

Haiti Hurricane Season



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The main priority is to ensure that telecommunications are available in Haiti, writes Mark Phillips, Emergency Coordinator in the Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST). Mark explains: *“Once again I found myself flying to Haiti; last time it was just before the 2005 elections. However, this time it was hurricane season across the Caribbean!”*

However, Mark’s journey became increasingly difficult due to worsening weather conditions. After landing in New York, Mark was stranded for four days while he tried to find a flight to Haiti. Travelling to the airport every day, Mark finally managed to catch a flight to Haiti via the Dominican Republic. By strange coincidence, after clearing customs, the first person he met in Haiti was the driver who had collected him three years previously. The driver took Mark to the office and he was able to get in touch with Nasir Khan, ex-FITTEST and newly appointed ICT officer for WFP Haiti.

Since his arrival, Mark explains that the work has been fast and furious: *“We have not stopped so far...updating the flash appeal, managing CERF budgets, activating extra staff, shipping equipment, organising telecommunications work groups and holding global ICT meetings. One member of staff even managed to carry a complete fly-away kit weighing 284kg single-handedly via America...which is no mean feat”*.

The work continues as Mark and his team head onwards to Gonaives, the worst affected area, in order to implement the communication systems which are so urgently needed following the hurricane season in Haiti.