



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

April 2011

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

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**USAID/OFDA Launches Small Grants Program for DRR Projects**

This month, the USAID/OFDA-supported Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) launched a small grants program to provide funding for disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The first grant awarded under the new program provided \$30,000 to the Fundación para la Cooperación Costa Rica-United States of America (CRUSA) to implement an early warning system for forest fires in small communities near La Amistad International Park, in Costa Rica's southern zone. CRUSA will match these funds and work closely with Costa Rica's Ministry of the Environment to implement the \$60,000 DRR project.

During the next 12 months, the CRUSA project will provide training as well as communications and firefighting equipment to three communities in the region, which is highly vulnerable to forest fires and possesses a wealth of biodiversity. The project will furnish a park ranger look-out station with equipment and communications systems to aid in the early detection of forest fires and the immediate notification of community firefighter brigades so that they can control the fire before it spreads. Addition-

**Continued on page 2**



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in San Jose

**CRUSA President Luis D. Escalante (left) accepts the small grant agreement from U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, Anne S. Andrew (center) and USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan (right), during the launch of the USAID/OFDA-supported RDAP small grants program earlier this month.**

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**USAID/OFDA Supports USAR Team Leaders Meeting**



Photo by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

**Team leaders from around the world met in Costa Rica to discuss lessons learned during recent responses.**

USAID/OFDA supported the urban search and rescue (USAR) Team Leaders Meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), held from April 5 to 7 in San Jose, Costa Rica.

Eighty participants from 44 countries attended the meeting, hosted by Costa Rica's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Response Commission.

"The recent earthquakes in Haiti, Chile, New Zealand, and Japan, make it clear that now more than ever, we need to be prepared not only for disasters in our own countries, but also to help others," said Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor and Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group of the Americas.

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**USAID/OFDA Provides Funds To Paraguay to Combat Dengue**

USAID/OFDA recently provided \$50,000 to Paraguay for the local purchase of equipment to help stem the spread of dengue.

The supplies provided to the Government of Paraguay (GoP) included medical equipment donated to the Ministry of Health to increase the capacity of hospitals in areas with high rates of the mosquito-borne illness. Equipment was also provided to the National Emergency System to help combat the spread of mosquitoes.

U.S. Ambassador Liliana Ayalde donated the USAID/OFDA-funded equipment to the GoP on April 18.

## Small Grants to Support DRR Efforts

Continued from page 1

ally, the project will set up three storage areas in which to maintain firefighting and personal protection equipment for the brigades, as well as build fire lanes and water storage areas to assist in controlling the fires.

CRUSA will work closely with the Ministry of the Environment and members of the three communities to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project after the early warning system is set up.

"This is a great example of the type of community-based projects we wish to support. The overall goal of the small grants program is to contribute U.S. Government funds for local projects in support of USAID/OFDA/LAC's strategic DRR goals and objectives, including: safeguarding livelihoods assets, preventing shelter loss, and building capacity for disaster preparedness and response," explained USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

As of mid-April, the RDAP had approved five other small grants, ranging from \$30,000 to \$46,500, to support community-based DRR projects in Belize, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and Panama.

In Belize, the RDAP is providing \$30,000 to the Belize Red Cross to fund a five-month project to complete the refurbishment of hurricane/flood shelters and bolster independently powered communications systems in four flood-vulnerable villages of the Belize River Valley: May Pen, Flower Bank, LEMONAL, and Rancho Dolores.

In Brazil, the new program is providing \$30,000 to Caritas to implement a 12-month project to increase rural communities resilience to drought. The project will train community leaders how to better manage scarce water resources, help build rainwater collection and storage areas, and help establish alternative sources of income to supplement families' reduced agricultural income during drought situations.

In Chile, the RDAP is providing \$34,000 to the Fundación Integra to assist 13 children's daycare centers in the Los Ríos Region with basic emergency planning, equipment, and infrastructure improvement to ensure that the centers are prepared to respond during adverse events. The nine-month project, which will benefit 2,077 young children and 420 staff members, will identify and prepare evacuation routes, install emergency alarm systems, and provide first-aid kits to the daycare centers.

In the Dominican Republic, the small grants program is providing \$46,500 to the Fundación Integral Niños Felices de America to support a six-month project to implement environmental protection and mitigation work in El Chavón neighborhood of the La Chapea Glen, in Los Alcarrizos Municipality. The project will reforest the La Chapea watershed area and work with various sectors of the community, including student clubs, neighborhood associations, church groups, and others, to emphasize the importance of restoring and preventing pollution in this area.

In Panama, the program is providing \$35,000 to Prodeso to design a model program to help school supervisors increase school safety and disaster risk management at schools in Bocas del Toro and Santiago de Veraguas. The 12-month project will help school supervisors identify risks, then design, execute, evaluate, and systematize a disaster risk management plan in at least three schools.

The RDAP plans to continue providing small grants for DRR projects in the LAC region during the next couple of years.

"We are hoping to shed light on DRR activities by funding pilot projects that might later serve as examples for other vulnerable communities to become more engaged in DRR activities," explained RDAP Administrative Director Michael Curry.

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  
www.usaid.gov/ofdalac

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### Florida International University Hosts DRR and CCA Study Tour

With USAID/OFDA support, the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami recently held a one-week study tour, or *pasantía*, on DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA).

The *pasantía* brought together 16 professionals, technicians, and public administrators with DRR and/or CCA management responsibilities. Participants came from Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks & Caicos Islands, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Bangladesh, and Nepal. USAID/OFDA/LAC Regional Advisor Sidney Velado and RDAP Technical Manager Fabián Arellano also participated in the tour.

The *pasantía*, held from February 28 to March 4, aimed to bridge the gap between conceptual and operational/practical knowledge by combining site visits, presentations, real-world observations, and discussions, taking advantage of notable DRR and CCA experiences and capabilities of various sectors in South Florida, including local governments, academia, businesses, and non-governmental organizations.



Participants of the recent USAID/OFDA-supported DRR and CCA study tour in South Florida.

Photo courtesy of Florida International University

## COMING UP

### Tsunami Warning System Meeting

USAID/OFDA staff from the LAC regional office plan to participate in the meeting of the Intergovernmental Coordinating Group-CARIBE Early Warning System for Tsunamis and Other Coastal Hazards, scheduled to take place in the Dominican Republic from April 26 to 29.

### Course on Using Water to Combat Fires

USAID/OFDA is supporting a new course on effective use of water to combat forest fires. The course, developed by the RDAP for leaders of firefighter brigades in countries where USAID/OFDA has provided water pumps to help combat forest fires, is scheduled to be held in Costa Rica from April 27 to 29.

### DRR Workshop with Partners in Paraguay

The RDAP plans to hold a DRR workshop with members of Paraguay's National Risk Management Network, known as "La Red," in Paraguay from April 29 to 30.

### USAID/OFDA Meeting with MDROs

USAID/OFDA is planning to meet with U.S. mission disaster relief officers (MDROs) from throughout Central America and the Caribbean to discuss 2011 hurricane season preparedness and response capabilities. The meeting with Central American MDROs is scheduled in Panama from May 5 to 6. The meeting with Caribbean MDROs is scheduled in Barbados from May 17 to 18.