

# LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (USAID/OFDA)

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## OVERVIEW

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are prone to a range of natural hazards, including hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, volcanoes, and drought. To reduce the effects of these hazards, USAID/OFDA supports disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs that promote local, national, and regional self-sufficiency in disaster preparedness and management, and build upon and strengthen the capacity of established institutions in the region.

The Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), established in 1989, is an important vehicle for USAID/OFDA's support of disaster risk management in LAC. Through RDAP, USAID/OFDA maintains a

network of disaster risk management specialists (DRMSs) who provide technical assistance for disaster preparedness and mitigation activities in the region, overseeing instruction in disaster management concepts, training methodology, and related technical disciplines, as well as helping governments develop processes and best practices to strengthen their response capabilities in extinguishing forest fires, utilizing the incident command system, and managing an emergency operations center, among others.

Since 2011, RDAP has coordinated the USAID/OFDA/LAC Small Grants Program to promote DRR projects at the community level. The grants, which average approximately \$30,000 to support projects for up to one year, contribute to host governments' DRR priorities and support innovative initiatives and pilot projects that develop community capacity to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters. New grants are awarded yearly to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to implement DRR activities. Once USAID/OFDA approves the project, the DRMSs provide technical support and guidance throughout the implementation process.

During the past two years, USAID/OFDA has provided \$400,000 in small grants funding to 13 community-level DRR projects in Belize, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, and Uruguay. All projects align with USAID/OFDA's regional DRR goals, including to safeguard the livelihoods of vulnerable families, prevent shelter losses, strengthen local DRR and preparedness capacities, and ultimately save lives in the event of future disasters.



*Volunteer community firefighter brigades in El Salvador receive uniforms and equipment after receiving training and technical assistance from the Asociación de Scouts de El Salvador with support from a USAID/OFDA small grant.*

USAID/OFDA supported the following Small Grants projects in 2015 and 2016:

#### **BELIZE—IMPROVING SWIFTWATER SEARCH AND RESCUE SKILLS**

The Belize Association for Search and Rescue trained 20 specialized search-and-rescue volunteers in swiftwater rescue, providing individuals with the skills and equipment to provide emergency assistance and save lives in swiftwater and flood situations. The training provided individuals with sound working knowledge of swiftwater hydrodynamics, knowledge of specialized gear and communications equipment, and ability to recognize and treat the signs and symptoms of medical problems related to water accidents.

#### **BRAZIL—DAMAGE ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS ANALYSIS TRAINING PROGRAM**

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) trained approximately 360 Brazilian civil defense officials in damage assessment and needs analysis techniques, with emphasis on designing a response to disasters related to the El Niño Southern Oscillation weather phenomenon. ADRA conducted workshops for key civil defense staff in 12 Brazilian states to improve their ability to quickly and efficiently determine response priorities in the event of a disaster.

#### **CHILE—EMERGENCY PLANNING AND EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOLS**

*Fundación Integra* supported DRR measures for 36 preschools and daycare centers in the Los Ríos Region. The project supported staff training and the implementation of emergency evacuation procedures for children at the preschools and daycare centers. The project also benefitted children younger than 5 years who attend the centers by developing and implementing fun educational tools and materials to help children understand the importance of caring for nature and the risks associated with natural phenomenon.

#### **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC— STRENGTHENING DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN SANTIAGO**

*Corporación Ciudadana Santiago Solidario* implemented a project to strengthen community and local government disaster preparedness as well as reduce the risks associated with climate change and other hazards in selected vulnerable communities in Santiago Municipality. The project worked with municipal authorities, emergency response organizations, communities, and public schools to raise awareness of hazards and vulnerabilities related to floods, landslides, earthquakes, and other hazards, as well as to incorporate climate change and disaster risk management into municipal and community development plans.

#### **EL SALVADOR—BUILDING RESILIENCY AMONG SCHOOLS IN PUERTO DE LA LIBERTAD**

*Asociación de Scouts de El Salvador* worked with local government and public education officials in the Municipality of Puerto de La Libertad, along El Salvador's central Pacific coast, to foster greater awareness of hazards and vulnerabilities and strengthen resiliency among staff and students at four risk-prone elementary schools. The project benefitted more than 3,300 students and their families, as well as educational staff members, by providing the USAID/OFDA School Safety Course and technical assistance with risk analysis, implementation of DRR measures, and the development of emergency response and evacuation plans in coordination with civil defense authorities.

## EL SALVADOR—STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY FOREST FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

*Asociación de Scouts de El Salvador* worked with local officials, community members, and youth in communities near the organization’s Campo Escuela Atlacatl, or Atlacatl school campus, in the Municipality of San Ignacio, Chalatenango Department, to raise awareness of forest fire prevention and control strategies. The project identified and trained seven community firefighter brigades, including staff from Civil Protection and the Scouts association, in firefighting, the incident command system, and first aid techniques. The project also provided radio communications equipment and technical assistance to the volunteer brigades.



The 2015 small grant project in El Salvador provided first aid training to community members to strengthen forest fire prevention and control.

## GUATEMALA—IMPROVING LOCAL FOREST FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT

*Fundación ProPetén* supported integrated forest fire risk management efforts in Flores and San José municipalities in Petén Department through the creation of six Community Forest Fire Prevention Committees, organizational and operational fire management training for committee members, technical assistance for the development of fire prevention and response protocols and procedures, and the procurement of uniforms, firefighting tools, and communications equipment for the six committees.



The Honduras small grant project strengthened drought resilience by teaching students about drought-resistant crops and agricultural practices.

## HONDURAS—BUILDING RESILIENCE IN DROUGHT-PRONE RURAL COMMUNITIES

*Instituto para la Cooperación y Autodesarrollo (ICADE)* strengthened drought resilience, DRR, and community preparedness among 40 families who live in highly vulnerable rural communities of Piedras Bonitas and El Sunnete in Santa Fe Municipality, Ocotepeque Department. The project worked with families, including a high percentage of women, to increase awareness of their vulnerabilities, create hazard and resource maps, and demonstrate drought-resistant crops and agricultural practices through the establishment of community, family, and school gardens. ICADE also helped families with the construction of water storage tanks, water filtration systems, and latrines.

## NICARAGUA—STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

*Fundación Nicaragüense para la Educación Popular y Ambiental (FUNDEPAMB)* strengthened the emergency preparedness and response capabilities of residents in four vulnerable neighborhoods of Managua’s IV District, which is particularly prone to seismic risks. The project formed and trained four local emergency response brigades, with a focus on risk management, school safety, evacuation assistance, first aid, and fire management, and helped communities develop hazard maps and emergency response plans. The project also trained community leaders in the geographic information systems (GIS) technology used by the Municipality of Managua to map local seismic fault lines, geopolitical boundaries, location of schools, hospitals, gas stations, emergency shelters, and flood-prone areas, as examples.

## **PANAMA—PROMOTING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Programa de Promoción y Desarrollo Social* worked closely with Panamá’s Ministry of Public Education to develop emergency response plans, create safer school environments, and empower school supervisors to enact preparedness measures in six highly vulnerable public schools in Darién and Panamá provinces. The project, which benefitted approximately 1,000 students, provided 10 school supervisors the skills and tools necessary to identify and evaluate local disaster hazards and vulnerabilities; inventory, organize, and mobilize human, academic, and material resources for disaster risk management activities, and create emergency response action plans for each of the schools.

## **PARAGUAY—PROMOTING DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND RISK REDUCTION IN RURAL AREAS**

The Dr. Raul Peña Institute of Higher Education at the National University of Asunción trained 30 professional and technical staff from several Government of Paraguay agencies, including the National Emergency Secretariat, Environment Secretariat, National Forestry Institute, National Civil Aviation Authority, and government ministries of Education and Culture, Public Works and Communications, and Agriculture and Livestock, in rural disaster management related to the El Niño and La Niña weather phenomena. The project also helped participating agencies create or improve their institutional disaster management plans and supported a forum on disaster management and risk reduction in higher education.

## **SAINT LUCIA—RAINWATER HARVESTING PROJECT**

Micoud South District Disaster Committee worked with community leaders to design and install rainwater harvesting systems at district schools, community centers, and churches that serve as emergency shelters in post-disaster situations. The district, which has a population of approximately 7,500 people, faces severe potable water challenges dating back to Tropical Storm Debbie in 1994, which destroyed water infrastructure systems. The project installed a total of twenty-three 1,000-gallon water storage tanks at eight emergency shelter locations, ensuring a supply of potable water for future shelter occupants.



*The tanks provide a secure source of potable water for shelter occupants.*

## **URUGUAY—STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE OF RIVERSIDE POPULATIONS IN DURAZNO**

Uruguay’s ADRA chapter worked with local government officials and vulnerable residents living along the Yí River in Durazno to mitigate disaster risks and strengthen capacities by developing an emergency response plan, forming community emergency response teams, and engaging community members in disaster mitigation projects. The project benefitted approximately 2,000 people living in flood-prone areas, including approximately 200 community members living in extremely vulnerable conditions.