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November 2013

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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

New Projects to Build Disaster Management Capabilities, Reduce Urban Risk

USAID/OFDA has awarded more than \$3 million in recent months to fund five projects that aim to build disaster management capabilities in Haiti and strengthen urban disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts in vulnerable areas of Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

The projects, implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), GOAL, and Mercy Corps, were selected from among 47 proposals that USAID partners submitted for consideration through USAID/OFDA's Annual Program Statement (APS) for Haiti Capacity Building and APS for Urban DRR in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

As part of the Haiti Capacity Building APS, USAID/OFDA awarded approximately \$250,000 each to CRS and Mercy Corps for 12-month programs to improve the disaster risk management capabilities of the Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC) in South and Artibonite departments, respectively.

"Departmental-level capacity building has been a key priority for the U.S. Government in recent years. The U.S. Department of Defense has built departmental emergency operations centers (EOCs) throughout the country, and we

Continued on page 2



Photo courtesy of GOAL Honduras

Children peer out of a house built on a hillside in the Ulloa sector of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, where a new USAID/OFDA-funded project implemented by GOAL aims to help thousands of residents reduce disaster risk.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Promotes Safety Among Caribbean Region's Schoolchildren

USAID/OFDA's Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) facilitates school safety programs throughout the Caribbean in an effort to educate school staff and children about disaster preparedness and minimize potential effects of disasters.

Recently, the Government of Saint Lucia School Safety Committee, with support from USAID/OFDA and the Ministry of Education, published and distributed a school safety brochure titled, "A Parent's Guide to School Safety -- A Safe Learning Environment for all." The brochure promotes collaboration among the school system, parents, and community members and outlines how schools' emergency

management plans function to ensure a safe learning environment for children and teachers on a daily basis as well as in the event of a disaster. Through training sessions and drills carried out in collaboration with local community partners, the fire and police departments, education authorities, and the Saint Lucia National Emergency Management Organization, school staff and students are learning the necessary steps to reduce disaster risks and respond to disasters.

Saint Lucia also leads the Caribbean's dedication to institutional safety through the implementation of a National School Safety Policy. The policy addresses procedures for creating a school environment free of preventable accidents or incidents, ranging from

disasters to bullying and inappropriate use of information technologies. Other Caribbean countries are following suit, incorporating the standards set by Saint Lucia into the development of their own policies, according to RDAP Disaster Risk Reduction Specialist Eduardo Gutiérrez.

In addition to providing the school safety course in countries throughout the Caribbean, USAID/OFDA is supporting school safety projects in Belize and Saint Kitts and Nevis through the RDAP Small Grants Program. The grants, averaging \$30,000 each, boost community awareness of safety issues and benefit thousands of students.

Projects to Reduce Urban Risk

Continued from page 1

are happy to see that the Government of Haiti has increased DPC staffing at the departmental level," said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil Gelman.

In Haiti's South Department, the CRS project will address identified training and capacity building needs, bridge gaps in early warning systems, and help the DPC improve emergency preparation and response assistance for vulnerable communities. Toward this end, CRS will help create a rapid response mechanism and provide institutional capacity building and support for the departmental DPC structure, including EOC teams.

The Mercy Corps project in Artibonite will work with national and departmental DPC members to improve their ability to carry out timely, appropriate, and effective responses within hazard-prone communes. As part of the project, Mercy Corps will help establish an early warning system and hold community meetings to increase hazard awareness.

Also in Haiti, as part of the Urban DRR APS, USAID/OFDA provided \$500,000 to GOAL to operationalize a neighborhood approach to reduce urban disaster risk in Haut Turgeau and Debussy, two high-risk neighborhoods in the Port-au-Prince area. The 15-month project will implement a comprehensive, community-led mapping and planning process to increase disaster preparedness and response capacities in the communities. Project implementers plan to work with emergency risk management authorities at all levels to ensure the integration of neighborhood-based, urban disaster risk management activities with national policies and plans. The project will also support small-scale physical infrastructure works to help mitigate identified risks at the community and household levels. GOAL expects more than 15,500 individuals to benefit from the project.

Through the Urban DRR APS, USAID/OFDA also provided approximately \$805,000 to GOAL in Honduras to operationalize a neighborhood approach to reduce urban disaster risk in three high-risk neighborhoods in the Ulloa sector of Tegucigalpa. Ulloa is characterized by poorly regulated urbanization and is home to extremely poor families with limited income generation opportunities. Residents are vulnerable to a number of hazards, including flooding, landslides, rockslides, and fires. GOAL's two-year urban DRR project aims to improve the sustainable development of Ulloa by reducing the vulnerability of housing and critical infrastructure, protecting livelihoods, and increasing community capacity for disaster preparedness and response. GOAL expects more than 16,500 people to benefit from this project.

Finally, also as part of the Urban DRR APS, USAID/OFDA provided \$1.3 million to CRS in Nicaragua to implement the two-year "United Neighbors" project in 20 vulnerable urban neighborhoods of Chinandega Department. Project implementers will work with local and national government representatives and neighborhood groups to conduct participatory risk analysis, hazard mapping, and disaster planning exercises. The project will also train youth to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to local DRR efforts. CRS expects the project to benefit nearly 21,000 people, including approximately 140 youth.

"USAID/OFDA is committed to urban DRR as part of our regional strategy," Gelman said. "This is our second year of funding urban DRR projects, and we now have a portfolio of seven projects backing our commitment to help the LAC region reduce disaster risks as its population becomes increasingly more urban."

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



Photo courtesy of INDECI

Quechua-speaking volunteer firefighters participate in a recent training exercise in Peru.

USAID/OFDA Supports Firefighter Training in Peru's Indigenous Villages

As part of USAID/OFDA's commitment to strengthening disaster management capacities in culturally unique populations in LAC, USAID/OFDA continues to work with Peru's National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI) and Cusco local government agencies to provide forest fire management training in Quechua-speaking communities in the Cusco region prone to forest fires.

In October, USAID/OFDA supported INDECI and the Cusco Region Technical Committee on Forest Fires to test and validate the new Quechua-language Volunteer Forest Firefighter Brigade Training Guide, created earlier this year as part of the USAID/OFDA-supported inter-institutional effort.

Nearly 40 residents and community leaders from several indigenous villages in the Ollantaytambo District northwest of Cusco participated in the guide validation and training event, held from October 14 to 18 in the village of Patacancha. Peru-based USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist Dante Torres co-facilitated the event with INDECI.

During the event, USAID/OFDA donated firefighting tools, including shovels, rakes and axes, and personal protective equipment to the Patacancha Volunteer Forest Firefighters Brigade and provided guidance to the volunteer firefighters during a field exercise on equipment use.

With USAID/OFDA support, representatives from INDECI and the Cusco Region Technical Committee on Forest Fires plan to create an interactive training manual in Quechua and develop a workshop to train and certify instructors of the Quechua-language forest firefighter brigade training course.



Photo courtesy of INDECI

USAID/OFDA donates equipment to the firefighters.