

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

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



USAID/OFDA partner SC/US distributes hygiene kits with insect repellent, soap, towels, water containers, and water tablets to displaced households in Piura. *Photo by Ana Silvia Fernandez, USAID/OFDA*

VDAP Provides New Equipment For the Monitoring of Poás Volcano

The USAID/OFDA-funded U.S. Geological Survey-implemented Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) recently donated online visual, seismic, and gas monitoring stations to Costa Rica's Volcanological and Seismological Observatory (OVSICORI). The monitoring stations will replace and augment remote monitoring equipment at Poás Volcano that was destroyed during a period of heightened eruptive activity that began in April.

Following heightened seismicity and gas emissions, Poás Volcano, located approximately 45 kilometers northwest of San José, Costa Rica, experienced a series of eruptions beginning on April 22, according to OVSICORI. As a safety precaution, the Government of Costa Rica (GoCR) authorities evacuated all visitors and closed Poás Volcano National Park indefinitely on April 9. Emergency officials also issued a green alert—the lowest level of a three-tiered alert system—for seven cantons near the volcano.

Additionally, the GoCR officials requested specialized monitoring equipment from USAID/OFDA to replace equipment destroyed during the explosions and improve monitoring efforts.

In response, VDAP provided OVSICORI with two cameras for online visual monitoring, as well as seismic and gas monitoring equipment, to assist in the real-time transmission of vital information from the volcano to scientists. By providing timely warnings of volcanic activity, the equipment can help protect lives and property.

Poás is one of Costa Rica's most active volcanoes, with a long history of intermittent activity dating back to at least the early 1800s.



U.S. Government representatives in San José deliver equipment to OVSICORI. *Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy*

USAID/OFDA Continues to Assist Flood-Affected Families in Peru

Through its partners in Peru, USAID/OFDA continues to address the shelter and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs of thousands of families in northwestern Peru affected by heavy rains and flooding in the first quarter of 2017. In late March, USAID/OFDA activated a 17-person response team

to assess the scale of humanitarian needs and coordinate USAID/OFDA-supported disaster assistance activities in affected areas.

The USAID/OFDA response team deployed to four locations; one group remained in the capital city of Lima to coordinate response efforts with the Government of Peru (GoP) authorities, and three groups visited affected communities in the northwest regions of Lambayeque, La Libertad, and Piura. Team members traveled to different locations each day to assess damages, speak with community members, and coordinate with local humanitarian actors. The assessments provided an in-depth understanding of the scope of the disaster, identified the priority needs of at-risk populations, and efficiently directed USAID/OFDA's delivery of humanitarian assistance to those most in need.

“USAID/OFDA's response efforts were greatly enhanced by the deep local knowledge and contextual understanding that our three



USAID/OFDA Program Officer Peter Schecter distributes humanitarian relief supplies to flood-affected families in Piura. *Photo by Ana Silvia Fernandez, USAID/OFDA*

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USAID/OFDA RA Sarah McNiece crouches in a doorway filled with mud left by floodwaters in the Armando Villanueva area of La Libertad region. Photo by Marco Gonzalo, USAID/OFDA

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Peru-based disaster risk management specialists and five local surge capacity consultants contributed to the team. They provided important insights about the country's political and geographic landscapes and valuable information from on-the-ground assessments and communications with local non-governmental partners, institutions, and government personnel," said USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) Tim Callaghan.

In support of USAID/OFDA-coordinated relief activities, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) provided two C-130 aircraft to transport relief commodities from Lima to communities in La Libertad, Lambayeque, and Piura, which remained isolated due to severe damage to more than 2,000 miles of highways and 300 bridges. In coordination with USAID/OFDA, the GoP, and other stakeholders, DoD aircraft flew 24 missions between April 6 and 19, carrying more than 723,000 pounds of relief supplies.

The USAID/OFDA response strategy prioritized the provision of WASH and shelter assistance for vulnerable populations in La Libertad, Lambayeque, and Piura. In these areas, the driest in Peru, walls are commonly constructed with adobe bricks, as under typical climate conditions, houses are exposed to very little rainwater throughout the year. However, abnormally high rainfall and subsequent flooding in 2017 led to the collapse of many adobe brick buildings. As of May 9, floodwaters had completely destroyed or left uninhabitable nearly 47,000 homes and temporarily displaced more than 196,000 people, according to the GoP.

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor (RA) Sarah McNiece, who led the response team after SRA Callaghan and visited areas severely affected by floods, commented, "The flooding came on so quickly that many people left their homes with only the clothes on their backs. They literally lost everything." RA McNiece spoke with many community members who were forced to evacuate their homes in the middle of the night due to rapidly rising floodwaters, only to return and find that their house and all of their belongings had been washed away.

On March 21, U.S. Ambassador to Peru Brian A. Nichols declared a disaster due to the effects of the floods, and USAID/OFDA provided initial funding to support emergency relief efforts. In April, USAID/OFDA provided additional funding for the local procurement and distribution of emergency relief items through non-government organizations (NGOs), including Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), CARE, and Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US). USAID/OFDA also provided approximately \$150,000 to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and \$143,000 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support logistical coordination and assist in WASH and camp management efforts. To meet health, WASH, and epidemiological surveillance needs, USAID/OFDA provided \$200,000 to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). PAHO is also implementing education campaigns in affected areas to encourage communities to support vector and larval control and mitigate the spread of disease.

In addition, USAID/OFDA provided \$1.37 million to Plan International and \$2.45 million to SC/US to support shelter and WASH programs that will benefit more than 2,400 families in Lambayeque, La Libertad, and Piura.

USAID/OFDA is coordinating with the GoP National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI), the UN, and NGOs, to implement shelter and WASH programs for affected families and help repair or rebuild water and sanitation systems in their communities—or in new locations if their original communities' sites are at high risk of future flooding. Through USAID/OFDA's initial disaster declaration support, Water for People rehabilitated safe drinking water infrastructure in the La Libertad region.

The U.S. Government provided nearly \$7.5 million to support relief efforts in Peru as of June 15, including nearly \$4.7 million from USAID/OFDA, \$1.62 million from DoD, and \$1.14 million from the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.



USAID/OFDA RA Sarah McNiece distributes hygiene kits to families affected by recent flooding in the San Pablo camp, Piura. Photo by Ricardo Herrera, USAID/OFDA

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