



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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Haiti Study Tour Promotes Urban Disaster Risk Reduction

The January 12, 2010, magnitude 7.0 earthquake near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, was one of the largest urban disasters in the Western Hemisphere, and one of the most severe to ever strike a national capital.

Much of the destruction was due to poor building techniques and the use of sub-standard building materials, leading some to refer to the event as a “construction disaster” rather than a “natural disaster.”

Working with the international community, USAID has been a leader in supporting initiatives that were instrumental in advancing the rehabilitation of severely affected neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince.

“The scale and location of the disaster demanded innovative approaches for resolving immediate post-emergency displacement, and for establishing a new paradigm for reconstruction. Many lessons were learned as a result of these innovations, and we recognize the importance of sharing these lessons with our partners in the rest of the region,” said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil Gelman.

Toward that end, the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) developed a Haiti Study Tour to share lessons learned from the Haiti earthquake response and encourage

Continued on page 2



Photos by Sarah Bailin, USAID/OFDA

Clockwise from top left: Engineer Kit Miyamoto, from USAID/OFDA partner Miyamoto International, speaks with Haitian engineers who helped conduct habitability assessments; Milton Funes, from CHF International in Honduras, inspects a two-story shelter under construction; October 2011 Haiti Study Tour participants; Miyamoto discusses repair projects near a recently improved wall.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

RDAP Certifies 23 Trainers of Trainers in Haiti



Photo courtesy of Plan Haiti/Belizaire Jefferson

Participants in the trainer of trainers certification course provided by the RDAP in Haiti during September.

The USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) has certified 23 new trainers in the RDAP Training for Instructors Course, which took place from September 19 to 23 in Montrouis, Haiti. The newly certified instructors will help to improve Haiti’s self-sufficiency in disaster management training and capacity building.

USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist Rose-Luce Cadot organized the course in coordination with the Government of Haiti Department of Civil Protection, the U.N. Development Program, and Plan Haiti.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Wind Laboratory Experts Visit Haiti to Test Shelters

With support from USAID/OFDA, two experts from the International Hurricane Research Center at Florida International University (FIU) in the United States visited Haiti in October to gather information on transitional shelters (t-shelters) being constructed in the earthquake-affected country, in order to test similar models in the research center’s wind laboratory.

Testing is designed to identify best practices for constructing t-shelters in hurricane-vulnerable regions, with a

Continued on page 2



Photo by Sarah Bailin, USAID/OFDA

Participants in the Haiti Study Tour discuss the neighborhood approach during a visit to review infrastructure rehabilitation projects in the Ravine Pintade neighborhood of Port-au-Prince.

Haiti Study Tour Reviews Lessons Learned

Continued from page 1

participants to return to their countries with a clearer understanding of viable measures to reduce potential impacts of and help governments react more effectively to urban disasters.

The first Haiti Study Tour took place from October 4 to 6, with 11 emergency officials, engineers, and other representatives from civil defense and non-governmental organizations in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Peru, and Trinidad and Tobago. Next year, USAID/OFDA plans to support several additional study tours.

"We are deeply committed to promoting learning regarding urban disaster response strategies and want to help create a community whose members can share information and ideas for moving forward with urban disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities in their own countries. USAID/OFDA hopes to help support these efforts and provide technical assistance as appropriate," explained Gelman, who helped to organize the first study tour.

During the three-day study tour, USAID partners Pan American Development Foundation, CHF International, Catholic Relief Services, and Première Urgence/Aide Médicale Internationale, as well as sub-grantees Miyamoto International, Cordaid, and J/P Haitian Relief Organization, presented on topics including USAID/OFDA-supported assessments of the habitability and reparability of houses affected by the earthquake and the challenges of rubble removal.

"We encouraged participants to think about how authorities might address potential shelter and settlements issues before disaster strikes. For example, how to muster sufficient resources (including qualified human resources) to carry out habitability assessments in urban neighborhoods following a disaster. Also, to think about reviewing urban building stocks and determine whether options exist for retrofitting key pieces of government infrastructure now, before disaster strikes," Gelman explained.

Participants also discussed the neighborhood approach, which grew out of the Haiti earthquake response. Experiences in Port-au-Prince suggest that one way to improve humanitarian assistance in urban areas is to employ a holistic approach based on neighborhoods rather than individual households, to better understand the best methods for providing multisector assistance.

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



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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Supports USAR Training

In early November, with support from USAID/OFDA, urban search-and-rescue (USAR) experts from the Fairfax County, Virginia, and Los Angeles County, California, fire departments conducted a five-day technical rescue training course for 25 members of the Haitian Volunteer Firefighters Association.

During their visit to Haiti, the experts also worked with the Cap-Haïtien USAR team to create a five-year plan to develop capacity for USAR responses. USAID/OFDA plans to continue to support the association's efforts to strengthen USAR capacity in Haiti.



Photo by Olivier Joseph, USAID/OFDA

Members of the Haitian Volunteer Firefighters Association learn to use a saw to cut concrete during a USAID/OFDA-funded training in July 2010.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Hurricane Lab to Study Haiti Shelters

Continued from page 1

focus on roofing, frames, and foundations. Test results, expected early next year, will be disseminated throughout the humanitarian community to improve the quality of t-shelter programs.

From October 10 to 13, Roy Liu-Marques, research scientist from the International Hurricane Research Center, and Walter Conklin, manager of the center's Laboratory for Wind Engineering Research, examined various structural elements of USAID/OFDA-funded t-shelters to inform future testing in the laboratory.

USAID/OFDA Shelter and Settlement Technical Specialist Eddie Argeñal and USAID/OFDA Haiti Field Officer Kathleen Miner accompanied FIU staff.

In 2008, USAID/OFDA entered a five-year, \$4.5 million cooperative agreement with FIU to encourage new DRR activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. The recent visit was carried out under this agreement.



Photo by Kathleen Miner, USAID/OFDA

Staff from the International Hurricane Research Center at FIU, Walter Conklin (left) and Roy Liu-Marques (right), document structural elements of t-shelters during their USAID/OFDA-supported visit to Haiti.