



Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, San José, Costa Rica

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo courtesy of the St. Lucia Red Cross

Community Disaster Response Team members transport relief items in St. Lucia after Hurricane Tomas in late 2010. USAID/OFDA funded the Red Cross program that trained the response team, and recently provided new funding for a similar DRR project in the Caribbean.

USAID/OFDA Funds DRR Projects

USAID/OFDA recently funded a series of disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects in Latin America and the Caribbean that aim to promote local and national self-sufficiency in disaster preparedness and management.

Countries in this region are vulnerable to a range of natural hazards, including earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, landslides, volcanic activity, and droughts.

The 11 DRR projects aim to identify and reduce disaster risks, as well as help countries and communities prepare for disasters more effectively. Following is a DRR project summary:

Saving Lives in the Caribbean through Preparedness: USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$1 million to the American Red Cross (AmRC) to enhance the capacity of communities in the Bahamas, Belize, and St. Lucia to better mitigate, prepare for, and respond to the adverse effects of climate change and disasters.

Youth-Focused DRR in the Caribbean: Building upon a previous USAID/OFDA-funded pilot project in Ja-

maica, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is engaging and training youth in at-risk communities in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, and St. Lucia in DRR and preparedness principles. With more than \$880,000 from USAID/OFDA, the program aims to establish a long-term foundation for DRR and mitigation efforts through the creation and training of youth emergency action committees.

Community-Level DRR in the Dominican Republic: USAID/OFDA provided more than \$725,000 to the Dominican Development Institute to implement community-level DRR training and capacity-building exercises including risk reduction training for teachers, DRR campaigns in schools, and the development of school emergency plans.

Increasing the Resiliency of Farming Communities in Jamaica: USAID/OFDA provided \$466,000 to HelpAge International to assist farmers in safeguarding their livelihood assets from natural disasters.

Continued on page 2

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA, El Salvador Sign USAR Technical Agreement

On December 14, representatives of USAID/OFDA signed an agreement with the Government of El Salvador (GoES) to provide training and technical assistance to strengthen national urban search-and-rescue (USAR) capabilities.

Under the agreement, USAID/OFDA, through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), will help to assess current USAR capabilities in El Salvador and train members of the national USAR team. The team is composed of staff from the El Salvador Firefighters Corps, Armed Forces, National Police, Red Cross, Green Cross, Salvation Army, Ministry of Public Works, and Ministry of Health.

USAID/OFDA-supported training activities planned in El Salvador during 2012 include courses in collapsed structures rescue, hazardous materials incident response, advanced life support, and the incident command system. USAID/OFDA will also provide technical assistance for USAR training exercises and evaluation and accreditation processes.

The GoES plans to establish a National USAR System to coordinate and oversee USAR training and accreditation processes in accordance with international quality assurance standards.

USAID/OFDA helps countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to evaluate and strengthen national USAR capabilities as part of regional efforts to promote and support DRR activities in urban areas.



Photo courtesy of the El Salvador Ministry of the Interior

El Salvador Minister of the Interior Ernesto Zelayandia (left) and USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist Manuel Santana shake hands after reviewing the agreement.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Supports Youth at CDM Meeting, Sponsors Central American DRR Consultation

USAID/OFDA supported regional conferences on comprehensive disaster management in the Caribbean and in Central America in December.

In the Caribbean, USAID/OFDA contributed \$50,000 to support the Sixth Caribbean Conference on Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM), "CDM: Reflection, Introspection, Moving Forward," held from December 5 to 9 in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) organized the conference.

USAID/OFDA sponsored the Youth Session of the CDM Conference, held on December 7 and 8 to provide Caribbean youth an opportunity to get more involved in DRR activities in their countries. The session featured youth speakers, debates, and artistic expression, including poetry, drama, and music, to highlight the importance of younger generations participating in disaster mitigation.

During the conference, CDEMA presented its 20th Anniversary Awards to five individuals whose leadership and commitment over the years have significantly influenced the development of disaster management in the region.

USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist Audrey Mullings, from Jamaica, received one of the awards. Mullings has led the region in disaster risk management for more than 25 years and helped develop some of the institutions which have supported this sector, according to CDEMA. From 1985 to 1993, she supported Red Cross societies of the region as Head of Office for the Caribbean League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as it was then known. She was also Deputy Director of CDEMA (then known as CDERA) for 10 years before joining the USAID/OFDA Latin America and Caribbean regional team. Mullings has also pioneered work aimed at bringing focus to gender and disaster management issues in the region.

Other CDEMA 20th Anniversary Award recipients include Elizabeth Mary-Rose Ferdinand, from Barbados; Dawn French, from St. Lucia; Arturo Lopez-Portillo Contreras, from Mexico; and Franklin McDonald, from Jamaica. Congratulations to all!

In Central America, USAID/OFDA provided \$100,000 to the Central American Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters (CEPREDENAC) to support a Regional Consultation Forum held in El Salvador on December 14. The consultation forum, held in preparation for the presidential summit later that week, resulted in a letter of consensus containing recommendations to advance comprehensive disaster risk management and climate change adaptation.

During the presidential summit, held in El Salvador on December 16, leaders from the region signed a joint declaration agreeing on various recommendations, including asking CEPREDENAC to continue promoting the Central American Comprehensive Risk Management Policy, as well as to strengthen the Regional Mechanism for Mutual Disaster Assistance and work with the Central American Economic Integration Bank to create a Central American fund to strengthen comprehensive disaster risk management and provide resources and technical assistance to the countries of the region.

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Tel: +(506) 2290-4133
E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov
Internet: www.usaid.gov/ofdalac
www.usaid.gov/rdaptrainingportfolio

Promoting DRR Activities in the Americas

Continued from page 1

Reducing Risk in Rural El Salvador: USAID/OFDA provided \$1 million to Save the Children to strengthen vulnerable communities' resilience to disasters in rural El Salvador by safeguarding the livelihood and household assets of vulnerable farming and fishing families in flood-prone areas in Usulután Department.

Community-Level Disaster Preparedness in El Salvador: USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$260,000 to CRS to strengthen disaster management capacities of vulnerable communities in the sub-watershed of the Acahuapa River in El Salvador by engaging and training youth in disaster preparedness, creating community risk maps, promoting community awareness, and identifying appropriate community-level risk mitigation projects in coordination with local government officials.

Community-Level Disaster Preparedness in Nicaragua: With nearly \$1 million from USAID/OFDA, CARE is strengthening capacities of communities in Masaya and Managua departments in Nicaragua to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to geological and hydrometeorological hazards. The project coordinates with institutions at different levels to develop and implement DRR approaches, including the strengthening of early warning systems to monitor seismic, volcanic, and flood threats.

Reducing Hydrometeorological Risk in Nicaragua: Through CRS, USAID/OFDA is ensuring that communities residing near the Lower Coco River in Nicaragua have a long-term plan for sustainably reducing risks resulting from chronic flooding and other hydrometeorological disasters. USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$540,000 to CRS to improve community early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms.

Increasing Resilience across South America: USAID/OFDA provided \$1 million to AmRC to help increase the resilience of nearly 50 vulnerable communities in Ecuador, Paraguay, and Colombia by raising awareness of risks, including those related to climate change, and helping to mobilize appropriate preparedness and response mechanisms.

Strengthening Community Preparedness and Response to Disasters in Ecuador: USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$980,000 through CARE/Ecuador to reduce populations' vulnerability to natural and technical disasters by strengthening disaster preparedness and response capacities of community institutions. Activities target 30 communities in Chimborazo, Guayas, and Cañar provinces. The program will also rehabilitate or retrofit homes and schools to improve their capability to withstand future disasters.

Reducing Vulnerability to Natural and Technological Risks in Peru: With more than \$800,000 in USAID/OFDA funding, CARE/Peru is producing national guidelines for community-based early warning systems in coordination with the Government of Peru's National Institute for Civil Defense and National Service for Meteorology and Hydrology. CARE/Peru will also identify and facilitate shelter options for various disaster scenarios, in conjunction with national officials.

STAFF NEWS

New Staff Members Join Regional Team

The USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean welcomes three new staff members.

Financial Assistant Jorge Nassar joined the USAID/OFDA regional team on November 21. Before joining the regional office, Nassar worked for 25 years as a U.S. State Department Financial Assistant at the U.S. Embassy in San José.

Information Associate Krystal Hartman and Event Planner Patricia Brenes joined the USAID/OFDA team in early November. Hartman, who assists with LAC information products and services, has worked as a magazine writer, fashion designer, and with first response agencies in her native Colorado. Brenes, who is coordinating USAID/OFDA regional forums and other events, has extensive experience as a project manager. She also worked for USAID/Costa Rica from 1986 until 1994, when the agency ceased operations in the country.

Additionally, USAID/OFDA would like to thank Response Specialist Steve McAndrew for his help with response-related activities during the 2011 hurricane season.