



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

DISASTER RESPONSE



Photo by Monserrat Chávez, ADRA/Paraguay

Children play on stacks of USAID/OFDA-funded mattresses and blankets that partner ADRA/Paraguay delivered to flood-affected families.

USAID/OFDA Assists Families Affected By Heavy Rains and Floods in Paraguay

Months of unusually heavy rains across Paraguay caused widespread flooding that, by mid-June, had affected approximately 200,000 people in eight departments, as well as the capital district of Asunción, according to the Government of Paraguay (GoP) National Emergency Secretariat (SEN).

The intense rainfall and flooding from the overflowing Paraguay and Paraná rivers damaged roads, houses, schools, and other public infrastructure and adversely affected agriculture and other livelihoods in the affected departments of Alto Paraguay, Alto Paraná, Central, Concepción, Itapúa, Misiones,

Ñeembucú, and Presidente Hayes.

On June 9, as flooding continued to displace inhabitants, the GoP requested humanitarian assistance from the U.S. Government. In response, U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay James H. Thessin declared a disaster due to the effects of the floods and USAID/OFDA provided \$200,000 to Paraguay, through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), to support emergency relief assistance for affected families.

On June 11, USAID/OFDA activated a two-person assessment and **Continued on page 2**

ADRA/Paraguay volunteers distribute USAID/OFDA-funded emergency supplies to displaced families in Puerto Falcón, Presidente Hayes Department.



Photo by Humberto Martínez, ADRA/Paraguay

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Paraguay Universities Form National REDULAC Chapter

Last month, six universities and educational institutions in Paraguay founded a local chapter of the Latin American and Caribbean University Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (REDULAC). The new REDULAC Paraguay chapter will promote increased disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts among the nation's universities, both in the classroom and in the community.

Representatives from Columbia University of Paraguay (UCP), National University of Asunción (UNA), Superior Education Institute (ISE), Our Lady of Asunción Catholic University of Paraguay (UCA), Private University of Guairá (UPG), and the National Professional Advancement Service (SNPP) signed the REDULAC

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Photo courtesy of UCP

Paraguay university staff and supporters during the REDULAC chartering ceremony.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Extends RDAP Contract until March 2015

USAID/OFDA has extended the contract to execute the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) by nine months to end on March 19, 2015.

Implemented by contractor International Resources Group/Engility with subcontractor Development & Training Services, Inc., since June 20, 2009, RDAP provides disaster risk management training and technical assistance and support for DRR and disaster response activities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

In early July, RDAP awarded five new small grants to support community-level DRR projects in Colombia, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, and Uruguay.

During the extension, RDAP will continue to support disaster risk management courses and other capacity-building activities in the region, as well as disaster response operations as appropriate.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Paraguay University Inaugurates Risk Management Certificate Program

On July 7, Our Lady of Asunción Catholic University (UCA) in Paraguay, with support from SEN, REDULAC, and USAID/OFDA, inaugurated the country's first international disaster risk management certificate program ("diplomado").

The six-week program aims to strengthen participants' understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of disaster risk management, including DRR. Developed within the framework of the National Education Plan for Risk Management by the Appropriate Technology Center at UCA's School of Science and Technology, the continuing education certificate program consists of 160 academic hours divided into four modules, culminating in a flood response simulation exercise on the final day, August 16. Twenty-four students enrolled in the program, hailing from SEN, government ministries, municipal governments, police and armed forces, and public services companies.

"We are developing tools to create hazard maps in collaboration with the population of a community, for example, an urban neighborhood prone to flooding. Rapid implementation of this mechanism could contribute to reduced vulnerability," said program participant Lina E. Rivelli, who holds a civil engineering degree from UCA.

USAID/OFDA provided \$30,000 to the university to support the program, including student scholarships and the participation of five international instructors from Argentina, Colombia, Peru, and the United States who joined Paraguayan instructors. Additionally, USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil Gelman facilitated the urban DRR and resilient cities section of the program.

Representatives from REDULAC, USAID/Paraguay, SEN, UCA's School of Science and Technology, and USAID/OFDA inaugurate the program.



Photo courtesy of UCA



Photo by Javier Espejo, ADRA/Paraguay

Displaced children in Paraguay's capital greet ADRA/Paraguay representatives delivering USAID/OFDA-funded emergency supplies.

USAID/OFDA Assists Families Affected By Heavy Rains and Floods in Paraguay

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response team in Paraguay, led first by USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil Gelman and later by Disaster Risk Management Specialist Carlos Córdova, and which also included Paraguay-based local surge capacity consultant Jorge Martin. The USAID/OFDA team visited shelters and affected areas in Asunción and Ñeembucú Department, and met with local government officials and humanitarian workers involved in the disaster response efforts.

The situation affected more than 3,700 students in approximately three dozen schools. Per the National Education Plan for Risk Management—which GoP education officials developed with USAID/OFDA technical assistance in 2011—the GoP Ministry of Education and Culture deployed mobile classrooms and sent teachers to shelters to ensure flood-affected children had access to education.

SEN collaborated with other GoP authorities and organizations to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations, including food and emergency shelter. Elevated water levels on the Paraguay and Paraná rivers isolated some low-lying communities, complicating emergency relief efforts early on.

In Ñeembucú Department, water levels at the bi-national hydroelectric power stations Itaipú and Yacretá, on the Paraná River, also increased, affecting communities downstream, according to SEN.

ADRA/Paraguay used the USAID/OFDA funds to locally purchase mattresses, blankets, 20-liter water containers, and water purification kits to benefit more than 2,250 affected families in Asunción and Ñeembucú, Presidente Hayes, and San Pedro departments. The distribution of the relief supplies was carried out in close coordination with SEN, as well as departmental and municipal authorities.

Paraguay Vice-President Juan Afara, SEN Minister Joaquín Roa, GoP Vice-Minister of Public Health María Teresa Barán, and U.S. Ambassador Thessin attended the ceremonies to donate the emergency supplies.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Defense, through the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Asunción, implemented a \$15,000 minimal cost project for the local purchase and distribution of additional mattresses for flood-affected populations.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

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Paraguay charter agreement on June 11. SEN and USAID/OFDA representatives attended the ceremony as honorary witnesses and supporters. During the event, participants selected Rubén Urbieta from UCP as the REDULAC Paraguay national coordinator.

REDULAC Paraguay plans to hold an inter-university workshop at UCP on September 18 to define a work plan for the 2014-2015 period. USAID/OFDA will support the meeting.

National REDULAC chapters have been established or are in the process of being established in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. USAID/OFDA has supported the chartering of a number of these national chapters, most recently in Chile and Brazil.

USAID/OFDA also sponsored the REDULAC-organized Latin American Forum on DRR in Higher Education, which took place in Panama in August 2012.

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