



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 Assists Three Countries Affected by Flooding

In late November, USAID/OFDA responded to floods and mudslides caused by heavy rainfall in Panama, Costa Rica, and Brazil by providing emergency relief supplies and other humanitarian assistance benefiting thousands of affected families. USAID/OFDA assessment teams were deployed to all three countries to help conduct assessments, coordinate with local emergency management officials, and oversee the distribution of relief commodities.

USAID/OFDA also provided funding for the local procurement and transport of emergency relief supplies, including plastic sheeting, water containers, blankets, and hygiene kits, to affected communities. In addition, on November 27 and 28, USAID/OFDA airlifted relief commodities valued at more than \$265,000, including transportation costs, from the USAID/OFDA warehouse in Miami, Florida, to Panama and Costa Rica.

USAID/OFDA also coordinated with U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) disaster relief teams based at the Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras to deliver more than 293,000 pounds of relief supplies, in nearly 100 helicopter missions, to flood-affected populations in Panama and Costa Rica.

Total U.S. Government humanitarian assistance in response to the recent floods



Photo by Eduardo Gutiérrez, USAID/OFDA

Residents in northwestern Panama examine roads damaged by flooding due to heavy rainfall in late November.

in Panama, Costa Rica, and Brazil exceeds \$1.5 million, including approximately \$400,000 from USAID/OFDA.

Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), highlighted the successful use of local disaster management experts hired through the LAC regional office's Surge Capacity Program during the recent responses. Callaghan emphasized that utilizing short-term surge capacity disaster manage-

ment consultants to augment the assessment teams has allowed USAID/OFDA to more effectively respond to disasters and the needs of affected populations.

PANAMA

Heavy rains beginning in mid-November caused floods and landslides in Panama that displaced more than 7,400 people, killed five individuals, and seriously injured at least eight others. The Government of Panama's

Continued on page 2

DISASTER RESPONSE

Haiti Disaster Assistance Response Team Stands Down



Photo by Pierre Cam Milfort, USAID/OFDA

Residents of Haiti's Southeast Department collect plantain roots for cultivation, distributed in November by USAID/OFDA implementing partner World Concern.

The USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) in Haiti "stood down" in early December following more than three months working to coordinate the U.S. Government's \$33.6 million humanitarian response to a series of storms and flooding earlier this year.

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Julie Leonard, who led the USAID/DART, will remain in Haiti at least part time until late April to monitor USAID/OFDA-funded activities.

Implementing partners in Haiti include the American Red Cross, International Organization for Migration, Pan American Development Foundation, Pan American Health Organization, Save the Children, U.N. agencies, World Concern, World Vision, and CHF.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Staff Train Peace Corps Volunteers

On November 17 and 18, Audrey Mullings, USAID/OFDA disaster management expert in Jamaica, and Karema Mitchell, a USAID/OFDA-trained staff member from Jamaica's Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), teamed up to train 20 Peace Corps volunteers in Jamaica in initial damage assessment.

The workshop helped volunteers better understand how to assess post-disaster damage in their communities, collate the data, and feed it to ODPEM in a standardized fashion. USAID/OFDA designed and developed the Initial Damage Assessment Course and materials used.

USAID/OFDA Responds to Floods

Continued from page 1

National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC) reported that floods damaged at least four bridges and several major roads.

USAID/OFDA deployed a surge capacity disaster management consultant and two field officers to assess flood damage and help coordinate the distribution of USAID/OFDA emergency relief supplies from the USAID/OFDA warehouse in Miami, including 5,000 blankets, hygiene kits, and water containers. Additionally, DOD disaster relief teams conducted 43 missions and delivered approximately 200,000 pounds of supplies by helicopter to affected areas in northwestern Panama.

COSTA RICA

In late November, heavy rains on the Caribbean coast resulted in floods that affected approximately 46,000 people in Costa Rica, including 5,408 individuals relocated to shelters. The Government of Costa Rica (GOCR) reported that the floods damaged or destroyed approximately 4,600 houses, as well as infrastructure including wells, bridges, dikes, and multiple sections of highway.

A five-member USAID/OFDA team, including a regional advisor, two disaster management experts, and two short-term surge capacity disaster management consultants, supported relief efforts in coordination with the GOCR's National Emergency Commission (CNE).

"This was the first time we had used surge capacity in a response in Costa Rica, and it was quite a success," said Costa Rica-based disaster management expert Fernando Calderón, who helped coordinate the relief effort. "We were able to quickly coordinate with the CNE, Red Cross, and World Vision, as well as the U.S. Southern Command, to deliver relief commodities to affected communities."

Team member María Luisa Alfaro highlighted the excellent coordination between USAID/OFDA staff and CNE officials in the field.

"We were on the ground conducting assessments before the official emergency declaration was issued and, therefore, were able to provide an excellent response," she said. Alfaro and the two surge consultants helped coordinate the Red Cross and World Vision ground distribution of airlifted USAID/OFDA relief commodities, including 100 boxes of reinforced plastic sheeting for temporary shelters and approximately 5,000 water containers, hygiene kits, and blankets, in addition to 10 chainsaws. U.S. military helicopters delivered both U.S. and Costa Rican emergency relief supplies to isolated mountain communities in Limón Province that were inaccessible by land due to floods. More than 93,000 pounds of supplies were delivered via 49 missions.

BRAZIL

Floods and mudslides caused by heavy rainfall in late November and early December destroyed infrastructure throughout the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil, isolating at least eight cities. Floods displaced more than 69,000 people, resulted in the deaths of nearly 120 individuals, and left 31 others missing. A three-member USAID/OFDA assessment team deployed to Santa Catarina state in late November to conduct assessments of affected areas and accompany Government of Brazil officials in relief operations. USAID/OFDA also provided \$100,000 through USAID/Brazil to implementing partner Catholic Relief Services for emergency assistance, including the local procurement and distribution of emergency relief supplies for affected populations.

CONDOLENCES

The USAID/OFDA/LAC family offers heartfelt condolences to Costa Rica-based USAID/OFDA disaster management expert Manuel Ramírez, whose wife Nuria passed away in late November.

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

Tel: (011-506) 2290-4133

E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov

Internet: www.usaid.gov

Keyword: ofdalac



DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



USAID/OFDA staff met with representatives from several international agencies on November 3 to address DRR education.

Photo by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

DRR Education Discussed with Agencies

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Rene Carrillo, disaster management expert Manuel Ramírez, and Fabián Arellano, technical director for the International Resources Group (IRG), which manages the USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Training and Technical Assistance Program in the region, met with representatives from several international agencies on November 3 to discuss DRR education. In attendance were Rafael Bonilla, International Red Cross school program advisor, Claudio Osorio, regional advisor for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Maria Eugenia Paniagua, executive secretary of the Central American Integration System's Educational and Cultural Coordinator (CECC-SICA), and Margarita Villalobos, Latin American communications officer for the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

New Disaster Management Experts Hired

USAID/OFDA is strengthening its network of disaster management experts in Latin American and the Caribbean with the addition of three new consultants for Haiti, Colombia and Ecuador. The consultants all have previous experience working with USAID/OFDA disaster assessment teams and are being hired through the International Resources Group (IRG). As of January 1, Juan Carlos Lobo and Michael Camchong will be working part-time as USAID/OFDA consultants for Colombia and Ecuador, respectively. The consultants will replace former Colombia/Ecuador disaster management expert Fabián Arellano, now technical director of the IRG-implemented regional training program. In addition, on January 19, Rose Luce Prevot will begin working full-time as the new USAID/OFDA consultant for Haiti.

USAID Book Launched in the Caribbean

On December 12, USAID/OFDA officially launched the English version of its book, "Time to Pass the Baton: Disaster Risk Reduction from the Perspective of Environmental Management, Land Use Management, Finance and Public Investment," in the Caribbean. The launch took place in Barbados at a four-day Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) conference entitled "Comprehensive Disaster Management -- A Catalyst for Change."

USAID/OFDA staff presented the book at a Caribbean disaster management conference in Barbados earlier this month.



Photo by Harris Anderson, CDERA