was critical for coordinating environmental and construction permit approvals and utility service, and resolving local opposition issues. Since the two community sites are temporary solutions—providing housing for up to 18 months—design details featured storm water controls and utility designs that helped streamline the approval process. Design collaboration with Bradford and Wyoming County Conservation District Offices cut review and approval timelines from months to less than one week for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to control storm water runoff.

One key design element was retaining the excavation materials onsite, rather than hauling them away. Hauling materials offshore normally requires a longer review time as the regulatory agency must evaluate whether the materials can support the construction. The concept designs, including environmental review and utility identification, were completed in only 10 days for the Sayre site and a mere six days for Tunkhannock.

SUCCESSFUL DELIVERY

When the resources of local communities and state governments are overwhelmed by natural disaster, FEMA is authorized to provide assistance to help affected individuals and households. After Tropical Storm Lee, FEMA provided 40 manufactured homes to functional community sites at Sayre and Tunkhannock within 60 days of the notice to proceed. The Sayre housing community, which required more extensive earthwork due to the capacity for 125 lots, was completed in 59 days. The Tunkhannock community was built in just 40 days. Each site also has the capability to expand—up to 58 homes at Sayre and 50 at Sayre and Tunkhannock.

FEMA’s ability to be responsive, to collaborate with local and state officials, and to provide effective Design-Build capabilities means that disaster survivors are provided housing quickly. In Pennsylvania that meant residents moved into their new homes the third week of December—just in time for Christmas.

As part of Southern Partnership Station (SPS) 2012, an 18-member Seabee detachment embarked onboard High Speed Vessel (HSV)-2 Swift, completing 1,065 man-days of Humanitarian Civic Assistance construction projects in five Latin American countries, helping improve the lives of more than 18,000 men, women and children.

SPS is an annual deployment of U.S. ships to the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) Area of Responsibility, which covers the Caribbean and Latin America. Various detachments such as medical, civil affairs and U.S. Marines comprise the ship’s personnel. The primary goal is information sharing, with navies, coast guards and civilians in the region. The Seabee detachment, with its ability to perform civilian humanitarian assistance exchanges with a military and civilian personnel, was the final piece of the puzzle. The mission was to improve infrastructure in the host nations and to, through completion of Humanitarian Civic Assistance construction projects. As the key enablers of SPS 2012, the Seabee detachment’s work not only left a physical reminder of their visit, but their interaction with the local population left a lasting positive impression of the United States.

MISSION ASSIGNMENT

Initially mobilized in July 2011, Seabee reserve members from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion TWENTY-THREE (NMCB 23) deployed from Gulfport, Miss., to their forward operating location in the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Theater Cooperation Security Team One (TSC 1), was formed to perform the Humanitarian Civic Assistance tasking in the countries assigned to the USACE, including Haiti and the Dominican Republic. TSC 1 was mainly comprised of builders, steel workers, electricians and utilitiesmen to support the various projects.

With the exception of one 14-day visit to Guatemala, all port stops were 21 days. Taking into account time for loading and unloading equipment, travel to the work sites, the extreme heat and the 13 person crew required, the project was executed approximately 160 man-days of construction in each country. However, this did not include labor availability from host and partner nation engineers, or up to five U.S. Marine combat engineers who would augment the detachment. TSC 1 had one fluent Spanish speaker to serve as lead linguist. Additional translators were made available to the team by the Marine detachment based on the number of concurrently running sites and materials acquisition requirements.

TSC 1 relied on its coordinating authority, the 25th Naval Construction Regiment (25 NCR), to provide the initial scopes of work. Generally, a Pre-Deployment Site Survey team with at least one engineering representative would be sent at least three months in advance of the ship’s movement to meet with in-country personnel to identify project sites, scopes of work and logistics. 25 NCR would then forward the Pre-Deployment Site Survey information to TSC 1, and preliminary bills of material were developed and the required equipment was identified. The mission bay of HSV-2 Swift accommodated any type of construction battalion equipment; however due to space limitations from other SPS mission requirements, the project scopes of work were developed by trying to keep the required equipment contained within three tricones. This essentially eliminated any organic capability to perform hori-
nental operations like earthwork or road improvement. And transportation of personnel and equipment to job sites had to be contracted.

MAKING AN IMPACT

The Seabee detachment installed $81,000 in materials and accomplished 3,065 man-days of construction in five foreign countries without incurring a safety incident in four months. Though these metrics support the team’s construction effort, they alone do not capture the essence of SPS.

The real goal was leaving a country better than before. Seabees with NMCB 23 were incredibly successful in that endeavor, whether it was by improving the functionality of a medical dispensary and providing new soccer goals and basketball court serving a community of 14,000 Haitians; by completely restorating, renovating and improving the functionality of nine schools for 4,350 pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students; by conducting training and exchanging best practices with 12 construction specialists from Guatemala’s Army Corps of Engineers, 24 Peruvian construction engineers from the Marine Infantry and 24 members from Indonesia’s Engineering Company; or by operating as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

TECHNIQUES: OLD AND NEW

A sea hut project in Ancon, Peru was the only entirely “ground up” project and provided the team an opportunity to exercise multiple techniques. The first was presented by the Peruvian engineers in the form of a water level. Neither the team nor the Peruvians had common language. Rafaela Santaella school in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

However, it was discovered that 2-in x 4-in x 16-ft roof stringers, 2-ft on center, with a minimal pitch (less than 1:12). This enabled the team to complete construction promptly yet also provide a safe, functional roof for the classrooms.

IN CLOSING

As each project came to a close, the local community would host a closing ceremony, where a TSC 1 “Seabee stamp” was always a crowd pleaser, as team members stamped children’s hands and arms to leave a final, personal mark of friendship. At project locations, a Seabee plaque was installed that read: “May the projects we completed last for years to come, and the friendships we built last a lifetime.”

Building lasting friendships though construction, this was the true success of SPS 2012 and the Seabees from NMCB 23.

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