



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

DISASTER RESPONSE

Humanitarian Aid Provided To Caribbean, Costa Rica

USAID/OFDA is providing humanitarian assistance to Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica in the wake of recent tropical storms and hurricanes.

From mid-August to early September, Tropical Storm Fay, Hurricane Gustav, Tropical Storm Hanna, and Hurricane Ike swept through the Caribbean region, causing extensive damages and displacing hundreds of thousands of residents.

A USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) has been deployed to coordinate more than \$30 million in U.S. Government (USG) humanitarian assistance to Haiti, the hardest-hit of affected countries (see article at right).

In neighboring Jamaica, where the storms caused at least a dozen deaths and impacted 72 communities, USAID/OFDA provided \$308,435 for emergency relief supplies, including clean water storage containers, personal hygiene kits, and shelter items.

In the Dominican Republic, where tropical storms Fay and Gustav caused heavy rainfall and flooding that damaged nine of the country's water systems and more than 1,250 houses, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 through USAID/Dominican Republic for the local procurement and distribution of emergency supplies.

After flooding related to Tropical Storm Hanna displaced thousands of residents in western Costa Rica, USAID/OFDA provided \$40,000 for the transport of relief supplies to affected communities.

USAID/OFDA staff will continue to monitor meteorological conditions in the region as the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season progresses, and are prepared to provide additional humanitarian assistance, if required.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Acting Technical Director Named

The staff of the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean welcomes acting technical director Fabian Arellano to the San Jose office. Fabian, who has been involved in the USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program for nearly six years, replaces former technical director Juan Pablo Sarmiento to oversee the regional training program implemented by the International Resources Group.

DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo by Craig Keller, U.S. Army

Humanitarian workers prepare to distribute USAID/OFDA relief supplies after recent storms and hurricanes caused severe damage and widespread floods that displaced thousands of people in Haiti.

Helping Hurricane Victims in Haiti

A USAID/DART is in Haiti coordinating the USG response to the humanitarian emergency created by four consecutive weeks of tropical storms and hurricanes.

Total USG assistance to Haiti exceeds \$30 million, including \$10 million from USAID/OFDA, \$14 million from USAID's Office of Food for Peace, \$5 million from USAID/Haiti, and more than \$1 million from the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).

The combined effects of Tropical Storm Fay, Hurricane Gustav, Tropical Storm Hanna, and Hurricane Ike have impacted at least 850,000 people, displaced 151,072 others and resulted in 423 deaths with another 50 people reported missing. According to the Government of Haiti, the storms caused an estimated \$265 million in damage, particularly in the housing, agriculture, public infrastructure, and education sectors. The most affected departments are Artibonite, Southeast, South, Nippes, and West.

Working closely with the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) and other

international donors, USAID/OFDA disaster experts conducted assessments with logistical assistance from the DOD, and delivered much-needed food, water and relief commodities to affected families in temporary shelters operating throughout the country.

The first USAID/OFDA disaster team member arrived in Haiti on August 28, two days after Hurricane Gustav passed over Haiti. On September 4, a USAID/OFDA-chartered aircraft arrived in Port au Prince, delivering emergency relief supplies that included 10,800 ten-liter water containers, 5,088 hygiene kits, and 500 rolls of plastic sheeting. The supplies were transported to affected areas with assistance from the U.S. Coast Guard and implementing partner International Organization for Migration (IOM).

On September 8, the USS Kearsarge, complete with helicopters and landing craft, arrived in Haiti to support relief operations. On September 11, a second USAID/OFDA-chartered

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COMING UP

Caribbean Hurricane Season Monitoring

USAID/OFDA staff will continue to monitor meteorological conditions in the Caribbean basin as the Atlantic hurricane season progresses. Recent storm and hurricane activity in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica has made these nations particularly vulnerable to the effects of additional adverse weather, and USAID/OFDA is prepared to provide additional humanitarian assistance, if required.

INSARAG Americas Annual Meeting

Representatives of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), including INSARAG Americas President Tim Callaghan, the USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean, and members from 19 participating countries in the Americas are holding their annual meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on September 23 and 24. Representatives from the INSARAG Secretariat in Geneva and member countries from other regions, including Austria, Germany, Korea, New Zealand, and Switzerland, are attending as observers. USAID/OFDA provides support to INSARAG efforts in the Americas.

MOU with State of Sao Paulo, Brazil

Representatives of USAID/OFDA will travel to Brazil in early October to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with emergency officials from the state of Sao Paulo. The MOU will increase cooperation between Sao Paulo and USAID/OFDA, particularly in the provision of disaster management instructors, materials, and technical assistance for training activities.

Firefighters participate in an exercise during the first hazardous materials training event in Costa Rica in late 2007.



Photo courtesy of Costa Rica's National Firefighters Corps

Hazardous Materials Course Evaluation

The USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program for Latin America and the Caribbean will sponsor a hazardous materials training event in San Jose, Costa Rica, in mid-October with the support of Diego Gotelli from the Argentina-based Chemistry Information Center for Emergencies. The hazardous materials training, developed by Costa Rica's National Firefighters Corps and the University of Costa Rica, with technical support from USAID/OFDA, will be evaluated in preparation for the hand-off of the course entitled "Operations to Respond to Incidents Involving Dangerous Materials."

Community of Practice Meeting in Chile

USAID/OFDA and the University of Chile are co-sponsoring a Community of Practice meeting in mid-October. The event will feature a roundtable discussion on "Disaster Risk Reduction in Environmental Management and Land Use Management" at the University of La Frontera in Temuco, Chile, on October 15. Field visits to Puerto Varas and Puerto Montt will be conducted on October 16 and 17. Eighteen people plan to participate from universities and institutions in Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, and Venezuela, along with representatives from Florida International University in Miami and the USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Assisting Storm-Ravaged Haiti

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aircraft arrived with an additional 10,200 ten-liter water containers, 5,088 hygiene kits, 700 rolls of plastic sheeting, and 2 water bladders. As of September 24, the USG had transported emergency food, water, and relief commodities from USAID/OFDA, WFP, and other relief organizations on 125 missions to and within Haiti, using a combination of DOD and Department of Homeland Security air and sea assets, as well as the two commercial flights funded by USAID/OFDA.

In Gonaïves, the hardest-hit city in a nation struggling with extreme poverty, USAID/DART members reported limited access and poor humanitarian conditions continue to exist. Adequate food, safe drinking water, health services, and improved sanitation and hygiene services remain urgent needs in many of the affected areas.

In response to identified critical needs, USAID/OFDA's humanitarian assistance includes \$2 million provided to the WFP; \$1.5 million to the IOM for shelter and settlements coordination; \$899,015 to USAID/Haiti for emergency relief supplies and transportation; \$750,000 to World Vision and \$500,000 to the American Red Cross for emergency relief supplies; \$500,000 to the Pan American Health Organization for emergency health services; and nearly \$70,000 to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for response-related logistics.

USAID/OFDA plans to provide an additional \$3.5 million for emergency relief activities in the coming days.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Chile Plans to Spend \$31 Million on Volcano Early Warning System

The Government of Chile (GOC) recently announced plans to spend \$31 million over the next five years to create a national volcano early warning system modeled after the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) national system.

The idea to develop an early warning system modeled after the USGS grew from interactions between Chilean and USGS volcanologists during a USAID/OFDA-funded USGS Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) response to recent activity at Chaitén Volcano.

The Chilean volcano, which erupted last May after being dormant for thousands of years, displaced thousands of residents and put several nearby towns on alert.

With USAID/OFDA funding, VDAP sent a three-person team experts 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.

Chile has more than 122 geologically active volcanoes, but only eight are closely monitored. More than half of the country's population is exposed to the potential threat of volcanic eruptions, according to SERNAGEOMIN.

The GOC plans to build three new regional observatories and improve an existing observatory in Temuco to monitor activity at 43 volcanoes as part of the early warning system. USGS plans to assist SERNAGEOMIN with the endeavor.

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