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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo by Eduardo Gutiérrez, USAID/OFDA

Audrey Mullings, USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist (DRMS) for Jamaica, speaks at a small grant signing ceremony with the Saint Catherine Community Development Agency. The USAID/OFDA-funded project aims to increase community resilience to seasonal drought conditions.

New RDAP Small Grants to Strengthen Community DRR

Through its Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), USAID/OFDA recently provided five new small grants of \$30,000 each to local community organizations to develop disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

The RDAP Small Grants Program targets local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to promote resilience and strengthen livelihood security through disaster preparedness and mitigation projects, as well as innovative community initiatives to build autonomy, create local employment opportunities, and promote sustainable farming techniques and resource management. Grants typically last between six months and one year.

Since April 2011, the RDAP Small Grants Program has provided approximately \$790,000 to fund 25 community-level projects in 17 countries in the LAC region.

"The Small Grants Program empowers local NGOs and community

leaders to invest in their communities to become better prepared for the risks—such as flooding and earthquakes—that they face each day," said USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

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Photo by Eduardo Gutiérrez, USAID/OFDA

Members of Saint Catherine Parish will benefit from the rainwater harvesting system's added water storage.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Expands Partnerships To Increase Community Resilience

USAID/OFDA is partnering with The Water Institute of the Gulf, a U.S.-based water resource systems research institute, and the Panama-based Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC), to develop tools to improve Latin American communities' ability to cope with extreme hydrometeorological events.

The partnership, which The Water Institute announced on July 31, specifically aims to increase coastal communities' resilience and sustainability by discovering and developing disaster coping strategies that are also exportable to other places around the world.

"We are excited to take this first step in building a grander view on resilience applications and community outreach," said Craig Colten, The Water Institute's Director of Human Dimensions. "This partnership will allow us to tackle shared water issues of international importance."

DISASTER RESILIENCE

FIU and USAID/OFDA Promote Business Continuity in the Bahamas

USAID/OFDA, in partnership with Florida International University (FIU), is providing technical assistance to the Government of the Bahamas for implementation of a small business continuity program for island residents in the event and aftermath of disasters. USAID/OFDA and FIU representatives recently met with the Director of the Bahamas National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Captain Stephen Russell, to discuss ways to ensure limited disaster effects on small business owners, post-disaster assistance options, and long-term strategies to increase continuity and resilience.

At the July 22 meeting, FIU invited select NEMA representatives and professionals from the private and public sectors—including the College of the Bahamas, the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce, and the Government of the Bahamas Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries—to participate in a study tour to learn more about FIU initiatives for business continuity in South Florida's Broward and Dade counties. Participants of the 2015 tour would explore resilience themes developed by FIU, such as livelihoods, market systems, and DRR.

New RDAP Small Grants to Strengthen Community DRR

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The five new projects, described below, are scheduled to conclude by December.

COLOMBIA—Developing an Early Warning System for Floods

With support from USAID/OFDA, the Pasto Firefighters Corps is working with municipal emergency response agencies and community members to develop an early warning system for flooding along the Pasto River and Quebrada Guachucal Creek in Pasto Municipality. The project will provide water-level monitoring equipment and guidance to ensure effective data sharing, as well as carry out a community awareness program targeting 1,500 families, to increase community resilience and promote disaster preparedness and risk mitigation.

JAMAICA—Promoting Resilience to Drought

With Small Grants Program funding, Saint Catherine Community Development Agency is establishing rainwater harvesting and storage systems in 10 schools and four community centers in Saint Catherine Parish. The increased water supply will provide everyday water consumption and help reduce shortages during periods of drought in seven communities in the parish. More than 6,000 students, teachers, and community residents will directly benefit from the project.

NICARAGUA—Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Capacities in Urban Neighborhoods

The Nicaragua Foundation for Popular Education and the Foundation for Peace and Democracy are working with municipal government authorities, community members, and emergency response brigades to reduce vulnerability and strengthen disaster preparedness in the highly vulnerable District IV neighborhood of Managua, Nicaragua's capital city. The USAID/OFDA-funded project aims to create, improve, and foster inter-agency coordination of emergency preparedness and response plans. Targeted beneficiaries include women, girls, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable community members.

SAINT LUCIA—Preparing for Water Shortages and Other Disasters

USAID/OFDA is supporting the Choiseul Emergency Preparedness Organization to install rainwater harvesting and storage systems in six vulnerable communities—comprising more than 2,800 beneficiaries—of Choiseul District. The organization will also provide training to community volunteers to manage the reserve water system and establish a working relationship with the Environmental Health Department and Water and Sewage Company. The additional water source will provide relief in times of scarcity and during disasters when regular water service is often disrupted.

URUGUAY—Strengthening Community Resilience in Brazos Unidos

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) of Uruguay is working with residents of the Brazos Unidos neighborhood, in Montevideo, to mitigate disaster risks and strengthen response capacities. The USAID/OFDA-funded project supports ADRA to develop an emergency response plan, form a community emergency response team, and engage residents in mitigation projects to reduce vulnerabilities and better prepare for and respond to flooding—a frequently recurring event in the area. The project will benefit more than 350 community members, nearly half of which are children.

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA RDAP Course Explores Principles of DRR

USAID/OFDA recently launched its new DRR course in Chile, in collaboration with Chile's National Emergency Management Office (ONEMI) and Caritas Chile.

The course reviews basic principles of disaster management in general and DRR in particular—including risk evaluation, transfer, and financing—using a variety of resources, tools, and the knowledge and experience of course participants.

Participants hailed from different disciplines and sectors, increasing the scope and reach of the course content. Participants included representatives from ONEMI, the municipal governments of Santiago, San Antonio, La Serena, and Panquehue, Caritas Chile, the Chilean Red Cross, and the National Firefighters Academy, as well as the new president of Costa Rica's National Commission for Risk Prevention and Disaster Response (CNE), Iván Brenes.

Caritas Chile Director Lorenzo Figueroa noted, "Emergencies and disasters are, in part, a result of our way of inhabiting our planet and relating to each other as people and communities; of our modes of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. And they mainly affect the most vulnerable, excluded, and abandoned communities. That is why capacity building and the exchange of experiences, strategies, and tools for DRR and disaster management is a task Caritas Chile assumes as part of our commitment to comprehensive, just, and socially and environmentally sustainable human development."

The newly revised DRR course was held in Santiago, Chile, from August 4 to 6.



Photo courtesy of ONEMI

Participants of the newly revamped USAID/OFDA DRR course.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Ashley Hernreich, the Washington, D.C.-based Acting USAID/OFDA Team Leader for the LAC region, recently traveled to several countries in the region to meet with USAID/OFDA staff and emergency management representatives. At right, she meets with Juan Gabriel Samoya from Guatemala's National Coordination for Disaster Management.



Photo by Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA