



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 by Fabián Arellano, USAID/OFDA

Members of the Cuenca Firefighters Corps urban search-and-rescue (USAR) task force in Ecuador participate in a USAR mobilization exercise in 2007.

Ecuador Focuses on Preparedness

Since 1989, USAID/OFDA's Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) has provided training and technical assistance to the Government of Ecuador (GoE) to help strengthen national disaster risk management and response preparedness capabilities.

Efforts have focused on USAR, forest fire prevention and control, simulation exercises, damage assessment and needs analysis (DANA), incident command system (ICS) implementation, and overall disaster risk reduction (DRR).

In 2008, the GoE created the National Risk Management Secretariat (SNGR) to oversee national disaster

risk management activities. RDAP works closely with the SNGR and has provided technical assistance to implement the Law of Risk Management and promote increased cooperation among all levels of government, as well as to integrate the private sector into these efforts.

In June of this year, thanks in part to USAID/OFDA's support, the City of Guayaquil, Ecuador's largest metropolitan area, created a Disaster Risk Management and Cooperation Department to help officials reduce disaster risks and prepare for disaster response, in cooperation with Guayaquil's Citizen Security Corpo-

Continued on page 2

USAID/OFDA fire management expert Luisa Alfaro (center) provides technical assistance during Ecuador's National Forest Firefighter Brigade Mobilization Exercise in 2008.



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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Keeping an Eye on Ecuador's Active Tungurahua Volcano

The USAID/OFDA-supported U.S. Geological Survey's Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) has provided ongoing assistance to the National Geophysics Institute (IG) of Ecuador to monitor Tungurahua volcano since it erupted in August 2006.

The 2006 eruption resulted in the deaths of several people, the evacuation of thousands of residents, and extensive crop damage.

Since then, volcanic activity has continued intermittently, with smaller eruptions, explosions, and lava and gas emissions.

In 2008, VDAP repaired and shipped seismic data acquisition equipment to IG and

Continued on page 2



Photo by Carlos Julio La Mota, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA disaster relief consultants meet with volcanologist Patricia Mothes (right), during recent unrest at Tungurahua volcano.

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Assists Ecuador with Floods, Earthquakes, and Volcanos

Since 1992, USAID/OFDA has provided nearly \$1.6 million in humanitarian assistance to Ecuador in response to disasters including floods, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions.

In 2008, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$929,000 to assist more than 60,000 families affected by heavy rains and flooding. In response to the emergency, which affected 13 of Ecuador's coastal and inland provinces, USAID/OFDA supported emergency health services; water, sanitation, and hygiene activities; and the procurement, transport, and distribution of emergency relief supplies, including hygiene items, water containers, and plastic sheeting for temporary shelters.

USAID/OFDA Helps Ecuador with DRR

Continued from page 1

ration. The new department will create local hazard maps, help community leaders mitigate possible disaster impacts, and participate in the USAID/OFDA-promoted ICS process.

Since 2003, RDAP has helped the city of Guayaquil implement ICS, which brings together key agencies, including police, 9-1-1 emergency call services, transit authorities, medical first responders, and others to establish a chain of command for disaster response operations. RDAP provided ICS training, helped develop response protocol and procedures, and participated in the 2010 signing of a memorandum of understanding with agencies involved in ICS.

Today, Guayaquil has successfully established ICS as the organizing principal for all emergency and disaster response within city limits and is carrying the process forward with minimal support from USAID/OFDA. SNGR has also adopted the ICS approach and is encouraging the country's other municipalities to use ICS as the basis for their risk management plans.

"Ecuador's emergency management officials have made great strides to identify disaster risks and are well prepared to respond to disasters, which in turn can help to save lives and reduce potential impacts," said USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

VDAP Helps Monitor Ecuador Volcano

Continued from page 1

assisted with plans for ongoing monitoring of Tungurahua activity.

During the near yearly eruptions since, VDAP has assisted IG with remote sensing of the Tungurahua crater and provided summaries of cloud-penetrating radar observations. This is particularly important during periods of cloudy weather, when knowing the situation at the volcano's summit is critical for carrying out actions designed to protect lives and property below.

In communities at the base of the volcano, such as Baños, the largest town in the area with 17,000 inhabitants, local governments have emergency plans in place and have clearly marked evacuation routes and emergency shelters.

The RDAP disaster risk management specialist in Ecuador, Michael Camchong, maintain close ties with SNGR and emergency officials responsible for disaster preparedness near Tungurahua.



Photo courtesy of Héctor Cobo Tinajeros

Ecuador's Tungurahua volcano emits a column of ash into the air above Ambato, the capital of Tungurahua Province, in 2009.

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Transit Police Adopt USAID/OFDA Courses

Since 2008, USAID/OFDA has provided technical assistance to Ecuador's Transit Commission to strengthen the agency's disaster response operations, develop a Disaster Risk Management Unit, and train transit police throughout the country.

As a result of these efforts, more than 600 transit police officers have participated in USAID/OFDA-developed courses in ICS, basic life support, and first response to incidents with hazardous materials. RDAP also trained Transit Commission instructors to provide these courses, thereby guaranteeing the sustainability of the commission's internal training program.

Additionally, RDAP technical assistance has helped the Transit Commission strengthen its operational protocols and procedures in order to improve responses to traffic accidents.

Members of the commission's Medical Emergency and Rescue Unit have participated in RDAP courses in collapsed structures rescue, advanced medical first aid, forest fire management, DANA, and disaster risk program management.



Photo courtesy of Ecuador's Transit Commission

Transit police in Ecuador apply skills and knowledge from USAID/OFDA training courses.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Small Grant Supports Coastal DRR Project

With a small grant from RDAP, USAID/OFDA local partner EcoCostas is working to reduce the risks associated with climate change in two coastal districts of Ecuador: San Cristóbal Island, Galapagos Province, and Manta, Manabi Province.

As part of the \$38,000 project, which began in April 2012, EcoCostas is working with SNGR representatives and local government leaders from the two districts to increase the resiliency of low-income communities that are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, such as landslides and flooding.

EcoCostas is currently mapping potential hazards and locations of recurrent natural disasters in Manta and San Cristóbal, in order to subsequently design emergency plans and provide disaster risk management training to local community leaders. The project will culminate in April 2013.



Photo courtesy of EcoCostas

At left, a coastal view of San Cristóbal, one of the districts targeted by the USAID/OFDA-supported DRR project.