

USAID’S BUREAU FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (USAID/BHA)

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

USAID Assists Vulnerable Populations Affected by TS Amanda in El Salvador

Tropical Storm (TS) Amanda made landfall near the El Salvador–Guatemala border on May 31, resulting in more than 25 inches of rain in numerous locations in both countries. The severe weather resulted in widespread flooding and landslides in 10 of El Salvador’s 14 departments, adversely affecting approximately 150,000 people. The UN World Food Program (WFP) estimates that 336,000 Salvadorans in the most affected areas face severe food insecurity and more than 138,000 acres of maize are flooded, with additional losses in vegetable production.

“At one point on May 31, there was probably a rain intensity of four inches per hour. TS Amanda might have caused a historic, record-breaking flood. This type of event is extremely rare and has a frequency of once every 100 years or most likely a thousand years. The event approached the devastating effects of Hurricane Mitch, which produced 30 to 50 inches of rain throughout Central America in 1998,” said USAID/BHA Hydrometeorological Advisor Curtis B. Barret.

Immediately after the storm made landfall, USAID/BHA activated an El Salvador-based disaster risk management

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U.S. Ambassador Johnson hands out the first tranche of USAID/BHA-supported emergency supplies to the GoES. Photo courtesy of U.S. Embassy El Salvador



USAID partner Acción contra El Hambre/Spain (ACH/Spain) provided cash assistance to vulnerable families in Cali, Colombia, to help them cover their basic needs during preventive isolation. Photo courtesy of ACH/Spain

Supporting Communities in LAC Hard-Hit by COVID-19

As the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic crisis began to impact Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), USAID activated several teams of experts and provided health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) support to bolster the capacities of some of the most at-risk and vulnerable communities in the region to prevent and respond to the spread of COVID-19.

USAID is responding to COVID-19 in multiple LAC countries. The support includes risk communication activities; disease surveillance; infection prevention and control (IPC), including cleaning and disinfection protocol and educating staff on personal protective equipment use; increasing clinical case-management and testing capacities; and WASH interventions to stem the spread of the disease while also building upon USAID’s existing health assistance in the region.

“USAID’s priorities in the LAC region are to protect the safety and health of most vulnerable communities and support national governments in their response to this highly infectious disease,” said USAID/BHA Acting Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) Sidney Velado.

In Peru, where COVID-19 patients have been facing severe challenges to access supplementary oxygen, USAID, in collaboration with Partners In Health, installed 24 oxygen outlets at a major hospital in Peru’s capital city of Lima and improved the capacity of an oxygen plant at the Lambayeque Regional Hospital. In addition, on June 23, USAID delivered 250 ventilators to assist the Government of Peru’s COVID-19 response efforts. These ventilators, produced in the U.S., are highly specialized, state-of-the-art pieces of medical equipment used in hospitals and other medical facilities to help support patients who are having trouble breathing. USAID is also supporting Peru with technical assistance and training in surveillance, IPC, risk communication, and community engagement.

On late May, USAID also donated 250 modern, top quality ventilators to assist the national COVID-19 response in El Salvador. USAID is also supporting training on the correct use of protection equipment and ventilators, data collection and analysis, and best practices in the care and treatment of COVID-19 patients.

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specialist and two surge capacity consultants to assess the scale of humanitarian need, liaise with government authorities, and coordinate the distribution of USAID/BHA-supported humanitarian assistance.

In response to the storm, the American people are providing a total of \$3.1 million through USAID to provide vulnerable people in affected areas with emergency shelter materials and food assistance, hygiene kits, and WASH supplies. With more than 5,000 cases of COVID-19 in El Salvador, as of June 25, this \$3.1 million in U.S. Government (USG) support for TS Amanda is critical to helping displaced people repair their homes and move out of emergency shelters as soon as it is safe to do so, to limit the risk of exposure to the disease.

As the world's largest donor of humanitarian assistance, the United States remains committed to helping the people of El Salvador.



USAID/BHA provided emergency supplies—including blankets, mattresses, and hygiene kits—to vulnerable families affected by TS Amanda throughout El Salvador. *Photo by Francisco Linares, USAID/BHA*

USAID/OFDA Becomes USAID/BHA

On June 15, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) was officially announced to bring together the former Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) under one bureau to streamline USAID's humanitarian responses across the globe.

The former USAID/OFDA, now USAID/BHA, LAC regional office will continue to operate out of San José, Costa Rica. In addition, USAID/BHA's staff presence in LAC is expected to remain relatively unchanged, except for the integration of former USAID/FFP regional team members joining the office.

"We are excited for the formation of BHA as it allows us to form an even closer working relationship with our colleagues from Food for Peace" commented USAID/BHA Acting SRA Sidney Velado. "Building on more than half a century of experience, we will be better, stronger, and faster at leading the U.S. government's humanitarian assistance efforts overseas."

The formation of USAID/BHA has been a years-long process that was initiated with the goal of delivering lifesaving aid around the globe more efficiently and effectively. The two institutions, with more than half a century of experience, are expected to be more nimble and stronger whilst leading the USG's humanitarian assistance efforts overseas.

"We will also continue to work together as one team, coordinating with interagency partners, other international donors, partners on the ground, and affected communities to meet our longstanding mission—save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the impact of humanitarian crises. This is at the core of what USAID/BHA does every day, all over the world," said Trey Hicks, USAID/BHA Assistant to the Administrator.

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



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In addition, on June 24, USAID provided the first installment of 50 U.S.-produced ventilators and accompanying equipment to Honduras to enhance hospital capacity to treat patients with severe cases of COVID-19.

In Ecuador, USAID, through WFP, is providing emergency food assistance using cash transfers, as well as food vouchers, to households at risk of severe food insecurity and acute malnutrition in Ecuador due to the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. The assistance will reduce the risk of vulnerable households adopting negative coping strategies due to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19.

USAID is also supporting Eastern and Southern Caribbean countries to increase capacity for diagnostics and case management, implement risk communication and community engagement programs, and support IPC activities among other interventions. As part of this support, USAID has launched a platform to provide virtual mental health and psychosocial support services to frontline workers and caregivers through an independent and multicultural network of international health care professionals.

As of June 26, USAID had pledged more than \$1.17 billion to respond to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to helping people around the world fight this pandemic, USAID's humanitarian programs are pivoting to address new challenges caused by COVID-19 while continuing to meet existing critical needs.



USAID partner Samaritan's Purse (SP) sensitizes COVID-19 transmission risks and promotes hand washing throughout communities in The Bahamas. *Photo courtesy of SP*