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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

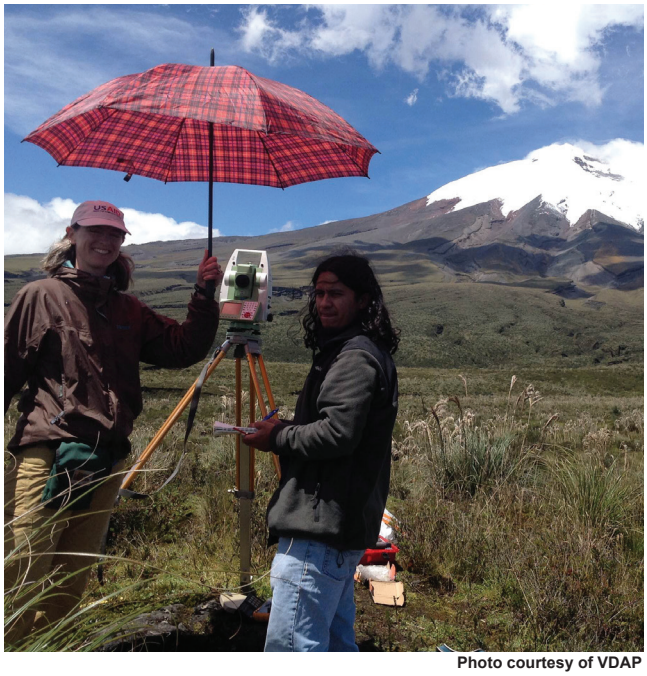

Photo courtesy of VDAP

Volcanologist Heather Wright (left) led a team of five VDAP scientists, who participated in an on-site response at Cotopaxi Volcano, Ecuador, between June and July 2015.

VDAP Supports Volcano Monitoring in Ecuador

In mid-April 2015, Cotopaxi Volcano in Ecuador began showing signs of higher activity than normal. A large eruption at Cotopaxi would threaten the tens of thousands of people who live near it. An increase in earthquakes, gas concentrations, and emissions caught the attention of Instituto Geofísico (IG), the institution in charge of monitoring volcanoes and other geophysical phenomena in Ecuador. This led to an important collaboration between IG and a long-time partner, the U.S. Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), implemented by USGS and funded by USAID/OFDA.

USAID/OFDA and VDAP have a history of over three decades of working together on volcanoes throughout the region, including focusing on seismology, geodesy (volcanic deformation), volcanic gas geochemistry, photogrammetry (using photography to make measurements of changes at a volcano's surface), lahar (volcanic mudflows) monitoring, remote sensing support, and warning systems.

Due to the increased activity at the volcano, and a request made by the Government of Ecuador to the U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador,

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Assists Flooded Communities in Guatemala

On August 6, heavy rains affected the Izabal Department in eastern Guatemala. An accumulation of over four inches of water caused Sumach River to overflow, which resulted in floods in the municipalities of Estor and Livingston.

Nearly 10,000 people were affected or at risk during the emergency. Of the 1,100 individuals who had to evacuate their homes, 326 stayed in temporary shelters provided by the government. The floods also damaged 1,500 homes and destroyed at least two bridges and one school, among other public infrastructure.

The National Coordination for Disaster Management of

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Alejandro Maldonado from CONRED received the USAID/OFDA donation of 3,000 hygiene kits for families affected by heavy rains and floods in Izabal Department, Guatemala

Photo by Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Sponsors Caribbean DRR in Education Forum

USAID/OFDA is sponsoring the first Caribbean Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Education on the island of St. Lucia from October 13 to 15, 2015.

The Caribbean region is vulnerable to many disasters, hence the need for urgent policy attention to address DRR. The forum will seek to increase awareness of disaster risks in the education sector, share and test lessons learned and best practices of disaster risk management, and encourage the development of regional approaches for addressing DRR in the education sector.

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

VDAP Supports Volcano Monitoring in Ecuador

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VDAP provided technical assistance to IG beginning in June 2015. With approximately $236,000 in funding from USGS, VDAP deployed five volcanologists for an on-site response and donated equipment to IG. The equipment included four broadband seismometers with web-cams and digital telemetry equipment for the field, as well as multi-gas portable instruments for direct sampling of volcanic plumes, all with appropriate installation and integration to existing IG systems.

The deployed VDAP team aimed to repair and augment the existing lahar monitoring system, upgrade some software components of the data collection and analysis system, train IG technicians on installation and function of the new lahar monitoring equipment, and ensure the successful integration of the new equipment into the established IG systems, among other tasks.

In June and July, IG observed the largest eruptions in Cotopaxi since 1940, and as of mid-August, Cotopaxi continues to experience increased activity, such as constant seismicity and occasional explosions with ash columns.

VDAP continues to remotely support the IG during this response. Stationed in different USGS offices and volcano observatories, the VDAP team performs tasks such as supplying satellite remote sensing observations, assisting with the evaluation of volcanic unrest, and producing eruption forecasts.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Sponsors Caribbean DRR in Education Forum

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Leaders in the education sector, educational practitioners, and stakeholders from 13 countries in the Caribbean are expected to attend the forum.

A live stream of the forum will be broadcast online, with Spanish translation available. To watch the stream online visit: www.salcc.edu.lc

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

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Photo by Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA-donated hygiene kits

USAID/OFDA Assists Flooded Communities in Guatemala

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Guatemala (CONRED) responded to the emergency by carrying out damage analysis and needs assessment tasks and activating an Emergency Operations Center in Estor.

To complement the response, CONRED requested USAID/OFDA assistance for the local purchase of family hygiene kits. The kits donated were delivered directly to CONRED Executive Secretary, Alejandro Maldonado, and benefited 3,000 affected families.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

VDAP Provides Equipment to Mexico

At the request of Mexico's National Center for Disaster Prevention (CENAPRED), the USAID/OFDA Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) has donated equipment to assist CENAPRED in monitoring Colima volcano, located about 300 miles west of Mexico city.

Colima is one of Mexico's most active volcanoes, having erupted more than 40 times since 1576. On July 4, Colima entered a phase of increased activity that has resulted in ash fall to the surrounding communities, lava dome extrusion, and pyroclastic flows that traveled six miles from the volcano.

The equipment that VDAP provided included four broadband seismometers and associated telemetry equipment that will be able to detect small volcano-related earthquakes, which may be precursors to eruptions. This will help CENAPRED provide the public with the most accurate information possible.

Worker packs up the shipment of volcano monitoring equipment heading to Mexico.

Photo courtesy of Angie Diefenbach, VDAP