



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

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

## Neighbors Work Together for DRR



Photo by Manuel Ramirez, USAID/OFDA

**USAID/OFDA supported risk identification and damage registration training in the Bosque de Concordia neighborhood in Lima, Peru.**

Since 2012, USAID/OFDA has supported the “Guardianes voluntarios de las laderas” (“Voluntary Guardians for the Slopes”) program in the Bosque de Concordia neighborhood in the district of Chosica, of Peru’s capital city, Lima. The program— implemented in coordination with the Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle, and the Peru Civil Defense, aimed to build resilience and increase disaster risk reduction (DRR) awareness in Bosque de Concordia through the establishment of community-led teams trained to identify risks to mitigate the effects of disasters and register damages after a disaster occurs.

The Bosque de Concordia neighborhood is located on rocky, unstable terrain, and many people live on steep slopes, increasing their risk of being affected by landslides and rockfalls. In addition, the neighborhood is at risk of earthquakes and fires. The geography and construction present significant challenges for the population, who lack safe mobilization routes, making evacuations extremely difficult and dangerous in the case of an adverse event.

These factors led to the decision to establish trained and organized teams of community members familiar with the landscape and local population that could identify risks prior to disasters and assist with registering damages after a disaster occurred.

Other objectives for the project included: facilitating DRR activities in the neighborhood; keeping local authorities informed about existing risk; and providing, in the case of emergencies, quick and effective assistance to aid organizations, based on objective and accurate information management regarding damage during and after an adverse event.

Manuel Ramirez, USAID/OFDA’s thematic consultant for the education component, and director for the program, thinks that the work done in this neighborhood went beyond the expectations stated in the project’s objectives.

“The integrated work between educational institutions, the Municipality, Civil Defense, community leaders, and community members, created a kind of magic to synchronize all elements towards a common, concrete goal,” Ramirez said.

“This has to be understood as an investigation/participative action from

**Continued on page 2**

**DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

## USAID/OFDA Assists Families in Panama



Photo by Manuel Santana, USAID/OFDA

**USAID/OFDA and the American Red Cross, with support from the Panama Red Cross, provided supplies to families affected by a fire in Panama’s Madungandi region in early June.**

On June 3, a fire resulting from a gas tank explosion destroyed 150 homes and displaced 800 people in the Aguas Claras community of the

**Continued on page 2**

**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

## USAID/OFDA Supports Disaster Management Learning



Photo courtesy of Brant Mitchell

**Participants from throughout the Caribbean took part in the LSU technical exchange.**

For the third year in a row, USAID/OFDA supported a disaster management technical exchange at the Stephenson Disaster Management Institute at Louisiana State University (LSU).

**Continued on page 2**

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### Neighbors Work Together for DRR Continued from page 1

the educational point of view. The process does not depend on one person, but on how and when the stages are fulfilled; all the actors have to contribute to the success. It is incorporating a flexible process into rigid systems, and promoting analysis of actions and achievement of goals, instead of complying with activity schedules," added Ramirez.

Ultimately, the goal was accomplished. Several teams of community members, not previously engaged in disaster work, were trained for two primary tasks. First, to identify disaster risks, which allowed the community to prepare for potential disasters and conduct activities to mitigate their impacts. Second, to be able to properly register damages resulting from disasters and communicate effectively with local authorities. These actions will ensure quick and reliable information, which will translate into more efficient assistance for the community.

The program also highlighted that education does not only take place in the classroom. Through the trainings, members of a vulnerable community understood that by committing, they could achieve. It is important to highlight that the commitment is voluntary, which gives the population a sense of belonging to a community.

During the development of the project, the teams had to face a real emergency, when a mudslide affected Bosque de Concordia and surrounding communities. Fortunately, thanks to the training and simulations they had participated in, the team members knew how to respond and were asked to help in other communities.

"The systematization of this process will be an important tool for education and lessons learned for the whole region. From proposal, research and execution, even in a real emergency situation, the process can give valuable insight to be replicated in other countries of Latin American and Caribbean, where this kind of communities in high risk areas are common," said Ramirez.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

### USAID/OFDA Supports Disaster Management Learning

Continued from page 1

This year's exchange took place June 8-12 on the LSU campus and at sites throughout Baton Rouge and New Orleans. While last year's participants were from Latin America, this year the focus was on the Caribbean, and 23 participants traveled from eight countries in the region to take part in the event.

Participants came from a variety of fields, each with the hope of learning from the experiences of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Representatives from federal, state, and local organizations gave lectures and led workshops to demonstrate hands-on tools, techniques, and information on preparation, mitigation, and response to disasters.

"It's an amazing opportunity for the participants to learn from the Louisiana entities, which are some of the best in the world at disaster preparation," said USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist, Clive Lorde.

Some of the highlights included hurricane evacuation preparedness and planning, map creation for school safety, tsunami and storm surge mitigation, and volunteer recruitment techniques, among others.

Mandela Christian, Program Officer for the Office of Disaster Management, on the island Dominica commented, "I took away so much from the various speakers that I will be able to implement in my home country."

## DISASTER ASSISTANCE

### USAID/OFDA Assists Families in Panama



Photo by Manuel Santana, USAID/OFDA

*The fire in Panama destroyed 150 homes.*

Continued from page 1

Madungandi region in eastern Panama. The fire injured four people, but fortunately did not result in any deaths.

The Office of the First Lady of Panama led the response, activating the Joint Task Force, comprising 200 members of organizations that make up the National Civil Protection System (SINAPROC). Staff from the Panama Firefighters Corps (BCBRP), Ministry of Housing, National Institute for Professional Formation and Training for Human Development (INADEH), National Border Service (SENAFRONT), Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MIDA), National Police, and the Air and Sea Service (SENAN) participated in this operational group.

Their mission was to reduce the effects on the fire on the people of the community— many of whom had lost all of their belongings. The task force coordinated with all actors, including the affected population, to define the best course of humanitarian action to help alleviate the situation.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health contributed teams of doctors, nurses, and environmental sanitation personnel to provide medical care and supplies to people affected by the fire, including those with burns and respiratory problems due to smoke inhalation.

USAID/OFDA supplemented the Government of Panama's response by supporting the American Red Cross and its local partner, the Panama Red Cross, to supply agriculture and construction tools, as well as cooking equipment, to families who lost their belongings in the fire.

### Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



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