



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**



Photo by Alejandro Torres, USAID/OFDA

***USAID/OFDA disaster experts at the airstrip in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, review the plan to deliver relief supplies to families affected by Hurricane Felix in September 2007.***

**USAID/OFDA Ready for Hurricane Season**

USAID/OFDA hopes for the best and is prepared for the worst this Atlantic hurricane season, which began June 1 and continues through November 30.

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

Meteorological experts from the Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado State University have predicted that the 2008 Atlantic basin hurricane season will include above-average tropical cyclone activity with 15 named storms, of which eight will develop into hurricanes. Four of those hurricanes are predicted to become intense storms (category three or stronger on the Saffir-Simpson scale).

In recent weeks, USAID/OFDA staff members have met with counterparts from the American Red Cross, International Federation of the Red Cross, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, Eastern

Caribbean Donors Group, and others to coordinate preparedness efforts.

Tim Callaghan, Senior Regional Advisor for the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, four regional advisors, a communications officer, and support staff are stationed at the regional office in San Jose, Costa Rica, and available for immediate deployment as needed. Another 20 disaster experts are located throughout the region through the International Resources Group (IRG), which implements the regional USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program. The experts are all equipped with communications packages, including portable computers, GPS, and satellite phones.

"In preparation for what looks like an active season, we have strengthened our surge capacity program and reviewed our communications equipment and team capabilities. We've reviewed lessons learned from other hurricane seasons and made adjustments that will allow us to respond faster. We've also established memorandums of understanding with dif-

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**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**Volcano Assistance Provided to Chile**

USAID has provided \$80,000 to assist the Government of Chile (GOC) monitor volcanic conditions at Chaitén Volcano, which began to erupt last month after being dormant for 173 years.

The volcano, located 760 miles south of the capital city of Santiago, began to spew molten rock and ash on May 2. In response, the GOC issued a red alert and began evacuating people living within a 30-mile radius of the volcano. As of mid-May, at least 8,000 people had been evacuated.

In response, the U.S. Government offered assistance to the GOC through the USAID/OFDA-supported U.S. Geological Survey Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP).

As of early May, the Chilean geological agency SERNAGEOMIN was monitoring activity at Chaitén Volcano using four seismic stations near the volcano. The technology at these stations requires that a person travel to the stations to collect data on the volcano.

With funding from USAID, VDAP will install new telemetered seismic stations and assist SERNAGEOMIN with data interpretation. On May 16, VDAP sent a three-person team of experts to Chile to assist with station and telemetry installation and provide technical support.

In February, VDAP provided equipment and technical support to the Government of Ecuador following the eruption of Tungurahua Volcano.

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**Teaming up with Canada For Risk Reduction Course**

USAID/OFDA and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have teamed up to provide a disaster risk reduction course in Ottawa, Canada, from June 18 to 20.

USAID/OFDA will provide three instructors for the course, which was developed by USAID/OFDA and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Fifteen participants from CIDA and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs are expected to participate in the three-day course, which aims to increase participants' awareness of natural hazard risk management in general and risk reduction in particular.

CIDA has participated in the delivery and fine-tuning of the USAID/OFDA course in the Caribbean region since it was first offered there in 2006.

## COMING UP

### Caribbean Disaster Management Meetings

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and Barbados-based Regional Consultant Clive Lorde will attend the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency's Workshop on the Comprehensive Disaster Management Database, to be held on June 12 in Saint Michael, Barbados. Additionally, Dominica-based USAID/OFDA Consultant Cecil Shillingford will represent the LAC Regional Office in the Disaster Management Seminar for the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories, to be held in Montserrat on June 16 and 17 and organized by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development.

### Joint Humanitarian Operations Training

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan will speak at the upcoming Joint Humanitarian Operations Course in Miami, Florida. Members of the U.S. Southern Command will attend the June 17-18 event. USAID/OFDA developed the two-day training in 2004 to establish a formal learning environment for U.S. military leaders to discuss the relationship between USAID, its partners, and the U.S. military, and prepare participants for collaborative work during humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations.

### USAID/OFDA Warehouse Press Event

USAID/OFDA Director Ky Luu will join Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and International Resources Group Chief of Party Stephen Smith, from the LAC Regional Office in San Jose, at a press conference June 19 at the USAID/OFDA warehouse in Miami, Florida. The USAID/OFDA staff will discuss USAID's preparations for the hurricane season that began this month, as well as the emergency supplies stored in the warehouse, and answer questions about USAID/OFDA assistance following disasters in the region.



USAID/OFDA archive photo

*USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan (left) and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez inspect the blankets and other emergency supplies stored in the Miami warehouse.*

### Crisis Management Exercise in Barbados

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado will represent the LAC Regional Office during the upcoming State Department Crisis Management Exercise for U.S. Embassy staff in Bridgetown, Barbados. The June 19-20 exercise will cover the basics for responding to emergencies affecting embassy staff.

### USAID/OFDA Networks with Key Partners

LAC regional advisors will meet with representatives of key NGOs as well as government officials in various countries in the coming weeks to review USAID/OFDA capabilities and coordination with other humanitarian agencies. Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and Regional Consultant Manuel Santana will attend the next Partner Day, scheduled for June 20 in the Dominican Republic.

## Focus on Hurricane Preparedness

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ferent agencies and groups so that we can respond in a more efficient manner," Callaghan said.

USAID/OFDA and IRG have reviewed and updated their surge capacity plan, which includes the ability to call on one or more of the 105 disaster experts in countries throughout the region for full-time disaster response assistance as necessary.

As part of preparedness efforts, Callaghan is participating in two days of hurricane season briefings in Washington, D.C., on June 16 and 17, to inform the U.S. Military, U.S. Coast Guard, Homeland Security, National Security Council, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Interaction, and Capitol Hill groups about USAID/OFDA preparedness. USAID/OFDA regional advisors have also conducted briefings for USAID mission disaster relief officers in the region.

USAID/OFDA has replenished its warehouse in Miami, Florida, with emergency supplies -- including blankets, chainsaw kits, hygiene kits, medical supplies, plastic sheeting, water containers, and water treatment units. This year, USAID/OFDA has planned for broader air coverage and established new agreements for charter air service.

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 NGOs as the storm approaches. That's vital. And this season we've already pre-positioned relief commodities in Jamaica, Nicaragua, and Honduras, as well as placing communications gear in countries that have been struck by hurricanes before and are likely to be struck again, including Barbados, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica," Callaghan said.

Since 2003, USAID has provided more than \$145 million in response to the devastating effects of hurricanes and tropical storms in Central America and the Caribbean.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

### Helping Nicaragua Recover From Tropical Storm Alma

USAID/OFDA has provided \$50,000 to benefit families in Nicaragua affected by Tropical Storm Alma.

The storm struck the Pacific coast of Nicaragua on May 29 and tore the roofs off of 1,140 houses in the departments of León and Chinandega, according to preliminary estimates from Nicaragua's Civil Defense.

The USAID/OFDA funds will be assigned to the organization Save the Children to help repair the roofs of an estimated 128 damaged homes in León and Chinandega.

Save the Children has been working in the department of Chinandega for the past six years, implementing a USAID-funded food security program. Save the Children has also been working in the department of León to implement health programs in remote communities. Because of these activities, Save the Children has developed and maintains strong relationships with local authorities in the storm-affected areas.

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and two other representatives of the LAC regional office traveled to Nicaragua in late May to assess damages and coordinate the U.S. Government's humanitarian assistance in the wake of Tropical Storm Alma.

### Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

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