

## OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (USAID/OFDA)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA



To boost Independencia communities' afforestation efforts, a team of DHL Express volunteers helped plant trees through its GoGreen campaign. *Photo courtesy of PREDES*

### **USAID/OFDA Partner PREDES Engages Private Companies to Enhance Resilience in Vulnerable Peruvian Neighborhoods**

With USAID/OFDA support, the Center for Disaster Studies and Prevention in Peru (PREDES) developed an urban disaster risk reduction (DRR) model that is helping transform hazard-prone neighborhoods in Lima Province into safer, greener, and healthier communities.

Through a process that featured the active participation of the local government, beneficiary communities, and private sector companies, from 2015-2018, PREDES successfully piloted the neighborhood-approach in Lima's Independencia District, a densely populated area where half of its population live on arid hillsides at risk of landslides and earthquakes.



Maestro staff promote safe building techniques at a community fair in San Juan de Miraflores District in Lima. *Photo courtesy of PREDES*

During the first phase of the program, PREDES conducted assessments to identify earthquake-vulnerable structures and determine appropriate building techniques and materials to improve resilience of households located on steep hillsides. In addition, PREDES established emergency evacuation routes and safe areas, while training local communities in first aid and housing reinforcement.

As part of the program, PREDES helped El Volante II and El Volante III neighborhoods in Independencia afforest barren hillsides to reduce landslide risk by stabilizing loose soil on steep slopes and to avoid the indiscriminate, unregulated expansion of informal settlements. PREDES helped neighbors identify and plant drought-resistant native trees and installed a controlled drip irrigation system to water them. Two years after completion of the pilot phase, through which the project team planted nearly 3,500 native trees, the

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A team of eight representatives from Argentina participated in FIU's study tour in early May. Photo courtesy of Carlos Cordova, USAID/OFDA

## USAID/OFDA Supports Argentina's Disaster Risk Management System

In early May, eight high-ranking representatives from Argentina's National Disaster Risk Management System (SINAGER)—including directors from the Government of Argentina (GoA) Ministry of Security, Civil Protection, Federal Police, and the Naval Prefecture—participated in a USAID/OFDA-supported emergency operations systems technical exchange, hosted by Florida International University at its Extreme Events Institute.

From May 7–10, the group visited several emergency operations centers and a 911 operations center in the state of Florida to observe how the state's emergency management system operates and to study best practices and lessons learned from hurricanes Andrew, Katrina, and Matthew. Attendees also participated in workshops on how to establish an emergency operations centers and implement the Incident Command System.

"USAID/OFDA technical exchanges and study tours aim to promote collaboration between risk management agencies and higher education institutions," explained USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor (RA) Sidney Velado.

GoA Civil Protection Undersecretary of Operations Dr. Daniel Russo thanked USAID/OFDA and FIU for the support provided through this technical exchange, which helps facilitate new ideas and national proposals, while increasing the capacity of SINAGER.

Participants highlighted the usefulness in learning how Florida's inter-institutional risk management group—which includes municipalities, response agencies, non-governmental organizations, private businesses, universities and organized communities—has been set up and operates to enhance disaster response and support DRR projects.

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Municipality of Independencia designated the area as an Ecological Forest Park known as Boca de Sapo (Toad Mouth). The park comprises 14 hectares (34 acres) with family recreation spaces and walking trails.

To enhance the communities' afforestation efforts, PREDES engaged logistics company DHL Express, which helped plant trees through its corporate responsibility program "Zero Emissions for Year 2050."

In addition, Maestro, a Peruvian home and construction products store chain, engaged in the program by launching a public information campaign on how to mitigate disaster risk through safe building techniques. The campaign used graphic material and video tutorials on disaster preparedness and building techniques to reinforce houses, which were disseminated through social media. PREDES also trained local builders and community members through illustrated guides that show how to improve retaining walls on hillsides and create safe spaces within houses. These guides were distributed at Maestro-sponsored community fairs.

"Private companies can become agents of change to support building resilience in their communities. This is especially true in urban areas, where a large number of private sector actors offer opportunities for the development of innovative partnerships. In Latin America there are great opportunities for governments and non-profit organizations to better use private sector potential contributions," commented USAID/OFDA RA Phil Gelman.

PREDES systematized the planning processes, activities, and lessons learned from the pilot through a series of guidelines and manuals and shared them with key municipal and national authorities. Municipal actors aim to recreate this urban DRR project in other highly vulnerable neighborhoods of Lima.

Former Independencia Municipality Environmental Management Director Arturo Espinoza said at the time, "We want to replicate this successful experience throughout our district. We plan to expand forested areas and convert them into recreation sites that will beautify the area and increase economic opportunities for neighborhood residents. To achieve this, we recently created a program entitled, 'Green Belt for My District,' which aims to transform 400 hectares of hillsides into green areas and develop seven new forest parks—similar to Boca de Sapo—with more than 50,000 trees."

From FY 2015–FY 2018, the program—which concluded in August 2018—reached more than 30,700 people. On May 22, the PREDES program received an honorable mention for its contribution to urban improvement during the "Urban Leadership" award ceremony hosted by the organization Lima Como Vamos.

USAID/OFDA remains committed to helping improve DRR in vulnerable neighborhoods of Lima, where more than 1 million people are living in houses built on hillsides that remain vulnerable to rain, earthquakes, and other hazards.



DHL Express volunteers plant native trees. Photo courtesy of PREDES

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