USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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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

USAID/OFDA Promotes Food Security in Paraguay

Photo Courtesy of ACDI / VOCA

Community members receive training in farming for a family business.

The effects of severe climate variation, particularly increased periods of drought, have strained the resources of smallholders farmers in Paraguay in recent years. In 2011 and 2012, severe drought conditions resulting from the La Niña phenomenon caused widespread loss of livestock, crops, and fodder. The situation was so critical that the Government of Paraguay declared a state of emergency and distributed food to families in drought-stricken areas for 180 days.

The Guayaibí District, located in the poorest part of Paraguay, is particularly vulnerable to harmful weather events. Ninety percent of Guayaibí's rural population is involved in the agriculture, livestock, and poultry industries, all of which are negatively impacted by extreme weather conditions.

To strengthen farmers' capacity to adapt to drought conditions and increase food security in Paraguay, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supported ACDI/VOCA between May 2013 and April 2014 to implement the Paraguay Resilience Program. The program increased farmers' access to credit, allowing them to reduce household stocks. It also taught the farmers climate adaption strategies and improved agricultural techniques.

Based on the success of the Paraguay Resilience Program, USAID/OFDA provided additional support to ACDI/VOCA in May 2014 to launch an 11-month Risk Management and Food Security Program in Guayaibí. The new program has two primary objectives: to increase sustainable food security for families suffering the negative effects of climate change and to support local capacity building to enable communities to independently identify and implement risk reduction measures in the future. USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor (RA) for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Julie Leonard explains, "ACDI/VOCA, in conjunction with agricultural school students, is working with communities to reduce small farmers' vulnerability to extreme hydro meteorological events which have been increasing in Paraguay over the last few years. With the new gardening techniques they are learning, women are improving their vegetable crops, making them less vulnerable to drought, hail storms, and flash-flooding. The main purpose of these activities is to improve family nutrition, while enabling the families to earn extra income."

To increase communities' capacity to withstand the harmful effects of climate change, the program will implement several activities, including providing technical assistance to establish orchards and small poultry farms; supplying tools and agricultural equipment for farming; and conducting group trainings in sustainable forestry practices, reforestation, and farming as a family business.

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Chile Officially Adopts School Safety

Photo by: Claudio Osorio, Instructor

Teachers from 28 schools in Santiago, Chile, participate in the first School Safety Course organized directly by local institutions.

On January 7, the National Emergency Management Office of Chile, through its National Civil Protection Academy, carried out the first "100% Chilean" School Safety Course (SSC) in the country.

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Supports DRR with Equipment Donations

Photo by: Sergio David Gutierrez, USAID/OFDA

DRR Specialist Eduardo Gutiérrez participates in a closing ceremony and equipment donation for neighborhood brigades in Managua, Nicaragua.

As part of a continued effort to promote Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the LAC region, USAID/OFDA has donated equipment to first responder and community organizations in several countries.

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Photo courtesy of ACDI / VOCA

Members of the San Rafael Association who received training.

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Back from a recent visit to the project, RA Leonard commented that the "women beneficiaries proudly showed us how they had raised the beds of their vegetable gardens, so that they will be less prone to flooding in extreme events. They explained the importance of spacing their plants and how they make organic fertilizer and protect their crops with shade and wind-breaks. They are enthusiastically awaiting their first harvest."

The program has complemented these activities by assisting local authorities to establish a District Council for Risk Management. The council has identified potential risks posed by climate change and extreme weather conditions and is currently working to implement preventive measures in conjunction with Paraguay's National Emergency Secretariat (SEN) and with technical assistance from USAID/OFDA's Disaster Risk Management Specialist Carlos Cordova. The goal of these activities is to improve families' resilience to droughts and to enable them to recover more quickly from all types of natural disasters.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Chile Officially Adopts School Safety

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USAID/OFDA has worked a committee, formed by the Ministry of Education, the National Emergency Office of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Safety, for more than a year to adapt the SSC for Chile, creating a methodological tool that compliments the National School Safety Integral Plan Manual and allows teachers and the education community to develop schools that are safer and better prepared to manage disaster risks.

USAID/OFDA transferred the course to local authorities in late 2013. "Chile implementing this course on their own is exactly what we strive for at USAID/OFDA. Government initiative ensures long-lasting effects and sustainability for the programs," explained USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

USAID/OFDA has included the School Safety Course in its training portfolio since 1995 to strengthen preparedness efforts to save lives in schools during emergencies and make education a more useful tool in prevention and solving risk related problems, such as hazards and vulnerability.

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Supports DRR with Equipment Donations

Photo by: Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA

Adolfo García, Director of SIPECIF, received 19 GPS devices donated by USAID/OFDA for forest firefighters in Guatemala.

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In Guatemala, USAID/OFDA donated 19 GPS devices and 42 sets of tools to the National System for Forest Fire Prevention and Control (SIPECIF). With this equipment, forest firefighters in the country can find fire hot spots easily and mobilize staff more efficiently.

The municipalities of Caaupe and Filadelfia in Paraguay, also benefited from a recent equipment donation by USAID/OFDA. As part of a Memorandum of Understanding with the SEN, the firefighters received personal protective equipment (PPE) and tools to fight fires in their communities.

Finally, as part of a small grant, four neighborhood brigades in Managua, Nicaragua, are now prepared to face emergencies. USAID/OFDA provided bicycles, tools, and first aid kits, among other equipment, to strengthen the preparedness and response capacities of the community emergency brigades.

Photo by: Daisy Lopez Roa

A beneficiary shows the PPE and tools USAID/OFDA donated to forest firefighters in Caacupe and Filadelfia, Paraguay.