



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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Volcano Disaster Assistance Program Helps At-Risk Communities

USAID/OFDA, through a partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), works to save lives and reduce potential economic losses in communities affected by volcano emergencies.

The initiative, known as the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), offers the only rapid-response volcano crisis team in the world. VDAP also provides technical assistance to national volcano-monitoring organizations and collaborates with local scientists to install and improve seismic monitoring networks and assess potential volcanic hazards in order to develop early warning plans.

The most significant volcanic event in Latin America during fiscal year 2008 (FY 2008) occurred at Chaitén volcano in Chile. The volcano erupted for the first time in recorded history in early May, destroying much of the town of Chaitén (former gateway for ecotourism in Patagonia and a center of aquaculture in southern Chile). The initial explosive phase of the eruption, the largest so far in the 21st century, sent ash clouds more than 40,000 feet into the sky and deposited ash across southern Chile and Argentina. The Government of Chile (GOC) evacuated as many as 10,000 people from

Continued on page 2



Photo by Andy Lockhart, OFDA-USGS VDAP team



Photo by Andy Lockhart, OFDA-USGS VDAP team



Photo by Jeff Marso, OFDA-USGS VDAP team

VDAP seismologist John Power (above left), wearing a mask for protection from the fine ash and gases emitted by the active Chaitén volcano (right), works to install an antenna at a new remote monitoring station. VDAP scientists transported the equipment to the remote site in Chile by boat and oxcart (left).

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Saint Lucia Welcomes First National Intervention Team



Photo courtesy of Bill Mortley, Saint Lucia Red Cross

Members of the new National Intervention Team graduated during a ceremony held March 7 at the Saint Lucia Red Cross headquarters.

Saint Lucia recently welcomed its first National Intervention Team, made up of 23 team members trained in disaster management with support from USAID/OFDA and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Following five months of training in disaster risk management and response as part of the USAID/OFDA-supported Community Risk Reduction Project, team members graduated on March 7. USAID/OFDA regional advisor Sidney Velado attended the ceremony and congratulated the new team.

Saint Lucia is now better prepared to respond to any disaster that can affect the daily lives of its citizens, according to the Saint Lucia Red Cross.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Online DRR Course Launched

USAID/OFDA and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Disaster Management Center (UW-DMC) have teamed up to provide a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) self-study course online.

The goal is to provide concepts, information, tools, and instruments that will increase awareness and understanding of disaster risk management in general and risk reduction, transfer, and financing in particular. Anyone can enroll in the course, though there is a small fee for those who wish to obtain credit.

Since 1985, thousands of individuals from all over the world have enrolled in UW-DMC self-study courses and workshops. For more information, see <http://dmc.engr.wisc.edu>.

VDAP Helps Monitor Volcanoes

Continued from page 1

the area during the early stages of the eruption, preventing loss of life.

With USAID/OFDA funding, VDAP sent a four-person crisis-response team to Chile to provide technical support and assist Chilean geological agency SERNAGEOMIN to install new telemetered seismic stations at Chaitén volcano for remote monitoring purposes. The previous technology required that a person travel to the stations in potentially dangerous areas to collect data.

In response to the ongoing eruption of Chaitén, VDAP has remained in close contact with SERNAGEOMIN, helping interpret seismic data, monitoring the eruption with remote sensing data, and assisting the GOC in planning a new volcano early warning system.

Also during FY 2008, VDAP provided remote monitoring assistance to counterpart observatories in Colombia (due to unrest at Galeras, Huila, and Machín volcanoes), Costa Rica (Turrialba), Ecuador (Tungurahua), El Salvador (San Miguel), and Nicaragua (Concepción). The USAID/OFDA-funded program also spent nearly \$80,000 on equipment to improve monitoring networks in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Guatemala.

This month, as part of its technical assistance to the region, USAID/OFDA is sponsoring a VDAP-led workshop for Latin American seismologists who monitor volcanoes (see "Coming Up" section at right).

"This workshop is an important part of our partnership with VDAP, and will improve technical relationships with seismologists in the region as well as provide a great networking opportunity," said USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor Tim Callaghan.



USAID/OFDA archive photo

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Rene Carrillo addresses the press during a conference at the USAID/OFDA supply warehouse in Miami, Florida, in preparation for hurricane season.

Regional Advisor's Contributions Honored

The USAID/OFDA family extends a heartfelt thank you to regional advisor Rene Carrillo for his 20 years of humanitarian assistance to the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region as he prepares to retire later this month.

"The Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), which has trained tens of thousands of individuals in disaster risk management and provides technical assistance throughout the region, is part of Rene's legacy. He also led many disaster assistance response teams over the years and provided solid leadership to the LAC regional office. We are truly grateful," said LAC senior regional advisor Tim Callaghan.

Rene first joined the USAID/OFDA team in the late 1980s in Peru. Prior to that, he had worked for the U.S. Peace Corps, the American Red Cross, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

"Working for those institutions marked his personality and oriented his life in service of people who suffer," said retired USAID/OFDA regional advisor Ricardo Bermúdez, who worked with Rene for many years.

Rene transferred to the LAC regional office in San Jose in the early 1990s. Since then, he has focused on ensuring the success of the training and technical assistance program.

"From the beginning, Rene really identified with the program. Thanks to his skill and dedication, the program, begun by a handful of trainers, has expanded to include thousands of USAID/OFDA-trained instructors throughout the continent. This has substantially improved disaster prevention and response capabilities in the region," Bermúdez said.

COMING UP

Caribbean Disaster Relief Workshop

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Clive Lorde will participate in the Caribbean Disaster Relief Workshop scheduled to take place in Antigua from April 16-22.

Colombia Flood Response Review

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Phil Gelman will travel to Colombia to meet with other humanitarian workers on April 20 to review the recent response to the flood emergency in Tumaco.

WHO Caribbean Hurricane Meeting

USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Beryl Armbrister will attend the World Health Organization's hurricane preparedness meeting in the Bahamas from April 20-24.

PAHO Annual Meeting with Partners

USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor Tim Callaghan will attend the Pan American Health Organization's annual Partnership for Health Preparedness meeting in Ecuador from April 21-22.

Community of Practice Workshop

USAID/OFDA and the Latin American and Caribbean Center at Florida International University (FIU) will co-host a DRR community of practice meeting in Lima, Peru, from April 22-24, to advance ideas on implementing DRR through environmental and land use management.

Agreement with Swiss Cooperation Agency

USAID/OFDA plans to sign a memorandum of understanding with Swiss cooperation agency COSUDE in Lima, Peru, on April 24. The agreement will promote increased cooperation in urban search and rescue efforts in the region.

Volcano Preparedness Workshop

USAID/OFDA and the USGS, through the VDAP partnership, are organizing a workshop to support seismologists who monitor volcanoes in Latin America. Participants from 14 observatories in Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru are expected to attend the event, scheduled from April 27-May 11 in Colombia. Main objectives are to promote increased cooperation among the scientists, review and upgrade the hardware and software VDAP has provided to these observatories, and enlist seismologists' assistance in creating a seismicity manual of volcanic activity in the region.

Seminar for Journalists and Editors

USAID/OFDA/LAC staff members will participate in a DRR seminar for journalists and editors organized by FIU. The event will take place in Miami, Florida, from April 30-May 1.

Disaster Management Specialists Meeting

The 21 USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists who cover the LAC region will attend the annual RDAP staff meeting in San Jose from May 4-8.

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



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Tel: (011-506) 2290-4133

E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov

Internet: www.usaid.gov

Keyword: [ofdalac](#)