strengthening disaster plans, programs, and procedures through self assessment, peer assessment, gap analysis, targeted training, customized exercises, and aftercare.

In February, led by AmericasRelief Team and funded by FedEx, PReP completed a highly successful proof-of-concept pilot test at Las Americas International Airport in Santo Domingo. Other sponsors are joining FedEx to help bring this service to additional airports at no cost. MIA, FIU's International Center for Disaster Preparedness, American Airlines, PortMiami, and Smith-Woolwine Associates are among the many participants and sponsors supporting this important program.

The program works closely with airports and seaports to guide them from where they are to where they want to be. Site visits foster support for employees and their families as well as interagency cooperation and mutual aid. In addition, PReP will fly in participants to attend workshops that incorporate best practices and continuous improvement to ensure optimal interoperability among personnel and agencies facing the complex challenges inherent in restoring ports after a crisis.

This structured, functional port restoration program will standardize and streamline response, promoting timely repair and reopening of damaged ports and rapid restoration of normal trade activity. Strong, resilient ports protect vital assets and interests, and they help communities bounce back from disasters. But most of all, strong ports save lives

Dr. Babun is the Executive Director of AmericasRelief Team, an initiative of Outreach Aid to the Americas, Inc. (OAA), and founder of the Port Resiliency Program (PReP). Dr. Smith is PReP's Technical Director and a researcher in the field of airport-community partnerships for disaster preparedness.

For more information contact AmericasRelief Team at email: teob@americasrelief.org; or via the web at: www.americasrelief.org.

Organization:

AmericasRelief Team (ART) operates as an initiative of Outreach Aid to the Americas, Inc. (OAA), a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Florida on September 29, 1999. Its mission is to "Provide humanitarian logistics assistance and educational programs, which will benefit disaster victims in our region, and develop sustainable programs which will have a greater impact and longer term benefits for those in need."

ART focuses on the following programmatic areas: (1) Disaster Preparedness, by conducting disaster preparedness in urban centers, and ports in Latin America; (2) Disaster Response and Aid, by collaborating with partners to stage and ship humanitarian aid after a crisis occurrence; and (3) Humanitarian Assistance, by providing physical aid to hurting people in the Americas.

The focal point of ART is to provide humanitarian logistics assistance to benefit disaster victims and reduce the suffering of the most vulnerable groups in the Americas, and to provide tools and resources needed to increase their preparedness and self-sufficiency. ART reacts to immediate crisis, and plans for future disasters in the region which will require effective coordination of humanitarian relief. ART works in coordination with affected governments, the US Southern Command, emergency centers, corporate donors, air and sea cargo carriers, logistics companies, non-governmental experts and others to assess damage when disaster strikes, and then effectively channel emergency relief to the most affected areas. ART conducts multiple programs and initiatives as advocates, coordinators, and facilitators [from prevention to restoration and reconstruction, and from planning to implementation of humanitarian assistance] in the Americas.

ART accomplishes its mission by creating strategic agreements with key non-profit and corporate partners including U.S. and foreign government agencies, bilateral and international donor organizations, international finance organizations, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, international and local NGOs, and U.S. corporations.

P.O. Box 546135, Miami, FL 33154 * 305.884.0441 * WWW.AMICASRELIEF.ORG