USAID/OFDA Supports Disaster Management Technical Exchange

With USAID/OFDA support, 15 professors and administrators from the Central American Council of Universities (CSUCA) participated in a disaster management technical exchange organized by the Stephenson Disaster Management Institute at Louisiana State University (LSU).

During the exchange, held from December 9 to 13, 2013, LSU introduced visitors to federal, state, and local programs to prevent, prepare for, and respond to disasters—particularly hurricanes and floods—in the U.S. state of Louisiana.

"It was an opportunity for Latin American universities to learn from Louisiana entities impacted by Hurricane Katrina, and will help incorporate disaster management into different disciplines, as well as foster resilient universities," said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado, who participated in the exchange.

USAID/OFDA Signs Agreement with Peruvian DRR Authorities

USAID/OFDA and USAID/Peru signed a memorandum of understanding with Peru’s National Center for Disaster Assessment, Prevention, and Risk Reduction (CENEPRED) on December 6, 2013.

In the document, the parties agree to collaborate on activities to develop disaster risk scenarios, disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, community education campaigns, technical tools for risk management, and university DRR programs.

USAID also pledges to support the institutionalization and sustainability of national capacities for disaster risk management in Peru and promote private sector and civil society participation in these efforts.
USAID/OFDA Helps Families Affected by Severe Weather in the Caribbean

On December 24 and 25, torrential rains and high winds in the eastern Caribbean caused widespread flooding and landslides in Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The severe weather resulted in 15 deaths and damaged or destroyed numerous roads, bridges, houses, medical centers, and public water systems.

In response to identified needs, USAID/OFDA provided $50,000 to the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Red Cross to procure and distribute emergency relief commodities to affected families. The funds are also being used for projects such as debris clearing to help affected families in the hardest-hit areas rebuild and recover.

In Saint Lucia, USAID/OFDA activated a local surge capacity consultant to liaise with emergency authorities and evaluate potential humanitarian needs. Through its Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), USAID/OFDA also provided $5,000 to the Saint Lucia Red Cross (SLRC) to support the transportation of emergency relief items to affected communities in the Vieux Fort area. The USAID/OFDA consultant helped SLRC workers distribute relief supplies to affected residents.

Additionally, a rainwater harvesting and storage project in southern Saint Lucia, funded by an RDAP small grant in early 2013, proved to be a valuable asset during the December emergency. The back-up system, managed by the Laborie Disaster Preparedness Committee, successfully provided safe drinking water to area residents for two days after the storm, until authorities restored regular water service.

Costa Rica Hosts Regional Exercise

Costa Rica, host to the event, invited 20 firefighting units from Central America and the Caribbean to participate in a fire management exercise which brought together new and experienced participants from various countries. The event was supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the U.S. Forest Service’s Latin American Regional Office.

USAID/OFDA Welcomes New Haiti Team Members

USAID/OFDA welcomes three new regional team members to the Haiti Program Office in Port-au-Prince. New Senior Program Officer Jonathon Anderson arrived in Haiti in late January. He previously served as a USAID/OFDA Program Officer in Ethiopia, providing oversight for emergency response, recovery, and DRR programs.

Program Officer Angelica Fleischer began her Haiti assignment in November 2013, after more than nine years of disaster management experience with non-governmental organizations in Africa and Asia. Administrative Assistant Bathalie Guerrier, a former teacher and interpreter, joined the Haiti office in June 2013.

The team will work closely with the Government of Haiti’s Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC) and partners to strengthen local disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

The USAID/OFDA regional team also wishes to thank Acting Program Officer Nina Minka for her work in Haiti during the 2013 Atlantic Basin hurricane season.

Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean