



## SNAPSHOT

# Reducing Risks Through Volunteerism

**Thanks to USAID-ACCESO, volunteers in rural areas have been trained to plan for and manage risks associated with natural disasters.**



*Photo by Fintrac Inc.*

EDAN volunteers put their acquired knowledge to test during a simulation activity facilitated by project natural disaster specialists.

**“We reacted quickly and were able to provide the families with the zinc sheets...and wood they needed to rebuild.”**

*Jonatan Alvarado*

*–EDAN volunteer, municipal employee*

Residents of rural areas are often especially vulnerable to natural disaster risks such as floods, landslides, and forest fires because of a lack of infrastructure, technology, and training. To improve community response to emergency events, USAID-ACCESO natural disaster mitigation specialists train volunteers from the most vulnerable communities to conduct damage assessment and needs analyses (known as EDAN in Honduras) to effectively manage emergency situations.

Without EDAN volunteers or standardized emergency response guidelines, rural communities were more susceptible to widespread damage from natural disasters. The lack of trainings, superficial evaluations, and unreliable communications slowed response time during emergency situations, leaving many communities waiting for weeks or months for supplies.

In February 2012, USAID-ACCESO, with support from COPECO Regional 3 (Honduras’ national disaster prevention and response commission), began training volunteers in rural communities in EDAN methods and procedures.

Jonatan Alvarado, a municipal employee in Protección, Santa Bárbara, learned to assess damages, write reports, equip shelters, and identify evacuation routes. In November 2012, after a storm left 20 households roofless, Alvarado was put to test. He immediately enacted an EDAN analysis, working with local officials to respond to the community’s immediate needs.

“We reacted quickly and were able to provide the 20 families with zinc sheets for their roofs and wood they needed to rebuild,” Alvarado said.

Moisés Alvarado, deputy commissioner of COPECO in Copán, has also participated in several trainings and drills held by project specialists. He is now an instructor certified by the Office of the United States Foreign Disaster Assistance. “Thanks to USAID-ACCESO we have a stronger team with better capacities,” he said.

By building the capacity of rural residents, USAID-ACCESO has also helped improve COPECO’s effectiveness. The government body says they now have EDAN points of contact in 69 new communities. USAID-ACCESO has trained 178 EDAN volunteers in these municipalities, providing residents with access to qualified personnel who are prepared to deal with emergency situations.

The project continues training EDAN volunteers and instructors to share their skills and knowledge with other potential volunteers and national assistance authorities. USAID-ACCESO has trained 2,846 individuals in natural disaster mitigation, promoting access to information to safeguard the lives of household clients.