



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

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA and Save the Children Assist Families in El Salvador

USAID/OFDA is providing \$557,000 to Save the Children to support emergency relief for children and families affected by severe flooding in El Salvador.

In early November 2009, heavy rains associated with Hurricane Ida caused severe floods and landslides that resulted in loss of life and the displacement of more than 15,000 people in the five hardest-hit departments.

With funding from USAID/OFDA, Save the Children will provide livelihood opportunities, temporary shelter, and potable water to an estimated 21,000 people in the departments of Cuscatlán and La Paz.

Save the Children is working to mitigate the critical situation in the first six months of the emergency by providing cash-for-work opportunities to members of an estimated 700 affected families with children. Activities include cleaning schools, rehabilitating damaged homes, and draining standing water from fields and community roads.

According to the organization, schools should be vacated and cleaned as soon as possible so that classes can begin on time later this month. This will allow for some sense of normalcy for children affected by the floods. The flooding left an estimated 111 schools in need of repairs and cleaning.

Save the Children is also working to improve access to safe drinking water to prevent intestinal disease and death. The organization is repairing broken pumps, cleaning wells, repairing and replacing water pipes, and chlorinating water supplies.



Photo by Francisco Linares, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA installed a temporary water system in Verapaz in November (above); new funding aims to help restore permanent water systems.

The project will also provide temporary homes to families with small children, newborns, pregnant mothers, children with disabilities or elderly members whose homes have been destroyed. It will also support families with damaged houses to undertake basic repairs.

Finally, Save the Children will also provide training and capacity building for grow-

ing vegetables in home gardens to help ensure a balanced diet for affected families who will continue to receive high-carbohydrate food rations from the World Food Programme. Save the Children will provide seeds for vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, radishes, cucumbers and green beans, along with organic compost and tools, to an estimated 500 families.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Signs Memorandum of Understanding with Peru's Civil Defense



Photo courtesy of the Peru Volunteer Firefighters Corps

Representatives of USAID and INDECI sign the memorandum in Lima, Peru.

USAID/OFDA and Peru's National Institute for Civil Defense (INDECI) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cooperate on matters related to disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities.

USAID/OFDA/LAC Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and INDECI head General Luis Felipe Palomino signed the MOU in Lima on January 8.

Per the agreement, USAID/OFDA will provide technical assistance and cooperation in support of INDECI's efforts to create a nationwide system for post-disaster dam-

age evaluation and needs analysis, as well as strengthen urban search and rescue capabilities, implement the incident command system, and develop community-based early warning systems.

Other areas for mutual cooperation listed in the MOU include working with institutes of superior education, improving temporary shelter plans, strengthening local and national institutions, preparing for climate change, combating forest fires, and integrating the private sector into these efforts.



Photo by Fernando Calderón, USAID/OFDA

Future instructors of the USAID/OFDA-designed Basic Life Support Course participate in a training workshop.

New Basic Life Support Instructors Trained

In December, the USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) held the first workshop in Costa Rica to train potential instructors of the USAID/OFDA-designed Basic Life Support Course.

Eleven members of Costa Rica's Firefighters Corps successfully completed the course and must now teach two Basic Life Support Courses in order to receive certification as an instructor of the USAID/OFDA course.

The Firefighters Corps organized the course, which took place at the National Firefighters Academy from December 14 to 18, with technical assistance and funding from USAID/OFDA.

Peru-based USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Santiago Baltodano, who coordinates the Basic Life Support and Urban Search and Rescue components of the RDAP, supervised the training workshop.

The goal is for future Basic Life Support trainings to be provided by the Costa Rican instructors who completed the workshop.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Welcomes Regional Advisor

USAID/OFDA is pleased to welcome new Regional Advisor John Kimbrough to the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office.

Regional Advisor Kimbrough, who previously worked with USAID/OFDA in Sudan, arrived in San Jose on January 5. He will focus on the Caribbean Region, including monitoring USAID/OFDA-funded disaster risk reduction (DRR) projects and assisting with disaster response activities as necessary.

Kimbrough is already familiar with the Caribbean; he was based in Barbados from 2000 to 2002 when he worked with World Relief on DRR activities throughout the region.

"I am very happy to be back working in this region; my heart is in the Caribbean," Kimbrough said. During the next few months, he plans to visit most of the Caribbean countries in which USAID/OFDA supports projects and activities.

Southern Cone Coverage Restructured

The RDAP has restructured program coverage in South America's Southern Cone region.

As a result, disaster risk management specialist Miguel Palmieri no longer works with the program. USAID/OFDA thanks him for his years of service.

In the coming months, the RDAP plans to hire a Chile-based disaster risk management specialist to coordinate DRR training and technical assistance activities in that country.

Additionally, as of this month, the role of Argentinean-based disaster risk management specialist Jorge Grande has changed. He will now focus on providing assistance with special projects as required throughout the region.

COMING UP

Costa Rica Forest Firefighter Mobilization

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists Luisa Alfaro and Fernando Calderón are providing technical assistance to Costa Rica's National Forest Fire Commission in preparation for the III National Forest Firefighter Brigade Mobilization Exercise. The event will take place from January 14 to 17, in Atenas, Alajuela Province, with the goal of providing the nation's brigades with an opportunity to measure capabilities and exchange best practices to control forest fires.

Dominican Republic Education Workshop

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists Manuel Ramírez and Ricardo Berganza are organizing a technical workshop for Dominican Republic education officials to discuss disaster risk reduction in the education sector. The workshop will take place in Santo Domingo on January 18.

Disaster Management Alliance Conference

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists and staff from the regional office will participate in the Disaster Management Alliance's annual conference, organized by the Pan American Development Foundation and supported by USAID/OFDA. The "Regional Integration Conference: Driving Effective Partnerships for Disaster Management and Business Continuity" will take place from January 19 to 21, in Guatemala City. More than 70 participants from 11 countries are expected to attend the meeting.

MOU with Belize Ministry of Education

Acting USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Sidney Velado will sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Belize Ministry of Education on January 22. The MOU outlines each party's commitments in the process of developing a National School Safety Policy meant to increase awareness of school safety in more than 500 schools in Belize.

Meeting with Stakeholders in Belize

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Beryl Armbrister will facilitate a meeting with stakeholders in Belize on January 22 to discuss disaster preparedness efforts as well as efforts to create a National School Safety Policy.

Risk Management Planning in Panama

USAID/OFDA is supporting a disaster risk management planning workshop at the Universidad Especializada de las Americas in Panama, from January 27 to 29. USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Manuel Ramírez will attend the workshop and help the university draft a disaster management plan.

Ecuador Forest Firefighter Mobilization

USAID/OFDA is supporting the forest firefighter mobilization exercise in Quito, Ecuador, from January 29 to 31. USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Michael Camchong will participate in the event, coordinated by the Environment Ministry.

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