



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

### DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



Photo by Eduardo Gutierrez, USAID/OFDA

**USAID/OFDA disaster management specialist Beryl Armbrister (left) helps the Belize Red Cross deliver USAID/OFDA emergency supplies to communities in Belize affected by Tropical Storm Arthur in 2008.**

### USAID/OFDA Ready for Hurricane Season

USAID/OFDA staff members have been working on a variety of fronts to ensure that when a hurricane or tropical storm strikes anywhere in the Caribbean, Central America, or Mexico this hurricane season, USAID/OFDA can respond quickly to save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of the disaster.

Meteorological experts from Colorado State University have predicted that the 2009 Atlantic basin hurricane season, which begins on June 1 and continues until November 30, will be much calmer than last year (which was one of the most active seasons on record).

Scientists have forecast average tropical cyclone activity this season with 12 named storms, of which six are expected to develop into hurricanes. Only two of those hurricanes are predicted to become intense storms (category three or stronger on the Saffir-Simpson scale).

In the coming weeks, USAID/OFDA staff members plan to meet with

staff from the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, Eastern Caribbean Donors Group, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and others to coordinate preparedness efforts.

Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean, along with four regional advisors and support staff at the regional office in San Jose, Costa Rica, are available for immediate deployment for disaster response and risk reduction activities.

Another 21 disaster experts are located throughout the region and equipped with communications equipment to help monitor local conditions and coordinate disaster response efforts.

"In preparation for the season, we have strengthened our surge capacity program and reviewed our communications equipment and team capabilities. We've reviewed lessons learned from previous hurricane

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### DISASTER RESPONSE

### USAID/OFDA Provides Assistance to Mexico For Influenza Outbreak

In response to the Influenza A/H1N1 outbreak in Mexico, USAID/OFDA has deployed a technical advisor to assist the Government of Mexico (GoM) with logistics coordination of medical supplies and inventory.

The outbreak of the new strain of influenza was first detected in Mexico in late March. By early May, the virus had affected hundreds of people and caused at least 29 deaths in Mexico.

Dr. Pedro Soto, a physician and USAID/OFDA disaster management specialist, is using his experience in supply management and logistics to assist GoM health authorities to respond to the epidemic. He is also supporting USAID/Mexico's efforts during the emergency, working closely with mission disaster relief officer Molly Lindner.

USAID/OFDA also coordinated the shipment of 100,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, valued at more than \$973,000 including transport, that USAID's Bureau for Global Health (GH) donated to the GoM to provide first responders with respiratory, skin, and eye protection equipment, including disposable respirators, goggles, gloves and protective clothing.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services donated 400,000 courses of the antiviral medication Tamiflu to the GoM. The donation is valued at \$10 million. USAID/GH provided \$2.5 million to the U.N. World Health Organization and an additional \$2.5 million to the Pan American Health Organization to assist in controlling the spread of the virus.

USAID/OFDA staff from the regional office are monitoring the situation in other countries where cases have been confirmed (Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala) to determine if additional assistance is required.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico

**USAID/OFDA disaster management specialist Pedro Soto supervises the arrival of 100,000 PPE kits in Mexico City on May 2.**

## Getting Ready for Hurricane Season

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seasons and made adjustments that will allow us to respond faster and more efficiently," Callaghan said.

As part of preparedness efforts, Callaghan will participate in a series of hurricane season briefings next month in Washington, D.C., to inform the U.S. Military, U.S. Coast Guard, National Security Council, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Interaction, and Capitol Hill groups about USAID/OFDA preparedness.

Additionally, USAID/OFDA regional advisors will meet with U.S. mission disaster relief officers (MDROs) throughout the region to discuss USAID/OFDA hurricane preparedness and response strategies. The next MDRO meeting is scheduled to take place in the Caribbean from May 19 to 21 (see "Coming Up" section).

USAID/OFDA has replenished its warehouse in Miami, Florida, with emergency supplies including blankets, hygiene kits, medical supplies, plastic sheeting, water containers, and water treatment units. USAID/OFDA has standing agreements for charter air service in case of a disaster response.

USAID/OFDA also pre-positions personnel and relief supplies in advance of impending storms.

"We strongly believe in pre-deploying teams to work with embassies and NGO partners as the storm approaches. That's vital. This season we are preparing to pre-position relief commodities in Honduras, and have communications gear in place in the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica," Callaghan said.

For major disasters, such as following the series of storms that struck Haiti last year, USAID may deploy a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to provide emergency humanitarian assistance and support for humanitarian coordination.

Since 2004, USAID has provided more than \$176 million in response to the devastating effects of hurricanes and other tropical storms in Central America and the Caribbean.

### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

#### Paraguay Network Promotes Training

The USAID/OFDA-supported Paraguay Training Network for Emergencies and Disasters (widely referred to as La RED) is expanding its reach throughout this South American country.

La RED was founded nine years ago to pool resources and increase cooperation among emergency response organizations in Paraguay that recognized that their needs for training and capacity-building were bigger than their budgets.

The network, which is centered around USAID/OFDA-developed disaster preparedness training courses, has a Methodological Council focused on 10 areas of work. La RED is currently expanding its reach with the creation of regional methodological councils to better serve the entire country.

The network, which is run by volunteers, is also putting the finishing touches on its new Procedures Manual.

"La RED has faced great challenges. Once it was merely an idea born out of necessity, but through the years it has grown stronger and today continues to turn these challenges into opportunities," said Carlos Córdova, a USAID/OFDA disaster management specialist who helped the network get started.



Photo courtesy of La RED

*The current coordinators of the Paraguay Training Network are volunteers from the National Emergency Secretariat.*

### COMING UP

#### CDERA Board Meeting

USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor Tim Callaghan will attend the next Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) board meeting to discuss USAID/OFDA hurricane preparedness. The meeting is scheduled to take place from May 14 to 15 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

#### Eastern Caribbean Donor Group Meeting

USAID/OFDA representatives from the regional office will participate in the Eastern Caribbean Donor Group meeting on May 19 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

#### MDRO Workshop in the Caribbean

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Sidney Velado is organizing a workshop for USAID mission disaster relief officers (MDROs) throughout the Caribbean from May 19 to 21 in Bridgetown, Barbados, to discuss the role of MDROs in USAID/OFDA disaster response, preparedness programs, and risk reduction activities. Participants will also review USAID/OFDA preparedness for the upcoming Atlantic basin hurricane season.

#### Joint Humanitarian Operations Training

USAID/OFDA military liaison officer Kate Legates will conduct the upcoming Joint Humanitarian Operations Course at the U.S. Southern Command headquarters in Miami, Florida, from May 20 to 21. The training prepares military leaders for collaborative work with USAID during disaster response and humanitarian operations.

#### Red Cross Hurricane Season Meeting

USAID/OFDA representatives from the regional office will participate in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies hurricane season preparedness meeting on May 26 in Panama City.

#### Hurricane Season Donor Meeting

USAID/OFDA representatives from the regional office will participate in the international donor hurricane season meeting on May 27 in Panama City.

#### OCHA-REDLAC Meeting

USAID/OFDA disaster management specialist Manuel Santana will participate in the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Interagency Risk Emergency Disaster Working Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) meeting on June 2 in Panama City.

#### Tsunami Early Warning System Meeting

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Julie Leonard will attend the fourth meeting of the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Caribbean Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Early Warning System, scheduled from June 2 to 4 in Fort-de-France, Martinique.

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