



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

RDAP SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

OCTOBER 2014

OVERVIEW

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are prone to a range of natural hazards, including earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, landslides, volcanoes, and drought. To reduce the effects of these hazards, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs that promote local, national, and regional self-sufficiency in disaster preparedness and management, and build upon and strengthen the capacity of established institutions in the region.

The Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), established in 1989, is an important vehicle for USAID/OFDA's support of disaster risk management in LAC. Through RDAP, USAID/OFDA maintains a network of disaster risk management specialists (DRMSs) who provide technical assistance for disaster preparedness and mitigation activities in the region, overseeing instruction in disaster management concepts, training methodology, and related technical disciplines.

In April 2011, RDAP launched the Small Grants Program to promote DRR projects at the community level. The grants, which average \$30,000 for up to one year, contribute to host governments' DRR priorities and support innovative initiatives and pilot projects that develop community capacity to prepare for, mitigate the impact of, and respond to disasters. New grants are awarded yearly to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to implement DRR measures and increase disaster preparedness capabilities at the community level. Once USAID/OFDA approves the projects, DRMSs provide technical support and guidance throughout the implementation process.

To date, USAID/OFDA has provided approximately \$790,000 in small grants funding to 25 community-level DRR projects in the Bahamas, Belize, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Uruguay. All projects align with USAID/OFDA's regional DRR goals, including to safeguard the livelihood assets of vulnerable families, prevent shelter losses, strengthen local DRR and preparedness capacities, and ultimately save lives in the event of future disasters.

USAID/OFDA has supported the following projects through the RDAP Small Grants Program:

THE BAHAMAS—UPGRADING COMMUNITY SHELTERS FOR EMERGENCIES

The Bahamas Salvation Army upgraded two community centers in Nassau for use as emergency shelters, including repairs to sanitation facilities, walls, and floors, as well as converting storage areas into men's and women's showers and changing rooms. The upgrades, completed in March 2014, provide clean and secure shelters for neighborhood residents during hurricanes.

BELIZE—STRENGTHENING DISTRICT EMERGENCY RESCUE AND RESPONSE

The Belize Disaster and Rescue Response Team trained 75 volunteers in search-and-rescue practices, disaster response techniques, monitoring and evaluation techniques, as well as procured equipment to help strengthen emergency response teams in Belize's six departments. The project ended in March 2014.

BELIZE—IMPROVING EMERGENCY SHELTER AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Belize Red Cross upgraded community centers in Flowers Bank, LEMONAL, and Rancho Dolores villages in the Belize River Valley and equipped each unit with a back-up generator to ensure power supply when the centers are converted to emergency shelters during and after a disaster. The Government of Belize Ministry of Works and National Emergency Management Organization have certified that the buildings comply with hurricane and flood shelter standards. The project, which concluded in November 2011, also provided residents in the isolated May Pen village with a storm-resistant VHF radio communication system for use during emergencies.

BELIZE—STRENGTHENING SCHOOL SAFETY TRAINING AND EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

A grant to the Belize Red Cross strengthened the capacities of 19 schools in Cayo District to better respond to minor accidents and emergencies by developing emergency plans—including the formation of specialized brigades dedicated to first aid, fire safety, psycho-social support, and evacuation—as well as drafting general safety guides. The project ended in June 2013.

BRAZIL—STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO DROUGHT

Through two separate RDAP small grants, Caritas strengthened rural resilience to drought by training community leaders and establishing alternative income sources for families in the drought-prone municipalities of Crateús, Quiterianópolis, and Tamboril in Ceará State. Community leaders learned effective water management techniques, including the construction of rainwater collection systems and storage areas in their communities. The Caritas project, which concluded in June 2013, also helped establish a cooperative that uses recycled plastic bottles to make brooms, generating additional income and increasing the community's economic resilience.

CHILE—WATER QUALITY ANALYSIS DURING HYDROMETEOROLOGICAL EMERGENCIES

The Chilean chapter of the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) provided technical assistance, equipment, and training to local volunteers to conduct water analysis and sampling in drought-affected communities in Petorca Province. The ADRA project, completed in January 2014, also hosted workshops for families regarding disease prevention and proper hygiene measures, including hand-washing.

CHILE—DRR CAPACITY BUILDING IN HISTORIC COMMUNITIES IN SANTIAGO

Supported by the Foundation School of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Chile, community leaders in two historic neighborhoods in Santiago—home to approximately 6,000 residents in 1,200 buildings—evaluated risk mitigation and evacuation strategies for local populations vulnerable to earthquakes. The neighborhoods also benefited from strengthened capacities for post-disaster response and initial damage assessment and needs analysis (DANA) reporting. The project ended in August 2013.

CHILE—EMERGENCY PLANNING, EQUIPMENT, AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PRESCHOOLS

Fundación Integra supported DRR measures for 13 preschools in the Los Rios Region. The project, which ended in May 2012, benefitted children and staff members by identifying and preparing evacuation routes, building exit ramps, installing independently-powered emergency alarm systems, and providing first-aid kits.

COLOMBIA—DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS 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, scheduled to conclude in December 2014, will provide water-level monitoring equipment and communication guidance, as well as carry out a community awareness program targeting 1,500 families to increase community resilience and promote disaster preparedness and risk mitigation.

COSTA RICA—EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR FOREST FIRES

USAID/OFDA partnered with *Fundación para la Cooperación Costa Rica–United States of America* and the Government of Costa Rica National System of Conservation Areas to implement an early warning and response system in three remote communities near La Amistad International Park. The project, which ended in March 2012, also supported forest firefighter trainings and communications, as well as the procurement of firefighting equipment for the Tres Colinas, Potrero Grande, and La Puna communities.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC—COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Fundación Integral Niños Felices de América implemented a project in the El Chavón neighborhood of La Chapea Glen in Los Alcarrizos Municipality. The project, which concluded in May 2012, helped reforest the La Chapea watershed area and improved the neighborhood's infrastructure, as well as sensitized community members on the benefits of environmental restoration and reducing pollution as means to lessen disaster vulnerability.

ECUADOR—REDUCING RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CLIMATE CHANGE

EcoCostas worked with government leaders from coastal districts in San Cristobal Island, Galapagos Province, and Manta, Manabí Province, to develop climate change adaption and resilience strategies in low-income communities vulnerable to natural disasters, such as landslides and floods. The EcoCostas project, which ended in June 2013, also designed emergency plans and provided disaster risk management training to community leaders in the same coastal districts.

GUATEMALA—IMPROVING LOCAL FOREST FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT

Fundación ProPetén supported local fire management authorities in San Andrés, San José, and Flores municipalities in Petén Department by increasing organizational and operational capacity through response and fire management training and the procurement of environmental monitoring, communications, and equipment to combat forest fires. The project concluded in February 2014.

GUATEMALA—EMERGENCY RESPONSE EQUIPMENT AND FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING

SHARE Guatemala procured emergency radio communications equipment and provided technical training to municipal and community leaders in 30 primarily indigenous communities of Tecpán Municipality, Chimaltenango Department. The project, which ended in November 2012, also provided equipment and first responder training—including performing a full-scale emergency simulation to test communications equipment, procedures, and protocols—to nearly 300 volunteers from community disaster response committees.

JAMAICA—PROMOTING RESILIENCE TO DROUGHT

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 complement everyday water consumption and help reduce shortages during periods of drought in seven communities in the parish. The project, scheduled to conclude in December 2014, plans to directly benefit an estimated 6,200 students, teachers, and community residents.

NICARAGUA—REDUCING VULNERABILITIES 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 foster inter-agency coordination, reduce vulnerability, and strengthen disaster preparedness in the highly vulnerable District IV neighborhood of Managua, Nicaragua's capital city. The USAID/OFDA-funded project, scheduled to end in December 2014, aims to create urban risk maps and response plans that incorporate the needs of disabled community members as well as include gender considerations in response brigade formation and trainings.

PANAMA—SCHOOL SAFETY AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The Social Promotion and Development Program assisted regional education leaders and local school supervisors in identifying schools at risk of natural disasters, as well as improving the resources available for disaster management and response, in 12 rural communities in Bocas Del Toro, Veraguas, and the Ngäbe-Buglé indigenous reservation. The project, which concluded in August 2013, also helped develop a disaster response strategy training guide, coordinated simulations, and compiled risk management plans for at least 30 schools in the communities involved.

PARAGUAY—DRR IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The Dr. Raul Peña Institute of Higher Education helped train aspiring school teachers, who were then deployed on two-month assignments to educate students throughout Paraguay on DRR techniques. In addition, the program supported the integration of DRR into the institute's curriculum. The project ended in November 2013.

PARAGUAY—COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FOREST FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT

Promotores Ambientales San Rafael strengthened local forest fire emergency and response capabilities and provided disaster mitigation courses to members of three communities near San Rafael National Park. The project, which ended in April 2014, included integrated fire management training and equipment to combat forest fires.

PERU—IMPROVING NATIONWIDE DANA REPORTING

The organization Firemen & Health Hope helped standardize the post-disaster DANA process throughout Peru. The project, which ended in June 2013, adapted the Government of Peru National Civil Defense Institute's virtual platform—National Information System for Prevention and Response to Disasters—to the DANA system, as well as developed a DANA course model to provide training to regional instructors.

SAINT LUCIA—RAINWATER HARVESTING TO ALLEVIATE WATER SHORTAGES

The first RDAP small grant in the Caribbean region supported the Laborie Disaster Preparedness Committee (LDPC) in Saint Lucia to strengthen community resilience by establishing a rainwater harvesting system to alleviate water shortages. The project, which ended in June 2013, installed rooftop rainwater collection systems and 18 water storage tanks in public schools, churches, and a health center in the Laborie area. The LDPC also held public meetings in various communities to inform residents about the project and provide guidelines for how the system will function during emergencies.

SAINT LUCIA—PREPARING FOR WATER SHORTAGES AND OTHER DISASTERS

The Choiseul Emergency Preparedness Organization is installing rainwater harvesting and storage systems in six vulnerable communities—comprising an estimated 2,800 beneficiaries—of Choiseul District. The organization is providing training to community volunteers to manage the back-up water system and establishing 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. The project is scheduled to end in December 2014.

ST. KITTS AND NEVIS—SCHOOL SAFETY TO REDUCE VULNERABILITY

The St. Kitts and Nevis Red Cross Society helped implement the USAID/OFDA-designed School Safety Program in public schools. The project, which ended in June 2014, entailed the production, replication, and distribution of a School Safety Program training video outlining emergency and school safety plans; the organization and execution of emergency drills for all students and faculty; the purchase and distribution of emergency equipment to 30 vulnerable schools; and the development of a national disaster risk management policy for the education sector.

URUGUAY—STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN BRAZOS UNIDOS

Uruguay's ADRA chapter is working with residents of the Brazos Unidos neighborhood in Montevideo to mitigate disaster risks and strengthen capacities by developing an emergency response plan, forming a community emergency response team, and engaging members in disaster mitigation projects to reduce vulnerabilities and better prepare for and respond to frequent flooding risks. The project, scheduled to conclude in December 2014, expects to reach more than 350 community members, including approximately 175 children, representing half of the community.