



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

DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo by Carol Han, USAID/OFDA

USAID/DART Leader Tim Callaghan and Medical Officer Satish Pillai brief the media about what the United States is doing in response to the outbreak.

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisors Assist With Ebola Outbreak Response in Africa

In early August, two regional advisors from USAID/OFDA's Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) regional office deployed to West Africa to coordinate with other international humanitarian organizations and lead the U.S. Government's (USG) overall emergency response efforts to combat the spread of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the epidemic a "public health emergency of international concern."

On August 5, USAID activated a Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART), composed of disaster response and medical experts from USAID,

the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Forest Service, to identify key needs stemming from the outbreak, amplify humanitarian response efforts, and coordinate all USG efforts to support the response.

Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA/LAC Senior Regional Advisor (SRA), led the USAID/DART from Monrovia, Liberia, for eight weeks until the end of September. USAID/OFDA/LAC Regional Advisor Phil Gelman was the deputy team leader in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Both advisors, who helped coordinate the USG response to the January 2010

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USAID/DART Leader Callaghan inspects buckets and other hygiene supplies at a UNICEF warehouse in Monrovia, Liberia, slated for distribution to health clinics and families at risk of contracting the fatal disease.



Photo by Carol Han, USAID/OFDA

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

South American Professors Participate in U.S. Exchange

A delegation of university professors and administrators from South America, associated with the Latin American and Caribbean University Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (REDULAC), along with disaster risk management specialists from the USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program, recently visited the U.S. state of Louisiana to learn about the national response framework implemented after Hurricane Katrina.

The Stephenson Disaster Management Institute (SDMI) at Louisiana State University (LSU) hosted the USAID/OFDA-supported technical exchange, held from August 18 to 22 in the cities of New Orleans and Baton Rouge. SDMI introduced delegation members to federal, state, city, and university-level programs that are in place to help prevent, prepare for, and respond to disasters.

"We are happy to exchange information and experiences regarding how universities can contribute to disaster resiliency and recovery. We are hopeful these new relationships can be continued in an ongoing dialogue, as well as joint engagements to develop and improve strategies to mitigate the effects of disasters," said SDMI Executive Director Joseph Booth.

Participant Vicente León from the Adventist University of Chile said, "It was striking to observe the level of consciousness, preparedness, and programs developed by the various actors to respond to emergencies. Their social awareness, commitment level, and desire to help humanity are significant. Now it is our task to undertake similar work in our respective workplaces."

The REDULAC delegation learned about LSU programs that support disaster resiliency and response efforts; visited Dillard University, which was impacted by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, to discuss continuity of operations and emergency management for institutions of higher learning; and saw the ongoing revitalization of post-Katrina New Orleans.

"I really had no idea how involved Louisiana State and Dillard universities are in natural disaster prevention and mitigation; this has been a great opportunity to visualize the role that our educational institutions should play in disaster management," said César Gavidia, from the National University of San Marcos in Peru.

"We witnessed the fruitful integration of hurricane preparedness actions on behalf of LSU research groups, Louisiana State and New Orleans municipal government agencies, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. What

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA and U.S. Forest Service Assess EOC Functionality in Haiti

In August, USAID/OFDA and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) completed an assessment of the functionality of various emergency operation centers (EOCs) in Haiti.

The EOCs were constructed by the U.S. Southern Command for the Haitian Directorate of Civil Protection (DPC). The EOCs are designed to be the hub for preparation and coordination of response activities for emergency situations.

During the assessment visit, the USFS focused on identifying the types of capacity-building support that DPC requires to ensure that the EOCs are operational and that emergency response actors utilize a structured management system—specifically the Incident Command System (ICS)—to guide relief operations.

ICS was designed by the USFS in the 1970s to improve interagency emergency responses and continues to be the emergency management model used in the United States and other countries. USAID/OFDA and the USFS plan to coordinate with the DPC to implement a multi-year capacity-building program to institutionalize ICS in Haiti and increase the functionality of the EOCs.

Representatives from USFS and USAID/OFDA visit North Department EOC and DPC staff during the recent assessment.



Photo courtesy of DPC



Photo by Sarah McElroy, USAID/OFDA

USAID/DART members unload buckets and other critical hygiene items for distribution as part of the Ebola outbreak response.

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Haiti earthquake, have returned home for a well-deserved break from the dangerous response.

"This is the hardest response I have ever worked, but I am proud that the USAID/DART staff have been totally committed—under stressful conditions; Ebola kills—to stopping this awful epidemic," Callaghan said.

WHO reported a total of 5,843 suspected and confirmed cases of Ebola in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, the three most affected countries, as of September 22. Of these, 2,803 people have died.

The USG response focuses on slowing or stopping the spread of the highly contagious disease by increasing public awareness of how the virus spreads, setting up much-needed Ebola treatment units, training medical and other health care workers, distributing personal protective equipment and disinfection supplies, and other actions aimed at preventing infection.

For example, in an effort to break the chain of transmission in Liberia, the most-affected country to date, USAID, UNICEF, and the U.S.-based Paul G. Allen Family Foundation have teamed up to deliver 50,000 household protection kits to family caregivers to look after ill relatives as safely as possible.

The first shipment of 9,000 kits arrived in Liberia on September 25. Kits contain protective gowns, gloves, and masks, as well as soap, chlorine and a sprayer, along with instructions on the use and safe disposal of materials. UNICEF's partners, in coordination with USAID and the Government of Liberia Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, will distribute the kits in communities with the highest rates of Ebola in the coming weeks.

"This epidemic is unprecedented and combating it requires an extraordinary response," said Sheldon Yett, UNICEF Liberia Representative. "The first priority is for more dedicated Ebola treatment facilities and trained staff, but until these are in place, we need to support community efforts to safely care for those who may be infected and cut the transmission cycle of this deadly disease."

As of September 29, USG had provided approximately \$106 million in response to the Ebola outbreak, of which USAID/OFDA had contributed nearly \$42.8 million.

"We will continue to work alongside our international partners and the governments of the affected countries to coordinate a creative and global effort to stem this historic epidemic," Callaghan said.

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I learned in the United States, and am sharing in my classes and scientific meetings, is that comprehensive disaster risk management is possible and is extremely important to effectively face natural and manmade disasters," noted Isa de Oliveira Rocha, a professor at Santa Catarina State University in Brazil.

Mirtha Alfonso, from Paraguay's National Professional Advancement Service, said she "witnessed the results of a tenacious labor, which prioritizes the creation of resilient cities, step by step, correcting mistakes, and, above all, employing a truly efficient holistic method."

USAID/OFDA supported a similar exchange for Central American university staff in December 2013.

Participants learn about campus disaster preparedness programs at Dillard University during the Louisiana technical exchange.



Photo by Manuel Santana, USAID/OFDA

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Tel: +(506) 2290-4133
E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov
Internet: www.usaid.gov