

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

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA



Children play with forest firefighting mascot Policarpo in San Rafael, Paraguay. Photo courtesy of Isacio Espinola

Call for Concept Papers for the Disaster Risk Reduction Small Grants Program

Since 2011, through the Regional Disaster Assistance Programs (RDAP), USAID/OFDA has supported the RDAP disaster risk reduction (DRR) Small Grants Program to help communities in the LAC region mitigate the effects of a range of natural hazards. The Small Grants Program reduces the dangers associated with natural disasters by bolstering local, national, and regional disaster preparedness and management capacity, including strengthening established disaster management institutions in the LAC region.

In 2018, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$200,000 in funding for eight community-level DRR projects in Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, and Uruguay. The small grants program in Saint Lucia helped the Vieux-Fort South District Disaster Committee to develop disaster preparedness and risk reduction awareness campaigns for the population of Saint Lucia, which included theater productions, public service announcements, social media, videos, as well as television and radio spots in English and Creole. Messaging focused on appropriate response actions for earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis and informed the population on the steps they should take to prepare for and adequately respond to a disaster, protecting lives and reducing damage to property.

“The small grants program, like the one we funded in Saint Lucia last year, provides a special opportunity to initiate projects that

can have a significant impact on building capacities within the communities where we work” commented Saint Lucia-based USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Ann Jean Baptiste.

Previous year programs have also included a wide variety of DRR activities including rainwater harvesting, school safety in higher education, hazard mapping, community training and

Continued on page 2



Through a small grant, teachers and students in El Salvador worked to create safer schools as part of a school readiness program. Photo by USAID/OFDA

Caribbean Surge Consultant Training

This past July, staff from USAID/OFDA's Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC) office in San José hosted a three-day training for 24 surge capacity consultants—representing 10 countries in the Caribbean—to strengthen the capacity of the surge consultants to prepare for and quickly respond following a disaster in their home countries.

The USAID/OFDA surge capacity program in LAC is unique in the world, and allows the USAID/OFDA LAC office to quickly ramp up capacity to support countries in the region after a disaster. Currently, USAID/OFDA has more than 400 surge capacity consultants spread throughout the LAC region.

The first day of training consisted of USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialists (DRMS) training the surge consultants on how to conduct initial damage assessments (IDA) and measure the impact of an event by performing damage and needs assessments (DANA). These skills are critical to accurately assess the level of damage and communicate the most vital needs rapidly following a disaster.

Participants also received training in the use and handling of USAID/OFDA plastic sheeting. Plastic sheeting was used extensively following the Caribbean hurricanes of 2017 to repair damaged roofs on the island of Dominica. Participants can share this information with partner organizations to facilitate roof repairs after a disaster.

Information Officers from the San José office also trained the surge consultants on the different reporting needs pre- and post-disaster. In addition, they were trained in photo and video reporting to assist in meeting the information sharing needs of USAID/OFDA.



Surge Capacity Consultants from throughout the Caribbean received training in Barbados. Photo by USAID/OFDA



A 2014 small grant on Saint Lucia installed rainwater harvesting and storage systems in six vulnerable communities. Photo by USAID/OFDA

Small Grants Program continued from page 1

awareness campaigns, development of early warning systems, and strengthening community forest fire prevention, among many others.

The grants, which average \$30,000 to support projects for up to one year, contribute to host governments' DRR priorities and support initiatives that strengthen community capacity to prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters. New grants are awarded annually to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to implement DRR activities and increase disaster preparedness capabilities at the community level. After USAID/OFDA approves the projects, the in-country DRMS provides technical support and guidance throughout the implementation process.

For the fiscal year 2020, RDAP anticipates to award grants from a pool of funds totaling approximately \$250,000, with awards ranging from \$15,000 to \$50,000. Currently, RDAP is inviting applicants to submit concept notes that respond to one or more of the stated areas of the RDAP DRR Small Grants Program. These areas, along with the full call for concept papers, can be [viewed here](#).

Organizations eligible to apply for small grants include NGOs, non-profits, and universities. The full list of eligibility requirements and expression of interest form can be [viewed here](#).

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