



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

DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo courtesy of the Colombian Red Cross

In November and December, USAID/OFDA provided \$500,000 to the Colombian Red Cross to provide relief supplies to flood-affected families.

Providing Assistance to Flooded Colombia

Heavy rains in Colombia this season have caused floods and landslides that have affected more than 2.1 million people and caused significant infrastructure damages in 64 percent of the country's 1,102 municipalities.

As of December 22, floods and landslides since March had caused 284 deaths, with 63 people reported missing, affected more than 316,000 houses, and destroyed 3,348 houses, according to Colombia's National Risk Management Directorate. Additionally, floods affected 654,000 hectares of agricultural lands, 727 sections of road, 58 automobile bridges, 53 pedestrian bridges, 508 schools, 37 community

centers, 12 health centers, and 122 aqueducts.

The Government of Colombia declared a national public calamity on November 18 and requested international assistance. In response, USAID/OFDA activated a five-person assessment team and provided more than \$1 million in humanitarian aid to Colombia to benefit affected families, including \$510,000 provided to CHF International for the local purchase and distribution of non-food emergency items to an estimated 1,550 affected families. USAID/OFDA also provided \$500,000 to the Colombian Red Cross to provide

Continued on page 2

Heavy rains in Colombia have caused widespread floods and landslides. At right, emergency officials in Bogotá assist with evacuations.



Photo courtesy of the Bogotá Emergency Prevention and Response Fund

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Activates Team to Assist with Volcano Response

In response to heightened activity at Tungurahua Volcano in Ecuador in early December, USAID/OFDA activated a three-person assessment team to assist the Government of Ecuador with monitoring and response activities.

The team also helped to coordinate a donation of USAID/OFDA-funded clean-up tools, including 750 shovels, 2,000 brooms, and 10,000 sacks purchased through implementing partner Fundación Gestión Ecuador, to emergency officials in Tungurahua, Bolívar, and Chimborazo provinces to help clean up ash from the volcano.



Photo by Carlos Proaño, USAID/OFDA

The USAID/OFDA assessment team delivers brooms to officials in Guaranda, Bolívar Province, to help clean up the volcanic ash.

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Provides Assistance to Panama after Heavy Rains, Floods

Heavy rains since early December have caused floods and landslides that have affected more than 14,000 people in Panama.

In response, USAID/OFDA activated a four-person assessment team to help evaluate damages and to coordinate U.S. Government humanitarian assistance to Panama.

On December 11, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 for the local purchase of emergency supplies including kitchen sets and water treatment kits. On December 19, USAID/OFDA airlifted relief supplies valued at \$166,000 including transportation, including 100 rolls of plastic sheeting, 3,000 blankets, 3,000 water containers, and 3,072 hygiene kits, from the USAID/OFDA warehouse in Miami, Florida, to Panama.

"We are committed to collaborating with the Government of Panama to support those in need because of the recent heavy rains," said LAC Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Education Forum Reviews Experiences in Region

In late November, education experts from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean who have worked with USAID/OFDA to promote school safety programs gathered in Panama to discuss how to improve education for disaster risk management.

During the 3rd Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Education for Risk Management, more than 70 participants from 16 countries shared their experiences, reviewed success stories, and discussed new ideas for approaching disaster risk management in the region's educational institutions.

"It was a great opportunity for mutual enrichment among participants from all levels of educational institutions all over the region. These experts offered recommendations that will have a positive impact on future risk management education," said Manuel Ramírez, disaster risk management specialist in charge of the education component of the USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), which organized the November 25 and 26 event.

"The recommendations are oriented toward promoting and developing a culture of disaster risk management among future generations through educational curricula and well-designed institutional and inter-institutional risk management plans. The forum helped to identify the tasks that educational institutions must take on to reduce disaster risks and help communities recover from adverse events," Ramírez added.

In addition to education experts, representatives attended from the American Red Cross, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, Superior Central American University Council, CEPREDENAC, European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Mission (ECHO), UNICEF, and the U.N. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

Also during the forum, Ramírez presented the preliminary version of a book documenting 16 experiences in implementing the USAID/OFDA school safety program in various countries. The RDAP plans to publish the book early next year to serve as a study guide for institutions that offer careers related to education.



Photo by Ana Silvia Fernández, USAID/OFDA

More than 70 people participated in the regional forum to share experiences in education for risk management.



Photo by Jairo Fernández, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA assessment team members and representatives of the Colombian Red Cross visit areas in Atlántico Department affected by the failure of the Dique Canal levee.

Helping Flood-Affected Families in Colombia

Continued from page 1

emergency relief supplies, including hygiene kits, kitchen sets, mosquito nets, and hammocks, to affected inhabitants of Bolívar Department as well as communities in Atlántico Department affected by failure of the Dique Canal levee. As of December 20, floods in the Dique Canal area covered an estimated 400 square kilometers (154 square miles) and had affected more than 47,000 people in at least eight municipalities.

Two USAID/OFDA team members were deployed to the Dique Canal area to assist with damage assessments and needs evaluations, as well as to provide technical assistance to the Governor of Atlántico Department, Eduardo Verano de la Rosa, during the response.

The rest of the USAID/OFDA team, led by Colombia-based disaster risk management specialist Juan Carlos Lobo, is monitoring the distribution of USAID/OFDA-funded relief supplies by the Colombian Red Cross and CHF International and conducting assessments in other affected areas, including Antioquia and Santander departments.

"The team is coordinating closely with USAID/Colombia staff, including Mission Disaster Relief Officer Jerry Marcus. We will continue to collaborate with the Government of Colombia to assist those affected by the floods," said LAC Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

COMING UP

Regional Stakeholders Consultation Forum

USAID/OFDA is working with the Center for the Coordination of Natural Disasters Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC) to organize a consultation forum with key disaster preparedness and response partners in the region. USAID/OFDA plans to share its five-year regional disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy with stakeholders in the meeting, which is scheduled to be held in Guatemala from January 24 to 26.

Costa Rican Firefighters Mobilization

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists Luisa Alfaro and Fernando Calderón will provide technical assistance for Costa Rica's IV National Forest Firefighter Brigade Mobilization Exercise, scheduled to be held in Agua Caliente de Cartago from January 27 to 30.

Internal Discussion on Urban Disasters

Recognizing the ever-increasing risk of large-scale disasters in the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean, USAID/OFDA/LAC regional advisors and other key staff plan to meet in Costa Rica on February 2 and 3 to discuss DRR and response preparedness in the context of urban disasters.

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



Tel: (011-506) 2290-4133

E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov

Internet: www.usaid.gov

Keyword: ofdalac