



PRESS RELEASE

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USAID PREPARES FOR 2007 HURRICANE SEASON IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Miami, FL – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has held a press conference concerning hurricane preparation for the 2007 season. Senior officials Greg Gotlieb, Tim Callaghan and Rene Carrillo were on-hand to provide an update on USAID's on-going preparations and disaster response capabilities.

In 2006, none of the storms that made landfall caused damage that required USAID humanitarian assistance, however, in 2005 USAID responded to the effects of five hurricanes and one tropical storm in 10 Latin American and Caribbean countries and provided life-saving humanitarian relief to disaster affected communities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Weather Service forecasts for the coming season, June 1 - November 30, indicate that above-average tropical activity is expected.

In response, comprehensive preparations by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) include contingencies for emergencies, direct-action responses, and risk-management training programs for disaster response officials in Latin American and Caribbean countries. Also, a team of USAID advisors based in the San Jose, Costa Rica, regional office remains available for immediate deployment throughout the region.

USAID manages a wide network of Latin American and Caribbean-based field staff who serve as direct links to the countries in the hemisphere, increasing the Agency's ability to prepare for and quickly respond to natural disasters.

If the scope of a disaster merits a robust response, a USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) may be deployed to provide life-saving emergency humanitarian assistance, including short-term disaster relief items and assistance with humanitarian coordination. Relief commodities such as medical supplies, hygiene kits, plastic sheeting, water containers, and blankets are stockpiled in Miami for quick disbursement to affected countries.

In the event of an impending disaster such as a powerful hurricane, USAID may pre-position personnel and relief supplies in order to provide immediate assistance and conduct humanitarian assessments, which are crucial in providing policymakers with the means to respond appropriately to identify needs.



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In order to help local and national authorities develop the capabilities needed to respond to natural disasters and to promote their self-sufficiency, USAID offers a year-round Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) to countries in the region. The course provides instruction in disaster management concepts, training methods, and technical disciplines such as search and rescue and shelter coordination. Participants gain the knowledge and skills required to replicate the training program. Since RDAP was established in 1989, nearly 43,000 people have been trained and more than 4,200 participants certified as active instructors, many of whom have gone on to conduct training in their own countries using their own resources.

For more information on USAID's disaster assistance programs, please visit:
www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/.

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