



## Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, San José, Costa Rica

### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo courtesy of Cooperazione Internazionale

*Cooperazione Internazionale is working with residents of Rimac District, Peru, to implement infrastructure upgrades as part of the USAID/OFDA-funded project addressing disaster risk reduction in urban areas.*

### USAID/OFDA Tackles Urban Hazards

USAID/OFDA recently awarded approximately \$9.6 million to support eight projects focusing on disaster risk reduction (DRR) in vulnerable urban areas of Colombia, Haiti, Jamaica, and Peru. The grants, awarded to six non-governmental organizations, aim to increase the resilience of residents living in marginalized metropolitan areas exposed to natural and man-made disasters, including earthquakes, storms, floods, landslides, and other hazards exacerbated by the elevated growth rate of cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

"It is critical, in a region as seismically active as this one, to look at urban DRR issues. We have seen first-hand the impact that disasters can have in places like Haiti, Peru, Guatemala... the list goes on," said USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan during a recent meeting to launch the projects, held October 30 and 31 in Lima, Peru.

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil



Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity

*Children in Portmore, Jamaica, will benefit from the urban DRR project.*

Gelman, who focuses on urban DRR in the LAC region, noted, "One of the great advantages of these projects is that every component can be approached as an opportunity to mobilize a community to action. So, whether it is an initial assessment, or a community census, or whatever; it becomes a tool for consciousness raising, decision making, and—above all—community engagement."

Following is a brief description of the recently inaugurated urban DRR projects supported by USAID/OFDA:

**COLOMBIA:** Global Communities is using a \$1.7 million USAID/OFDA grant to promote community and private- and public-sector engagement in reducing social and economic impacts associated with frequent landslides, earthquakes, flooding, and fires in four highly vulnerable mountain neighborhoods of Medellín. Project goals include training and building the capacities of neighborhood emergency committees; campaigns to boost resident unity; housing and infrastructure upgrades and layout reconfiguration; and strengthening small-business resilience through public-private partnerships and contingency plan development. The 21-month project aims to benefit more than 56,000 individuals.

**HAITI:** GOAL is working to reduce urban disaster risk, increase resilience, and mitigate geological and hydro-meteorological hazards through expanding and embedding the 'neighborhood approach' in five high-risk neighborhoods of

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### DISASTER RESPONSE

### USAID/OFDA Training Helps Save Miners' Lives

Three trapped miners were heroically rescued on November 10 after the Colombian gold mine where they were working collapsed, burying them in rubble. The rescuers, residents of Risaralda community, in Quinchia Department, Colombia, attribute their success at saving the miners' lives to the USAID/OFDA-supported trainings they had received through the American Red Cross.

Arriving first on the scene, the fully equipped community response team—members of the Colombian Red Cross Caldas and Risaralda branch—was able to mobilize efficiently with local police, initiate removal of earth and debris, and provide life-saving assistance to the trapped miners until additional emergency response crews arrived to extract them.

The USAID/OFDA-sponsored trainings provided to the Risaralda residents included emergency first-aid instruction, disaster simulations and response drills, development of a community emergency response plan, instruction in and procurement of emergency rescue and security equipment, and the formation and training of a community emergency committee.



Photo courtesy of the Colombian Red Cross

*USAID/OFDA-trained emergency responders from the Colombian Red Cross attend to three miners successfully rescued from the collapsed gold mine where they were working.*

According to the American Red Cross, the timeliness, skills, and resources of the Risaralda first responders saved the lives of the three buried miners. Their accomplishment embodies USAID/OFDA's core mandate and mission in the LAC region: to save lives, alleviate suffering, and minimize the social and economic impacts of disasters.

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### Building Capacity in Haiti

In an effort to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity in Haiti's Nord, Nord-Est, and Grand'Anse departments, USAID/OFDA recently awarded Catholic Relief Services approximately \$750,000 to assist departmental officials update vulnerability maps and contingency plans; strengthen Directorate of Civil Protection training and response capacity; facilitate emergency shelter upgrades; bridge gaps in existing early warning systems; disseminate preparedness information to vulnerable communities; and support the creation of departmental rapid-response mechanisms.

The 12-month project aims to lessen the potential impacts of existing hazards for approximately 1.9 million residents of the three departments. USAID/OFDA's support for Haiti capacity building and other DRR projects are part of USAID's agency-wide commitment to improving humanitarian conditions in Haiti.

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### Regional Experts Develop Guide for Future of USAR Training Exercises

Through its Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), USAID/OFDA recently held an urban search-and-rescue (USAR) exercise methodology workshop with disaster response and national emergency system representatives from 10 countries in Central and South America.

The aim of the workshop was to design and develop a model urban USAR-exercise guide for response institutions that takes into consideration individual cities' vulnerability level as well as structural and geographical differences. Once finalized, the guide will assist providers of USAR courses, trainings, and mobilizations to best develop USAR-specific protocol and techniques for their institutions.

Held October 29 through 31, in Panamá City, Panama, workshop participants engaged in lessons learned and experience exchanges as well as carried out cost-to-benefit analyses of existing training exercises, equipment, and techniques.

*USAID/OFDA-supported National USAR Mobilization Exercise in Jalisco, Mexico, 2012.*



Photo by Pedro Soto, USAID/OFDA

## DISASTER RESPONSE

### USAID/OFDA/LAC Regional Staff Serve on International Responses

Two staff members from the USAID/OFDA/LAC regional office recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to serve on response management teams (RMTs) supporting the USAID/OFDA humanitarian responses in the Middle East and West Africa.

USAID/OFDA has activated field-based disaster assistance response teams (DARTs) to respond to complex crises in Iraq and Syria, as well as Ebola outbreaks in Guinea, Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone. The Washington, D.C.-based RMTs support DART efforts and facilitate inter-institutional response coordination.

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard and LAC Regional Administrative Specialist Patrick O'Marr assisted with the Middle East Crisis Humanitarian Response and the West Africa Ebola Virus Response, respectively.

## USAID/OFDA Tackles Urban Hazards

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Port-au-Prince, home to approximately 23,500 residents. The project aims to strengthen social cohesion, implement community infrastructure upgrades, integrate urban DRR management into national policies and plans, and address the priority needs of highly-vulnerable residents through ongoing neighborhood assessments. USAID/OFDA contributed \$750,000 to the 18-month project.

In the impoverished Tabarre neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Cooperazione Internazionale is working to reduce potential impacts of geological and hydro-meteorological hazards to benefit approximately 22,500 residents. The project aims to improve public infrastructure and emergency evacuation routes and shelters, carry out community educational campaigns, integrate DRR decision-making processes at the municipal and national levels, and improve water-management initiatives. USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$750,000 to support the 12-month project.

Global Communities is working to mitigate potential impacts of geological and hydro-meteorological hazards in the vulnerable Christ-Roi, Cité Choune, and Ravine Pintade neighborhoods straddling the Nicolas ravine in Port-au-Prince. The program is building on previous DRR initiatives through partnerships with community-based organizations, government officials, and residents to upgrade infrastructure and mitigate existing risks. USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$750,000 to the 12-month project, which aims to benefit at least 35,000 individuals.

**JAMAICA:** Habitat for Humanity is helping Gregory Park, Newlands, and Naggo Head neighborhoods of Portmore Municipality, Jamaica, to create community redevelopment plans, implement DRR-oriented shelter and infrastructure improvements, and conduct community awareness and coalition-building campaigns. The project will address hazards including frequent hurricanes and tropical storms with associated flooding and ground-water contamination as well as seasonal droughts exacerbated by poor land management practices. The project also plans to strengthen market systems and develop business incentives for vulnerable residents. USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$1.4 million to the 33-month project, which aims to benefit nearly 65,000 individuals overall.

**PERU:** The Center for Disaster Studies and Prevention (PREDES) is helping strengthen community, municipal, and national disaster risk management capacities in the vulnerable Unificada and Ermitaño settlements of the capital city. The project aims to identify earthquake-vulnerable structures and conduct technical studies to determine best techniques and materials to improve building strength and functionality. In addition, PREDES will engage private-sector and government entities to develop, validate, and disseminate earthquake-resistant building techniques to approximately 19,000 project beneficiaries. USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$1.3 million to support the two-and-a-half-year project.

Cooperazione Internazionale is working with civil-society organizations, local authorities, and the private sector to strengthen risk management in marginalized informal communities of Rimac District in central Lima. The project intends to disseminate risk-management tools among government authorities with decision-making capacity, upgrade hazard-prone infrastructure, strengthen capacities of community groups—including women's associations, provide practical training, and develop a Geographical Information System database to identify and help address existing vulnerabilities. USAID/OFDA provided \$1 million to support the three-year project, which aims to benefit at least 20,000 individuals directly and nearly 170,000 indirectly.

Finally, Save the Children is helping urban neighborhoods in Carabaylo District of northern Lima to increase disaster resilience through the adoption of DRR-aligned policies and procedures, strengthen critical community infrastructure, and build local capacities through the identification and reinforcement of key municipal market systems and services. The project aims to foster participation and investment from private-sector actors, academic institutions, and community members, benefitting more than 50,000 people. USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$1.9 million to support the three-year project.

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