



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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo by Dante Torres, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA supports efforts in the region to prepare communities for tsunamis and other coastal hazards. Above, the coastline near Chanco, Chile, was affected by an earthquake and tsunami in 2010.

Supporting Tsunami Preparedness

On March 11, emergency authorities from northern Mexico to southern Chile awoke to the news that a tsunami wave generated by a powerful earthquake in Japan was expected to impact the Pacific coast of Latin America.

"Every single country in the region took the threat seriously and took a variety of actions, from issuing warnings to evacuating populations considered to be vulnerable," said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard, who participates in ongoing efforts to strengthen tsunami early warning systems in the region.

Authorities of South American countries where the estimated arrival of the tsunami coincided with high tide evacuated thousands of families from vulnerable coastal areas.

Fortunately, the tsunami waves that reached various Latin American countries caused only limited damage -- unlike Japan, where the tsunami caused widespread destruction.

"In light of what happened in Japan, putting in place and strengthening systems for warning people in coastal areas has taken on renewed urgency," Leonard said. "Everyone re-

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Damage along the coast of Chile after the 2010 tsunami.



Photo by Larry Sacks, USAID/Peru

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Provides Assistance to Bolivia after Floods, Landslides

Heavy rainfall has caused flooding and landslides in Bolivia that resulted in 50 deaths and affected nearly 70,000 people in six of the country's nine departments, as of mid-March.

Landslides in La Paz Department, particularly in the eastern neighborhoods of Pampahasi, Kupini, Callapa, Callapa II, and Irpavi II, have destroyed hundreds of houses,

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Photo by Carlos Córdova, USAID/OFDA

Women at the Ciudad de Dios shelter in La Paz use a USAID/OFDA-supported water system.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Publishes Basic Guidance Document on Protection

USAID/OFDA is encouraging partners to mainstream protection of vulnerable populations into as many programs as possible, to help make beneficiaries safer from harm, exploitation, and abuse, and ensure that vulnerable groups can gain access to humanitarian assistance.

To provide an overview and practical guidance for implementing protection, USAID/OFDA has published a basic protection guidance document, which is available at www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/sectors/files/fy2011/protection_guidance.pdf.

COMING UP

INSARAG Team Leaders Meeting

USAID/OFDA is supporting the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) annual global meeting of urban search and rescue (USAR) team leaders, scheduled to take place in Costa Rica from April 5 to 7. USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan, who is also the Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group of the Americas, will participate in the inauguration of the event, hosted by Costa Rica's National Risk Prevention and Emergency Response Commission.

Forest Firefighter Mobilization Exercises

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists (DRMS) are providing technical assistance for upcoming forest firefighter mobilization exercises scheduled to take place in Bolivia, from April 8 to 10, and in Colombia, from May 5 to 8.

U.S. National Hurricane Conference

USAID/OFDA staff and DRMS from the Caribbean region plan to participate in the 2011 National Hurricane Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, from April 18 to 22.

Caribbean Tsunami Warning System Meeting

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisors John Kimbrough and Julie Leonard 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.

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Provides Assistance to Flood-Affected Families in Bolivia

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displaced nearly 6,000 people, and affected communications, electricity, and water services throughout the area.

In early March, USAID/OFDA activated a three-person team to conduct damage assessments in affected communities.

On March 12, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 through USAID/Bolivia to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for the local purchase and distribution of non-food emergency relief supplies, including shelter materials, blankets, and hygiene kits, throughout affected communities.

USAID/OFDA also provided \$10,000 to IOM through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program for the local purchase of supplies including stoves, kitchen sets, water containers, and blankets to distribute to affected families in shelters.

USAID/Bolivia mission disaster relief officer Stanley Blanco and USAID/OFDA team members survey landslide damage.



Photo courtesy of Sergio Lema



Photo courtesy of Lauren Koellermeier, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard (back row, third from right) and other participants of the Inter-ICG group are working to harmonize the world's four tsunami warning systems.

Supporting Tsunami Preparedness

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alizes there is a need to further develop the capacity to forecast the impact of tsunami waves as well as to increase warning capacity and readiness at the community level."

Since early 2006, USAID/OFDA has been supporting the development of an early warning system (EWS) for tsunamis and other coastal hazards in the Caribbean and adjacent areas, in coordination with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

"When the Indian Ocean tsunami happened in 2004, there was only one system in place, in the Pacific Ocean. After the Indian Ocean disaster, there was agreement to stand up systems around the globe: one in the Indian Ocean, one in the North-east Atlantic and Mediterranean, and one in the Caribbean," Leonard explained.

Now, scientists and disaster management experts, including Leonard, who is part of the IOC's Intergovernmental Coordinating Group's Working Group IV on Preparedness, Readiness, and Resilience, are working to unify standards of the world's four tsunami warning systems.

USAID/OFDA has supported the development of the Caribbean warning system and human capacity in a variety of ways.

In August 2006, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$250,000 to the University of the West Indies' Seismic Research Unit to upgrade the Eastern Caribbean seismograph network to enhance its ability to detect potentially tsunamigenic events in a timely fashion and to improve data sharing among seismological organizations in order to enable integration into a regional tsunami warning system.

In September 2007, USAID/OFDA approved a \$475,000 grant to the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA) to fund a two-year project to empower coastal communities to prepare for and respond to tsunamis and other coastal hazards. The project had two fundamental components. The first was to create an effective framework of interagency protocols and procedures for receiving and disseminating warnings to all stakeholder agencies and potentially affected communities. The second was to develop public education and awareness materials for participating states to use in national campaigns to inform coastal communities about the threat of tsunamis and other coastal hazards.

USAID/OFDA has also supported various workshops, meetings, and trainings for disaster planners, seismic network operators, and government emergency authorities with the aim of advancing tsunami preparedness in the region.

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