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U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN – Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation Programs

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2006

September 30, 2006

Background

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are highly vulnerable to a range of natural hazards, including earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, landslides, volcanoes, and drought. At times, El Niño Southern Oscillation meteorological events and poor land use management exacerbate the effects of some of these hazards. In addition, disasters triggered by environmental or technological incidents, such as forest fires and chemical and oil spills, pose a potential threat. Some LAC countries are also vulnerable to civil unrest and associated humanitarian consequences.

Recognizing these vulnerabilities, USAID/OFDA supports disaster preparedness and mitigation programs aimed at reducing the loss of human life and lessening the economic impacts of disasters. These programs may include risk identification, prioritization, and reduction, as well as post-disaster recovery and short-term rehabilitation projects. In the LAC region, USAID/OFDA promotes local and national self-sufficiency in disaster preparedness and management. USAID/OFDA's programs build upon and strengthen the capacity of established national and regional disaster management institutions, many of which have the ability to meet most emergency needs after an event.

USAID/OFDA's commitment to the development of disaster risk management practices in LAC is best illustrated through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) established in 1989. Over the years, USAID/OFDA has adapted the program to meet the increased levels of capacity in LAC by changing from a strictly instructional approach to providing more technical assistance for planning, strengthening, and centralizing the role of national organizations in disaster management. USAID/OFDA's technical assistance also enhances local and regional abilities to respond to emergency needs by increasing awareness and understanding of disaster preparedness and mitigation activities and encouraging intra- and inter-governmental coordination in all risk management initiatives.

The RDAP and other preparedness programs are overseen and monitored by USAID/OFDA's team of four regional advisors based in San José, Costa Rica, and one regional advisor based in Bridgetown, Barbados.¹ USAID/OFDA regional advisors are available for immediate deployment in response to disasters to conduct damage and needs assessments and to help coordinate emergency response activities.

USAID/OFDA supports the development of risk management in LAC through a number of programs. In FY 2006, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$7.1 million for ongoing disaster preparedness and mitigation projects.

USAID/OFDA/LAC Preparedness and Mitigation Assistance *Regional Programs*

- **Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP):** Through a contract with the International Resources Group (IRG), USAID/OFDA maintains a network of disaster assistance experts located throughout the LAC region who are available to deploy to disaster sites, perform damage assessments, and provide guidance on disaster preparedness and mitigation activities. In addition, the IRG consultants oversee a multi-course program with instruction in disaster management concepts, training methodology, and technical disciplines. The program also provides technical assistance, including guidance for strategic planning and organizational development processes, facilitation in the development and evaluation of national and local risk management training programs, support for inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, and assistance in the preparation of local, departmental, and national emergency action plans. The program began in Latin America in May 1989 and expanded in 1991 to include the Caribbean countries. Since the program's inception, USAID/OFDA has trained nearly 43,000 participants and certified more than 4,200 instructors in 26 countries. Many of these USAID/OFDA-trained individuals have assumed leadership roles in national disaster management organizations and presently conduct training in their own countries using their resources. USAID/OFDA has contracted IRG to implement the RDAP from 1998 to 2008, and total funding of the program since 1998 amounts to \$30,394,654..... **FY 2006 \$4,700,000**

¹ The USAID/OFDA sub-office in Barbados is scheduled to close December 31, 2006. USAID/OFDA will continue to serve the Caribbean region through the consultant network and Costa Rica-based regional advisors.

- Emergency Health Preparedness Program: Since 1998, USAID/OFDA has supported the Pan American Health Organization’s (PAHO) efforts to promote improved disaster preparedness and response in the health sector. In 2003, USAID/OFDA and PAHO entered into a five-year agreement focused on increasing the capacity of health professionals to respond to disasters in the LAC region. PAHO is working to increase and improve advocacy, technical information services, and human resources training in health, environment, and all related sectors. Specific PAHO activities include production and dissemination of training materials and health guidelines, support for developing building codes for health and water facilities, and health surveillance for local communities in the immediate post-disaster period. Total USAID/OFDA funding to PAHO for regional technical support in the LAC region since 1998 is \$9,450,870 **FY 2006 \$1,000,000**
- Assessment of LAC Risk Management Curricula – Phase I and Phase II: Implemented by the Florida International University (FIU), Phase I of this project, completed in August 2004, assessed the state of disaster, emergency, or risk management instruction in higher education institutions in the LAC region. In Phase II, FIU is supporting three higher education institutions in South America identified in Phase I to receive small grants to strengthen disaster management learning through creative and innovative approaches. Since FY 2003, USAID/OFDA has provided \$251,206 to FIU for Phase I and Phase II of this project **FY 2006 \$99,978**
- Private Sector Involvement in Disaster Assistance: Since July 2004, USAID/OFDA has supported the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) to promote private sector engagement and contributions to emergency management activities before, during, and after disaster events in the LAC region. PADF has helped businesses to develop strategies that encourage quick mobilization of private sector resources for disaster assistance. The program is also bringing emergency management training to private enterprises, as well as creating awareness among businesses regarding disaster preparedness and mitigation. Since 2004, USAID/OFDA has provided a total of \$870,554 toward the implementation of this project..... **FY 2006 \$440,041**
- Volcano Response in Costa Rica and Ecuador and Strengthening Volcano-Monitoring Efforts: USAID/OFDA supports the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) that provides technical assistance to volcano-monitoring organizations throughout the world. VDAP assistance includes crisis response, training for risk assessment, developing early warning plans, and the transfer of volcano-monitoring equipment and technology. In FY 2006, VDAP provided volcano-monitoring equipment and/or remote assistance for volcanoes in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, and Colombia. VDAP assistance helped local agencies successfully forecast eruptions at Tungurahua volcano in Ecuador and Galeras volcano in Colombia, permitting the timely evacuation of residents. Other USAID/OFDA-funded VDAP assistance included the deployment of a volcanologist to El Salvador to assist with increased activity at Santa Ana volcano in October 2005, the shipment of equipment to the Observatorio Vulcanológico y Sismológico in Costa Rica to measure volcanic gas emissions from Poás volcano in April 2006, and the replacement of Ecuador’s Instituto Geofísico’s seismic-monitoring equipment destroyed in the August 2006 eruption of Tungurahua volcano. Since 1986, VDAP assistance in LAC has totaled approximately \$6.3 million, with \$325,000 provided in FY 2006 **FY 2006 \$325,000**
- Latin America and Caribbean Emergency Response Network (LACERN): From August 2005 to July 2006, USAID/OFDA supported the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) with a one-year grant worth \$700,000 for the LACERN emergency response project. LACERN comprised one central hub in Panama, primarily for operational equipment to be airlifted or shipped as needed during an emergency, and three sub-regional depots with small stocks of ready-to-eat meals—one in Central America, one in the Andean region, and one in the Caribbean. Immediate food interventions could be mobilized from the depots and reach most locations within the region within one to two days. An emergency management center was co-located with the hub to allow WFP and partners to share experiences, pre-crisis information, and operational data to optimize the timeliness of responses.

Caribbean Programs

- Caribbean Tsunami Early Warning System: In August 2006, USAID/OFDA entered an agreement with the University of the West Indies (UWI) Seismic Research Unit (SRU) as part of a multi-national, regional project to strengthen the capacity of the SRU to detect, monitor, and provide early warning of tsunamis and related geologic hazards. New equipment and software will assist with more rapid transmission of information regarding these events to vulnerable communities in the Eastern Caribbean and benefit disaster management officials, island governments, planning departments, and people living in the Caribbean, especially those residing near coastlines. The first phase of the program will end in February 2008 and will facilitate the development of information-sharing protocols among seismological agencies in support of a Tsunami and Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Areas. **FY 2006 \$249,680**

- Disaster Risk Management Program in Haiti: With \$250,000 provided in FY 2005, USAID/OFDA is supporting the U.N. Development Program's (UNDP) efforts to reduce natural hazard risks faced by vulnerable populations in Haiti through February 2007. UNDP is collaborating with Haiti's Civil Protection Department to strengthen local and national response, preparation, and training capacities and to develop disaster prevention and mitigation projects.
- Disaster Mitigation Facility for the Caribbean (DMFC): Between April 2000 and September 2006, USAID/OFDA provided \$1.6 million to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to establish a disaster mitigation facility in the region. The six-year program supported activities that promote sustainable development through reduced risk and losses from natural hazards in the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean. In addition, the DMFC worked to incorporate natural hazard considerations into new development projects financed by the bank.

Central America and Mexico Programs

- School Disaster Preparedness Project in Honduras: USAID/OFDA is supporting a pilot effort by World Vision United States (WVUS) to teach basic disaster preparedness principles to approximately 4,400 children in 42 schools and educational centers in the disaster-prone departments of Valle and Francisco Marazán in Honduras. The project will enhance risk management capacity for all the members of the school communities, including the parent associations, teachers, administrators, and WVUS program staff. Physical improvements to schools, such as repairs to roofs, windows, walls, sanitary services, floors, and walkways, will be implemented to further reduce risk. Using USAID/OFDA teaching methodology, WVUS staff will develop work plans and form school-level working committees trained in evacuation, first aid, rescue operations, and school safety **FY 2006 \$165,720**
- Disaster Preparedness in Vulnerable Municipalities of Western Honduras: In September 2006, USAID/OFDA awarded a grant to Action of Churches Together (ACT) in Honduras to train and organize local emergency committees in 40 highly vulnerable communities in Naranjito and Azacualpa in the Santa Bárbara Department, in Nueva Arcadia in Copán Department, and in La Unión in Lempira Department. Once established, the emergency committees plan to create risk maps and contingency plans to facilitate evacuation and rescue, install an early warning system to alert the population to signs of danger and thresholds for evacuation, and carry out small-scale mitigation projects to reduce risk in the most vulnerable communities. ACT will seek to strengthen coordination, at local and municipal levels, with existing governmental structures and civil society groups..... **FY 2006 \$76,400**
- Wildfire Prevention and Preparedness in Mexico: In 2005, three hurricanes—Emily, Stan, and Wilma—affected more than 860,000 hectares of land in the Quintana Roo region of Mexico, increasing fire risk due to greater amounts of fuels and damaged infrastructure. To address these concerns, USAID/OFDA is partnering with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and USAID/Mexico to develop a plan for managing that risk in support of the Government of Mexico National Forest Commission (CONAFOR). The program is based on the ongoing work of USAID/USFS Fire Management Program and will increase coordination and capacity to reduce the risk of wildfire and ensure an effective and safe response while mitigating health, environmental, and economic damage. Program activities will focus on prevention, preparedness, and planning and concentrate on priority areas identified by an inter-agency assessment conducted in December 2005. Specific activities will include strengthening inter-institutional coordination and collaboration to respond to wildland fire, delivering Incident Command System courses in Quintana Roo and Yucatán states, providing technical assistance to support CONAFOR's radio-communication system, and improving rapid detection and localization of fires. The program will also strengthen awareness and preparedness of local populations living in rural areas by assisting fire committees with the development of emergency response operational plans **FY 2006 \$100,000**
- Reducing Risk and Preparing Vulnerable Communities in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua: USAID/OFDA is supporting the Nicaraguan Red Cross (CRN) to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable communities in Puerto Cabezas, especially in the geographically and socially isolated areas closest to the Wawa River. The project is raising awareness of the importance of risk reduction, improved understanding of natural hazards, and strengthened local capacity to respond to disasters. The CRN is conducting information campaigns to teach the residents of Puerto Cabezas about potential risks and advocating that risk reduction education be included in relevant courses of study at schools and universities. The CRN is working with the municipal government and communities in disaster preparation activities, early warning systems, and the implementation of small mitigation projects. USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 in FY 2005 funding for this program, which is scheduled to finish in October 2006.
- Risk Reduction and Disaster Preparedness at Teacher Training Institute: Since 1998, USAID/OFDA has worked with the Juan Demóstenes Arosemena Teacher Training Institute (JDATTI) in Panama to incorporate risk

reduction into teaching curricula. Approximately 2,500 men and women study at the JDATTI, under the supervision of 90 administrators and 120 professors. Nearly 400 primary school teachers graduate from the JDATTI annually and are absorbed into schools throughout Panama, including disaster-prone and isolated areas of the Caribbean coast and southern region. With funding from USAID/OFDA, the institute enhanced risk reduction and disaster preparation by improving equipment in the JDATTI documentation center, primarily through the provision of computers and Internet service and the purchase of specialized books, documents, and curriculum guides for students, professors, and administrators. The new facilities enabled JDATTI students and faculty to publish original research on risk reduction and disaster preparation. In FY 2005, USAID/OFDA provided \$21,500 for this program scheduled to finish in October 2006.

South America Programs

- **South America Mitigation Initiative (SAMI):** From September 2005 to October 2006, USAID/OFDA supported CARE’s SAMI program in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru, aimed at incorporating an emergency prevention and preparedness approach into local development plans. SAMI’s activities worked to reduce the risk faced by vulnerable communities in the event of an emergency or disaster by developing and testing a set of tools and methods for emergency preparedness. SAMI trained approximately 240,000 people, including local government officials, non-governmental organization representatives, and CARE project staff in emergency preparedness concepts and methodologies. Specific projects focused on the departments of Tarija and La Paz in Bolivia, the provinces of Carchí and El Oro in Ecuador, and in the departments of Puno and Tumbes in Peru. USAID/OFDA provided \$88,012 in FY 2005 funding to this program.

Total USAID/OFDA FY 2006 LAC Preparedness and Mitigation Assistance.....\$7,156,819

USAID/OFDA PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE IN LAC REGION¹

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>FY 2006 Funding</i>	<i>Total Funding for Ongoing Projects</i>
ACT	Disaster Preparedness in Vulnerable Municipalities	Honduras	\$76,400	\$76,400
CARE	South America Mitigation Initiative	Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru	—	\$88,012
CDB	Disaster Mitigation Facility	Caribbean	—	\$1,600,000
CRN	Reducing Risk and Preparing Vulnerable Communities	Nicaragua	—	\$50,000
FIU	Assessment of LAC Risk Management Curricula	LAC Region	\$99,978	\$251,206
IRG	Regional Disaster Assistance Program	LAC Region	\$4,700,000	\$30,394,654
JDATTI	Risk Reduction and Disaster Preparation at Teacher Training Institute	Panama	—	\$21,500
PADF	Private Sector Involvement in Disaster Assistance	LAC Region	\$440,041	\$870,554
PAHO	Emergency Health Preparedness Program	LAC Region	\$1,000,000	\$9,450,870
UNDP	Disaster Risk Management Program	Haiti	—	\$250,000
USFS	Wildfire Prevention and Preparedness	Mexico	\$100,000	\$100,000
UWI	Seismic Research Unit Tsunami Early Warning System	Caribbean	\$249,680	\$249,680
VDAP	Strengthening of Volcano Monitoring Efforts	LAC Region	\$325,000	\$6,325,000
WFP	Latin America and Caribbean Emergency Response Network	LAC Region	—	\$700,000
WVUS	School Disaster Preparedness	Honduras	\$165,720	\$165,720
USAID/OFDA PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION ASSISTANCE IN LAC			\$7,156,819	\$50,593,596

¹ USAID/OFDA funding represents anticipated or actual obligated amounts as of September 30, 2006.