



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

DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo courtesy of CHF International

Workers help clear mud from a public school in Haiti as part of cash-for-work opportunities funded by USAID/OFDA after a series of tropical storms last year. CHF International and CARE implemented the cleanup project.

Helping Haiti Move toward Recovery

USAID/OFDA is helping families in Haiti get back on their feet after a series of devastating storms last year.

As part of the humanitarian assistance that followed the August and September 2008 hurricanes, to date, USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$13 million for projects benefiting more than 60,000 affected families.

Several projects were designed to help communities move beyond the emergency phase into the early recovery phase by providing child-friendly spaces, assistance allowing children to return to school, cash-for-

work opportunities, and microfinance loans for small business reactivation.

"The strategy was to get people working again so they could get over the hardship imposed by the loss of their homes and livelihoods," explained USAID/OFDA regional advisor Julie Leonard, who led the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) deployed to Haiti after the storms. The team stood down in December, but Leonard will remain focused on Haiti through the 2009 hurricane season. As part of this focus,

Continued on page 2

During International Children's Rights Day, a six-year-old participant in a USAID/OFDA-funded project to create child friendly safe spaces helps raise awareness in a temporary shelter in Gonaïves.



Photo by Augustin Pierre Hugue, Save the Children

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Workshop Focuses on Creating Better Shelters

Nearly 30 representatives from USAID/OFDA and implementing partners attended a workshop on shelter and settlements hosted by the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) regional office on February 25 and 26.

Washington, D.C.-based USAID/OFDA Shelter, Settlements, and Hazard Mitigation advisor Charles Setchell and Costa Rica-based LAC regional advisor Phil Gelman led the workshop, which covered global settlement trends and the basics of creating covered living space, including the importance of a good frame and using locally available and salvaged materials. The workshop also included ideas for incorporating disaster risk reduction and livelihood activities into shelter and settlement projects.

Participating implementing partners included the American Red Cross, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, CARE, CHF International, Catholic Relief Services, Habitat for Humanity Costa Rica, International Organization for Migration, Project Concern International, SHARE Guatemala, and World Vision.



Photo by Auriana Koutnik, USAID/OFDA

Nearly 30 shelter and disaster management specialists participated in the workshop.

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Provides \$125,000 For Colombian Flood Relief

USAID/OFDA has provided \$125,000 to assist families affected by flooding in Colombia's Nariño Department. Heavy rains in February caused the Mira River to overflow its banks, affecting more than 6,700 families in 63 communities. Several municipal water supply systems were also heavily damaged.

USAID/OFDA provided the Colombian Red Cross \$100,000 for water, sanitation, and hygiene activities; the remaining \$25,000 are being used to purchase fuel to support first responders in Tumaco.

COMING UP

Global Tsunami Warning Systems Meeting

USAID/OFDA regional advisor Julie Leonard will attend the global meeting of representatives of the world's four tsunami early warning systems (Pacific, Indian Ocean, Caribbean, and North Atlantic/Mediterranean) to take place in Paris, France, from March 24-27. Meeting participants plan to explore ways to harmonize the four systems.

Kenya Disaster Risk Reduction Assessment

Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor, and Juan Pablo Sarmiento, co-director of a five-year agreement between USAID/OFDA and Florida International University (FIU) to promote disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities, will travel to Nairobi, Kenya, from March 18-28 to evaluate potential opportunities for DRR activities and share LAC experiences in DRR with USAID/OFDA staff in Kenya.

Disaster Risk Reduction Courses

USAID/OFDA is hosting DRR courses in Jamaica and Panama this month. The USAID/OFDA-designed course will be provided in English in Kingston, Jamaica, from March 23-25, and in Spanish in Panama City from March 30 to April 2. The combined DRR course will be provided for the first time in the Caribbean at the University of the West Indies the first week of April. The course, designed with assistance from the University of Wisconsin, combines the traditional classroom setting with e-learning techniques.

USAR Course Hand-Off in the Caribbean

The USAID/OFDA urban search and rescue (USAR) light level course hand-off will take place from March 30 to April 2 in Bridgetown, Barbados. Following the hand-off, locally trained Caribbean instructors will begin to impart the USAID/OFDA-designed course using equipment donated by USAID/OFDA.

Central American MDRO Workshop

USAID/Honduras and USAID/OFDA are planning a workshop for USAID mission disaster relief officers (MDROs) in Central America and Mexico on April 1-2 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, to discuss the role of MDROs in USAID/OFDA disaster response, preparedness programs, and risk reduction activities.

Forest Fire Mobilization Exercise

USAID/OFDA is providing technical assistance and financial support for the upcoming Paraguay national forest firefighter brigade mobilization exercise, scheduled to take place in Asunción from April 3-5. Other forest fire mobilization exercises supported by USAID/OFDA are scheduled to take place in Colombia from September 11-13, Ecuador from September 25-27, and Costa Rica from January 15-17, 2010.

Land-Use Management Presentation

USAID/OFDA is sponsoring a land-use management project presentation by two Venezuelan members of the community of practice supported by USAID/OFDA since 2005, at the XII Encounter of Latin American Geographers, scheduled to take place in Montevideo, Uruguay, from April 3-7.

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisors Meeting

USAID/OFDA regional advisors from around the world will convene in San Jose, Costa Rica, the week of April 13 to attend the annual regional advisors meeting hosted by the LAC regional office. Participants will share experiences and lessons learned in disaster response and technical assistance activities, with a special focus on DRR projects.

USAID/OFDA Assistance to Haiti

Continued from page 1

she is monitoring the implementation of USAID/OFDA-funded projects.

One of these projects, implemented by CHF International and CARE, is providing livelihood opportunities to more than 5,300 people hired to clear mud from streets and public buildings in Gonaïves and Petit Goave. As a result, 19,000 metric tons of mud have been removed and at least 60 schools and the Gonaïves main hospital have been rehabilitated.

Another project, implemented by Save the Children, created child friendly spaces in temporary shelters in Gonaïves, Artibonite Department, and Southeast Department. The spaces have allowed approximately 5,000 children to play, create, and express themselves away from the destruction. Additionally, hundreds of families received financial support enabling children to return to school.

USAID/OFDA assistance is also helping stimulate the local economy in the form of microfinance loans to small businesses provided through implementing partner Fondasyon Kole Zepòl (FONKOZE). More than 4,700 beneficiaries, mostly women, are receiving financing to reestablish storm-affected businesses. As part of the project, FONKOZE plans to develop a disaster risk mitigation program to protect itself and clients from future disasters.

USAID/OFDA also provided nearly \$450,000 through USAID/Haiti to support the design and construction of a temporary crossing at the Ennery Bridge site in Artibonite Department. USAID/Haiti plans to fund the construction of a permanent bridge at the location.

To help the country strengthen its overall capabilities to deal with disaster, the USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) has hired a disaster risk management specialist to develop a country plan focused on intensifying USAID/OFDA technical assistance and training for disaster risk reduction and response.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

DANA Instructors Trained in Mexico

A total of 250 government officials and humanitarian workers in Mexico received training in damage assessment and needs analysis (DANA) between August 2008 and February 2009 thanks to a special USAID/OFDA-funded World Vision project.

In addition, 23 Mexican instructors were trained and certified to provide the USAID/OFDA-designed DANA Course. The instructors received their certificates at a February 27 ceremony at the Mexican National Red Cross Training Facility in Toluca, Mexico.

USAID/OFDA Meets Head of CEPREDENAC



Photo by Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA
USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor Tim Callaghan (left) meets CEPREDENAC executive secretary Ivan Morales.

USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor Tim Callaghan and regional advisor Rene Carrillo recently traveled to Guatemala City to meet with Ivan Morales, the new executive secretary of the Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDE-NAC). The February 23 meeting served to renew ties between USAID/OFDA and CEPREDENAC and exchange information of mutual interest.

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