



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

DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

A beneficiary in Chincha Baja explains how her life has improved thanks to the reinforced adobe home and fuel-efficient stove that she and her neighbors built as part of the USAID/OFDA-funded CARE Peru project.

Promoting Safe Rural Housing in Peru

Hundreds of poor families in rural and peri-urban areas of Peru who lost their homes during the magnitude 8.0 earthquake in August 2007 are building back better thanks to a USAID/OFDA-funded project promoting affordable, seismic-resistant houses.

The project, implemented by CARE Peru, combines scientific knowledge applied to traditional building methods such as adobe and quincha, with local government and beneficiary family involvement to promote the building of safe and healthy houses in safer places, explained USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard.

“Our aim was to help foster community awareness of affordable, tested construction techniques as well as bring about rural housing policy changes on a national level,” said Leonard, who is monitoring the project.

The project was instrumental in helping the Government of Peru to adopt a national rural housing policy, with standards for safe and healthy rural housing, as well as to begin implementing a program to provide eligible families with subsidies for housing construction in rural areas. Previously, housing subsidies were

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The improved adobe design can be modified to suit local conditions. For example, in the highland district of Huachos, Castrovirreyna Province, CARE Peru architects increased the slant of the roof due to the frequent rains in the region.



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Program Provides New Tools To Build Back Better in Peru

As part of the USAID/OFDA-funded CARE Peru project promoting “building back better” in rural communities affected by the August 2007 earthquake in Peru, CARE staff have completed 13 soil studies evaluating seismic risks and other geological hazards and provided them to local government representatives.

These studies are a valuable tool to help local government officials evaluate risks affecting new construction projects in their districts, said CARE Peru architect Joseph J. Cevallos.

Additionally, in the rural communities where CARE Peru is building seismic-resistant houses, staff members have worked with beneficiaries to evaluate disaster risks in their neighborhoods and create emergency response plans as part of the USAID/OFDA-supported project.



Photo by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

Mayor Emilio del Solar thanks USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard upon receiving the soil study of his district in Chincha Baja.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Publishes Annual Program Statement

On February 24, USAID/OFDA published an annual program statement (APS) seeking proposals from partners that aim to reduce disaster risks and strengthen preparedness of vulnerable communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Through the APS, USAID/OFDA seeks innovative as well as proven ways of safeguarding livelihoods assets, preventing loss of shelter, and building local capacity for disaster risk management and risk reduction. For additional information, enter Funding Opportunity Number APS-OFDA-11-000003 on the web site www.grants.gov.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photos by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

Trainees in Mina de Oro, Chincha, gather in front of a house they built as part of a course in improved quincha construction (a traditional Peruvian building method using cane and mud).

Program Empowers Beneficiaries To Take Action for a Better Future

Beneficiaries of the USAID/OFDA-supported project to promote safe and healthy rural housing in Peru envision creating a better life beyond the walls of their new houses.

"We're not just building new homes here; we're building new realities for ourselves," said Aguedo Rodríguez, a member of the neighborhood of Santa Rosa, in Lunahuana. He dreams that someday he and his neighbors can build a tourist lodge in Lunahuana, which attracts river-rafting enthusiasts from Lima, using the construction techniques they learned while building their seismic-resistant adobe homes with CARE Peru.

In Chincha's Mina de Oro neighborhood, 16 women and four young men have spent the past four months learning professional quincha construction with national training institute SENCICO as part of the CARE project, and now discuss using their new skills to obtain a job with a local construction company.

"What we are doing here is learning to fish instead of asking for a fish. We can't just hold out our hands; we need to learn to help ourselves," said a beaming Teresa Valdivia, who was selected by the group as the beneficiary of the quincha house they built during the training.

In the community of Emilio del Solar, in Chincha Baja, women who have finished building their own reinforced adobe houses as part of the USAID/OFDA-funded project now make pasteurized goat cheese to sell in local markets, thanks to the collaboration of another donor who provided livelihoods training.

The women are planning to build goat sheds behind their new homes, while their husbands work on nearby farms, and dream of expanding their herds, learning to make yogurt, and launching a woman-owned dairy business. They believe it will be a success because they have already learned how to work well together while producing the 56,000 adobe bricks that were required for the 28 houses they built in mutual collaboration.

Women in the community of Emilio del Solar (named after the supportive Mayor of Chincha Baja) share their vision for improving their neighborhood during a recent USAID/OFDA visit.



Promoting Safe Rural Housing in Peru

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provided only to families in urban areas.

"The project features a substantial training element for beneficiary families, local construction companies, and national training institute SENCICO, incorporating anti-seismic building techniques tested by experts from the Engineering Department of the Universidad Católica de Peru," said CARE Peru Program Manager Segundo Dávila. Additionally, each of the 200 model houses being built as part of the project features a fuel-efficient stove, also made of adobe bricks, and a flush toilet, latrine, or similar sanitary solution (depending on available water resources).

Local government officials, community leaders, and beneficiary families selected to help build the model homes are grateful for the opportunity the families have been given to participate in their own recovery. Not only has the process helped families to learn safe construction techniques, as beneficiaries must provide all the labor, it has also inspired greater interaction with local government leaders and helped families to become more involved in local political processes.

For example, in the neighborhood of Santa Rosa, in Lunahuana, leaders of the community featuring 20 reinforced adobe houses built as part of the CARE Peru project have successfully lobbied the municipal government to bring electricity to their neighborhood and install several street lamps for greater citizen security. Now, community members are organizing a request for assistance to install a potable water system, since they currently must haul their water several blocks uphill from the local river on the backs of their donkeys.

In Santa Rosa and other communities, CARE Peru has helped formerly landless families acquire titled property so they could be eligible for a reinforced adobe home. In Emilio del Solar, the Mayor promised families who previously resided on an untended archaeological site that if they raised half of the funds required to purchase a two-hectare property on which to move their community, he would produce the other half. The promise was fulfilled and the 28-home community now bears his name.

"One of our goals in this project was to find innovative ways to help earthquake-affected communities participate in their own development and leverage funding from other sources. CARE Peru has successfully involved other donors, local leaders, and the private sector to address property issues, livelihoods training, and much more," Leonard said.



Photos by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

Left, a worker transports adobe bricks during a home construction in Chincha Baja as part of the USAID/OFDA-funded project. Right, a woman and child stand near a house in the geogrid phase of the construction process in the highland district of Huachos.

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