

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

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



SCF brought in professional architects to help communities create an earthquake and flood resistant adobe model house. *Photo courtesy of SCF*

USAID/OFDA Continues Helping Flood-Affected Communities in Northwestern Peru

In early 2017, widespread flooding and landslides related to the El Niño phenomenon destroyed or rendered uninhabitable nearly 45,000 houses and affected more than 1.7 million people throughout Peru. While communities in northwestern and coastal Peru remain vulnerable to flooding, heavy rainfall, and other risks, USAID/OFDA and partners continue working with community members and local governments to improve their capacity to mitigate disaster risks and implement emergency response activities.

In Peru's Lambayeque and La Libertad departments—which were severely affected by the 2017 floods—USAID/OFDA, through Save the Children Federation (SCF), is helping the most vulnerable communities in peri-urban and rural areas become more aware of the hazards to which they are exposed and implement precautionary measures to reduce risks.

Through a process that features the active participation of community members, municipal employees, and the Government of Peru (GoP), SCF is also building the capacity of local governments to implement disaster mitigation actions and policies and respond to emergencies, prioritizing the most vulnerable populations and utilizing a gender-based approach.

In addition, USAID/OFDA partner SCF supported the development of a comprehensive Early Warning System (EWS) that can reach remote vulnerable communities, allowing them to evacuate promptly when a flood is imminent. The EWS uses data from official monitoring agencies, such as the National Meteorology and Hydrology Service of Peru (SENAMHI), and disseminates it through appropriate municipal communication

channels to alert populations about potential flood events. SCF has implemented the EWS in 11 communities and conducted mobilization exercises to test it and provide communities a better understanding of the alert alarms, community risk maps, evacuation signs, meeting points, and safe areas to evacuate.

Through this project, SCF is also supporting the reconstruction of houses damaged by the 2017 floods by involving community members in the planning process, while also teaching them to build safer structures.

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USAID/OFDA, through PI, helped vulnerable communities in northwestern Peru become more aware of their risks and how to prevent them. *Photo courtesy of PI*

USAID/OFDA Enables Technical Exchange Among Latin American Emergency Response Agencies

With USAID/OFDA support, in mid-November, seven representatives from the Honduras Emergency Management System (SNE) visited Ecuador's Integrated Security 911 Service (ECU 911) to exchange risk management knowledge and best practices and sign a collaboration agreement among both agencies.

From November 10 to 16, the Honduran SNE representatives visited ECU 911 facilities in Ecuador's capital city of Quito to learn about new technologies, protocols, organizational structure, and methodologies implemented by the agency to integrate the services of different emergency response actors. The group also visited the ECU 911 operations room in Tungurahua Province's Ambato city, located south of Quito, to learn about their volcanic eruption EWS and preparedness efforts.

"USAID/OFDA aims to continue promoting technical exchanges and joint work between regional emergency management agencies," noted USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

Since 2006, USAID/OFDA, through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) has enabled the exchange of risk management best practices and partnerships among institutions from the academic, private, and government sectors through forums and technical exchange programs. USAID/OFDA has also organized study tours to connect emergency management agencies in the United States and the LAC region and helped create regional disaster risk management networks.



Honduran SNE representatives visited ECU 911 facilities in Quito. Photo by Carlos Velasquez, USAID/OFDA

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"SCF brought in professional architects to assist communities in localizing an appropriate, safe method to rebuild their houses and create an earthquake and flood resistant adobe model house. They are teaching community members how to build safer adobe structures utilizing native techniques and material available locally. For example, in La Libertad, they used bean straw for the mud mix, and in Lambayeque, they used rice," said USAID/OFDA Program Officer Jamie Johnson Thomas.

With USAID/OFDA support, SCF has also been working with local governments, communities, and educational institutions in Piura Province's Cura Mori and Catacaos districts to develop risk management tools for the protection of children during crises. Following the 2017 floods, relief agencies identified the need for a disaster response management approach that addresses the protection needs of girls and boys affected by disasters. SCF's program's activities include training vulnerable communities and local authorities in child protection principles and providing technical assistance to update disaster management tools with a child protection approach.

In Piura's La Arena and Tambo Grande districts, USAID/OFDA, through Plan International (PI), is bolstering disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness at the institutional, school, and community levels. Building on lessons learned from the 2017 flooding, PI evaluated previous mitigation efforts in the region and identified best practices, weaknesses, and implementation gaps to help local municipalities and GoP National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI) departmental agencies enhance community DRR policies and activities. In addition, PI trained community volunteers in needs assessment data collection and immediate disaster response, including selecting evacuation routes, identifying safe areas and temporary shelters, and forming community groups for debris removal and clearing of access roads. To help identify the safest areas for the construction of new structures, PI assisted volunteers on the creation of a detailed map of the areas most and least affected by the 2017 floods in their communities.



USAID/OFDA Supports School Safety in Chile

Five communities in Chile's Concepción Province took part in a USAID/OFDA-supported small grant program, implemented by World Vision (WV), to build DRR capacities in their schools through the training of teachers and students in the promotion of risk reduction culture and the implementation of basic response protocols. The participants developed school safety plans, created emergency response brigades, and received training in the use of fire extinguishers and basic life support. In addition, the small grant assisted in the purchase of materials, including fire extinguishers, to support the program.

Since 2011, through RDAP, USAID/OFDA has supported the DRR Small Grants Program to help communities in the LAC region mitigate the effects of a range of hazards. Photo courtesy of WV