

## USAID'S BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (USAID/BHA)

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

### USAID Continues to Bolster COVID-19 Response Efforts in LAC

As the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to cause significant impacts throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), USAID is expanding activities to bolster response efforts in the region. Response priorities include supporting countries in their response to COVID-19, strengthening health institutions to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the possible re-emergence of the disease, and protecting the safety and health security of the medical workforce. To achieve these interrelated objectives, USAID is tailoring assistance based on country capacity and reported needs through the implementation of the U.S. Government (USG) Action Plan to Support the International Response to COVID-19 (SAFER Action Plan).

The USG SAFER Action Plan is focused on scaling up community approaches to slow the spread of COVID-19; addressing critical needs of health care facilities, health care workers, and patients; identifying, investigating, and responding to COVID-19 cases through expanded disease detection and surveillance mechanisms; employing strategies to address second-order impacts of COVID-19; and developing plans for the utilization of therapeutics, vaccines, and other life-saving supplies.

With USAID funding, LAC partner organizations continue to implement risk communication and community engagement, infection prevention and control (IPC), laboratory systems, disease surveillance, case management, and operations programs to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other partners, USAID is implementing activities that help provide accurate, timely information about COVID-19; prevent further spread of the



In early June, USAID/BHA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan delivered 1,000 protective face shields to Costa Rica's National Commission for Risk Prevention and Disaster Response Executive Director Yamilet Mata. *Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica*

disease—especially in health care facilities—and identify potential cases early; enable laboratories to more efficiently process COVID-19 tests; and properly address and care for those who have the disease. Through these and other interventions, USAID is working to stem the spread of COVID-19 and address the second-order impacts of the pandemic by providing assistance to populations in need.

With \$6.5 million in USAID funding, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will support the Colombian Red Cross Society (CRCS) to strengthen clinical response efforts to reduce morbidity and mortality related to the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. IFRC and CRCS will also provide health supplies—including hospital beds and other medical equipment—and services in medical facilities serving vulnerable communities in Colombia.

In Haiti, USAID partner the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been working in close coordination with the Government of Haiti Ministry of Health to print and distribute 500,000 leaflets, 250,000 brochures, and 100,000 posters to raise awareness on COVID-19 and basic prevention measures. The UN agency has reached more than 1.4 million people with messages on COVID-19 prevention in 79 communes and approximately 5 million people through social media. Furthermore, USAID, through several implementing partners, has provided essential commodities for COVID-19 detection in Haiti and trained nurses to support the sampling of COVID-19 suspected cases; the health care workers have assisted with the sampling and testing of more than 2,600 people since the beginning of May.

In The Bahamas, USAID partner Samaritan's Purse installed touch-free handwashing stations among the 23 existing water distribution points—14 on Abaco Island and nine on Grand Bahama Island—that were built after Hurricane Dorian damaged much of the islands' water

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With USAID/BHA support, Samaritan's Purse implemented a campaign to sensitize communities in The Bahamas on COVID-19 transmission risks, implement procedures that encourage physical distancing, disinfect high-touch areas, install and promote handwashing stations, and hire and train handwashing station monitors. *Photo courtesy of Samaritan's Purse*

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distribution systems. The distribution points deliver more than 90,000 liters of water per week to residents. Also in The Bahamas, USAID partner International Medical Corps (IMC) is supporting the already stretched health care system by training medical workers on IPC. In addition, IMC is providing small businesses with training that is mandatory for them to reopen their business and be COVID-19 compliant with the Government of The Bahamas Ministry of Health.

In Peru, a USAID partner provided support for 450,000 teleconsultations to health care workers through a medical call center and activated a community health worker network to safely conduct 18,000 outreach visits to identify households in need of clinical and social assistance in Peru's hardest-hit regions in March and April.

USAID, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), is providing bedding, clothing, food, hygiene kits, and pillows for people in quarantine in El Salvador. In addition, USAID supported a March IOM training for civil protection personnel on quarantine center management to ensure high-quality assistance for individuals in the centers.

In Guyana, USAID support has helped to ensure that all ten administrative regions have rapid response teams that are fully trained and equipped to conduct case investigations and contact tracing to identify additional potential cases and limit the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, USAID has provided technical assistance to the Government of Guyana Ministry of Public Health to strengthen the capacity to model disease scenarios and the potential impacts of various physical distancing measures.

USAID support has also helped the Government of Paraguay identify and fulfill equipment needs to reduce potential infections in critical care units, including the acquisition of 100 video laryngoscopes and 200 adult laryngoscopes benefiting 54 intensive care services and 46 urgent and emergency services throughout the country. Additionally, USAID has helped revise IPC measures for the ambulance service responsible for transferring COVID-19 patients, as well as provided cleaning and disinfection supplies.

Additionally, USAID has donated hundreds of ventilators to assist LAC countries in their national COVID-19 response. The donated ventilators, produced in the United States, are highly specialized, state-of-the-art medical equipment that are used in hospitals and other medical facilities to help support patients who are having trouble breathing. Included in the donation is one year of training on their correct use and maintenance. To date, USAID has delivered ventilators to Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, and Peru to support care for COVID-19 patients.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, USAID has pledged more than \$1.5 billion in emergency health, humanitarian, economic, and development assistance specifically aimed at helping governments, international organizations, and NGOs fight the pandemic.



As part of a program to bolster telecommunications infrastructure in the Dominican Republic, WFP provided training to technicians on the use of drones. Photo courtesy of WFP

## USAID/BHA Supports Communication Strengthening in the Dominican Republic

USAID/BHA is supporting the UN World Food Program (WFP) in the Dominican Republic as it works to strengthen the inter-institutional coordination between the Government of the Dominican Republic (GoDR) Emergency Operations Center (COE) and the country's telecommunications network providers as part of the activities of the Dominican Republic's Emergency Preparedness and Response Capacity Building project.

This project aims to ensure that emergency communications between relevant actors within the Dominican Republic remain unbroken, no matter the disaster.

Conventional communication systems like fixed-line telephones and mobile phone networks cannot be relied upon to provide uninterrupted service, particularly in the days and weeks following a disaster; therefore, the program identified key technologies that make up an emergency telecommunication system, including radio systems, satellite phones for voice and data transmission, drones, and early

warning systems for mass communication.

In coordination with the COE, WFP's Fast IT and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) conducted a telecommunications assessment in priority areas to identify the current state of the communications infrastructure used by the National Prevention, Mitigation, and Response System GoDR agencies. The mission identified gaps within the telecommunications infrastructure and, based on those gaps, developed recommendations that form the basis for the provision of a common security backbone communications network. In addition, WFP supported training to technicians within participating institutions to ensure they possessed the skills and technical knowledge to implement the advanced equipment.

The program helped to ensure that the country has a robust emergency communication system, which will greatly assist in ensuring a coordinated response during any disaster situation.

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