



## 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 Olivier Joseph, USAID/OFDA

**Members of the Haitian Volunteer Firefighters Association practice using leverage to move a large block of concrete during a recent USAID/OFDA-supported urban search and rescue (USAR) training for 25 first responders.**

### Helping Haiti Prepare for Disasters

USAID/OFDA recently facilitated urban search and rescue (USAR) training to 25 volunteer first responders from throughout Haiti's West Department, as part of efforts to help build local capacity for disaster response.

USAR experts from the Los Angeles, California, and Fairfax, Virginia, county USAR teams provided the training from July 12 to 18.

The training helped to build the skills needed to locate and extricate people trapped in collapsed structures, focusing on the proper use of the search and rescue equipment donated

by the Los Angeles and Fairfax USAR teams to the Haitian Volunteer Firefighters Association in February 2010. The equipment, worth about \$500,000, was used by the USAR teams that USAID/OFDA deployed to Haiti to assist with rescue efforts following the January 12 earthquake.

"Search and rescue teams played a critical role in the aftermath of the earthquake, saving 136 people from the rubble," said USAID/Haiti Mission Director Carleene Dei. "With this specialized training, Haitians will be

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**Experts from the Los Angeles, California, and Fairfax, Virginia, county USAR teams provided the training in Haiti. At right, a member of the Los Angeles County team (center) teaches Haitian volunteer firefighters how to properly tie a knot.**



Photo by Olivier Joseph, USAID/OFDA

### DISASTER RESPONSE

#### Helping Mexico after Alex

In July, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$420,000 in humanitarian assistance to benefit families in northeastern Mexico affected by intense rains from the category two Hurricane Alex in late June and Tropical Depression Two in early July.

Floods and mudslides from these rains affected tens of thousands of people and caused significant infrastructure damage, prompting the Government of Mexico (GoM) to declare a state of emergency in 94 municipalities of Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas states.

In response, USAID/OFDA sent a five-person team to Monterrey, the capital of Nuevo León, to assist the GoM with assessments. USAID/OFDA also provided \$350,000 through USAID/Mexico to purchase personal hygiene kits, kitchen sets, and cleaning tools such as shovels and wheelbarrows to benefit affected populations in the three states.



Photo by Alhy Daniel Núñez, USAID/OFDA

**USAID/OFDA team member Pedro Soto (center) and representatives of the Mexican Red Cross and Civil Protection inspect USAID/OFDA-donated kitchen sets for affected families.**

### DISASTER RESPONSE

#### Volcano Monitoring Equipment Provided to Guatemalan Agency

In response to the eruption of Guatemala's Pacaya Volcano in late May, the USAID/OFDA-funded Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) has donated \$25,000 worth of monitoring equipment to Guatemala's seismological and vulcanological agency, INSIVUMEH, to replace equipment damaged by the recent volcanic activity.

The equipment consists of two telemetered seismic monitoring stations and two telemetry repeaters to assist with volcano hazard mitigation.

## COMING UP

### Damage Assessment Program in Peru

USAID/OFDA is scheduled to meet with the Peruvian National Civil Defense Institute, Volunteer Firefighters Corps, Swiss cooperation agency COSUDE and the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Lima, Peru, on August 10 to review advances in the national program for damage assessment and needs analysis.

### Risk Management Course in Guyana

The first USAID/OFDA Risk Program Management Course is scheduled to be provided in Guyana from August 10 to 13. USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Clive Lorde is organizing the course, which provides the knowledge and skills required to develop and manage programs related to disaster risks and emergencies.

### INSARAG Advisory Committee Meeting

USAID/OFDA is supporting an upcoming meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) Americas Region. Members of the INSARAG Americas Advisory Committee will meet in Bogotá, Colombia, from August 16 to 18 to review the annual work plan and finalize arrangements for the INSARAG Regional Earthquake Simulation Exercise (SIMEX) to take place in Bogotá in mid-November. Urban search and rescue teams from the Americas and other INSARAG regions will be invited to participate in the simulation exercise.

### Workshop on Economic Recovery

USAID/OFDA is organizing a regional workshop on economic recovery and livelihoods support as a component of disaster response and risk reduction programming. The workshop, which targets non-governmental organizations with which USAID/OFDA partners during humanitarian responses to disasters in the region, is scheduled to take place from August 23 to 24 in San Jose, Costa Rica.

### USAID/OFDA Training in Southern Peru

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Dante Torres plans to meet with representatives of Bomberos Unidos Sin Fronteras (Firefighters without Borders) in Lima, Peru, from August 27 to 29 to discuss providing USAID/OFDA-designed training courses in southern Peru as part of the memorandum of understanding the two agencies signed earlier this year.

### Workshops on Gender and Disasters

USAID/OFDA is supporting an upcoming series of sub-regional workshops on gender and disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the International Organization for Migration. The first workshop, for Central American participants, is scheduled for Guatemala from September 20 to 22. The second, for South American participants, is scheduled for Colombia from October 4 to 6. The third, for Caribbean participants, is scheduled for Trinidad and Tobago in late October or early September.

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Photo by Olivier Joseph, USAID/OFDA

**First responders from throughout Haiti's West Department learn to use a saw to cut through concrete during the recent USAR training to help build Haitian local capacity for disaster response.**

## Building USAR Capacity in Haiti

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better equipped to respond to hurricanes and other disasters."

Chief Ardouin Zephirin of the Haitian Volunteer Firefighters Association said, "The things we learned this week will help us save lives and enable us to train other first responders throughout Haiti."

Highlights of the USAR training included instruction regarding safety, engineering, resource management, and rescue operations; training in lifting and moving portions of collapsed structures; proper shoring of portions of collapsed structures; and the construction and use of a rope rescue system to lower a load under control.

USAID has been working to strengthen USAR capacities in Haiti since the November 2008 collapse of a primary school in Port-au-Prince that resulted in the deaths of 100 people, mostly children.

In 2009, USAID/OFDA deployed an assessment team composed of USAID/OFDA disaster response professionals and USAR specialists from Fairfax County to Haiti for 10 days to help develop a USAR program support strategy. With that visit, the Government of Haiti agreed to create a working group to develop a national USAR strategy and policy directions.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

### Assisting Brazil with Flood Response

In response to the floods and mudslides that destroyed more than 32,000 houses in northeastern Brazil in June, USAID/OFDA provided technical assistance to Brazilian emergency management officials to design a temporary shelter module using USAID/OFDA reinforced plastic sheeting.

USAID/OFDA also provided 20 rolls of plastic sheeting to assist with shelter construction and \$100,000 for the local purchase of emergency relief supplies to distribute to affected families in the states of Alagoas and Pernambuco.

USAID/OFDA disaster management specialists Antonio Pinheiro, Carlos Córdova, and Alexandre Oliveira traveled to affected areas to coordinate the U.S. Government's humanitarian assistance with local emergency officials.



**Residents survey the damage from floods and mudslides in Branquinha, Brazil.**

Photo by Antonio Pinheiro, USAID/OFDA