Volcano Assistance Provided to Chile

USAID has provided $80,000 to assist the Government of Chile (GOC) monitor volcanic conditions at Chaitén Volcano, which began to erupt last month after being dormant for 173 years.

The volcano, located 760 miles south of the capital city of Santiago, began to spew molten rock and ash on May 2. In response, the GOC issued a red alert and began evacuating people living within a 30-mile radius of the volcano. As of mid-May, at least 8,000 people had been evacuated.

In response, the U.S. Government offered assistance to the GOC through the USAID/OFDA-supported U.S. Geological Survey Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP).

As of early May, the Chilean geological agency SERNAGEOMIN was monitoring activity at Chaitén Volcano using four seismic stations near the volcano. The technology at these stations requires that a person travel to the stations to collect data on the volcano.

With funding from USAID, VDAP will install new telemetered seismic stations and assist SERNAGEOMIN with data interpretation. On May 16, VDAP sent a three-person team of experts to Chile to assist with station and telemetry installation and provide technical support.

In February, VDAP provided equipment and technical support to the Government of Ecuador following the eruption of Tungurahua Volcano.

USAID/OFDA Ready for Hurricane Season

USAID/OFDA hopes for the best and is prepared for the worst this Atlantic hurricane season, which began June 1 and continues through November 30.

Staff members have been working on a variety of fronts to ensure that when a hurricane or tropical storm strikes anywhere in Latin America or the Caribbean, USAID/OFDA can respond quickly to save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of the disaster.

Meteorological experts from the Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado State University have predicted that the 2008 Atlantic basin hurricane season will include above-average tropical cyclone activity with 15 named storms, of which eight will develop into hurricanes. Four of those hurricanes are predicted to become intense storms (category three or stronger on the Saffir-Simpson scale).

In recent weeks, USAID/OFDA staff members have met with counterparts from the American Red Cross, International Federation of the Red Cross, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, Eastern Caribbean Donors Group, and others to coordinate preparedness efforts.

Tim Callaghan, Senior Regional Advisor for the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, four regional advisors, a communications officer, and support staff are stationed at the regional office in San Jose, Costa Rica, and available for immediate deployment as needed.

Another 20 disaster experts are located throughout the region through the International Resources Group (IRG), which implements the regional USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program. The experts are all equipped with communications packages, including portable computers, GPS, and satellite phones.

“In preparation for what looks like an active season, we have strengthened our surge capacity program and reviewed our communications equipment and team capabilities. We’ve reviewed lessons learned from other hurricane seasons and made adjustments that will allow us to respond faster. We’ve also established memorandums of understanding with different partners.”

Continued on page 2

Teaming up with Canada For Risk Reduction Course

USAID/OFDA and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have teamed up to provide a disaster risk reduction course in Ottawa, Canada, from June 18 to 20. USAID/OFDA will provide three instructors for the course, which was developed by USAID/OFDA and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Fifteen participants from CIDA and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs are expected to participate in the three-day course, which aims to increase participants’ awareness of natural hazard risk management in general and risk reduction in particular.

CIDA has participated in the delivery and fine-tuning of the USAID/OFDA course in the Caribbean region since it was first offered there in 2006.
Focus on Hurricane Preparedness

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frent agencies and groups so that we can respond in a more effi-
cient manner,” Callaghan said. USAID/OFDA and IRG have reviewed and updated their surge
capacity plan, which includes the ability to call on one or more of the 105 disaster experts in countries throughout the region for full-time
disaster response assistance as necessary.

As part of preparedness efforts, Callaghan is participating in
two days of hurricane season briefings in Washington, D.C., on June
16 and 17, to inform the U.S. Military, U.S. Coast Guard, Homeland
Agency, Interaction, and Capitol Hill groups about USAID/OFDA pre-
paredness. USAID/OFDA regional advisors have also conducted brief-
ings for USAID mission disaster relief officers in the region.

USAID/OFDA has replenished its warehouse in Miami, Florida,
with emergency supplies -- including blankets, chainsaw kits, hy-
giene kits, medical supplies, plastic sheeting, water containers, and
water treatment units. This year, USAID/OFDA has planned for broader
air coverage and established new agreements for charter air service.

USAID/OFDA also pre-positions personnel and relief supplies in
advance of impending storms.

“We strongly believe in pre-deploying teams to work with em-
bassies and NGOs as the storm approaches. That’s vital. And this
season we’ve already pre-positioned relief commodities in Jamaica,
Nicaragua, and Honduras, as well as placing communications gear in
countries that have been struck by hurricanes before and are likely to
be struck again, including Barbados, the Dominican Republic, and
Jamaica,” Callaghan said.

Since 2003, USAID has provided more than $145 million in re-
response to the devastating effects of hurricanes and tropical storms in
Central America and the Caribbean.

COMING UP

Caribbean Disaster Management Meetings
USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and Bar-
bados-based Regional Consultant Clive Lorde will attend the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency’s Workshop
on the Comprehensive Disaster Management Database, to be
held on June 12 in Saint Michael, Barbados. Additionally, Dominica-based USAID/OFDA Consultant Cecil Shillingford will
represent the LAC Regional Office in the Disaster Management
Seminar for the United Kingdom’s Overseas Territories, to be
held in Montserrat on June 16 and 17 and organized by the
Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for Interna-
tional Development.

Joint Humanitarian Operations Training
USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan will speak
at the upcoming Joint Humanitarian Operations Course in Miami,
Florida. Members of the U.S. Southern Command will attend the
June 17-18 event. USAID/OFDA developed the two-day training
in 2004 to establish a formal learning environment for U.S.
military leaders to discuss the relationship between USAID, its
partners, and the U.S. military, and prepare participants for
collaborative work during humanitarian assistance and disas-
ter response operations.

USAID/OFDA Warehouse Press Event
USAID/OFDA Director Ky Luu will join Senior Regional Advisor
Tim Callaghan and International Resources Group Chief of Party
Stephen Smith, from the LAC Regional Office in San Jose, at a
press conference June 19 at the USAID/OFDA warehouse in
Miami, Florida. The USAID/OFDA staff will discuss USAID’s
preparations for the hurricane season that began this month,
as well as the emergency supplies stored in the warehouse,
and answer questions about USAID/OFDA assistance follow-
ing disasters in the region.

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan (left) and U.S.
Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez inspect the blankets and
other emergency supplies stored in the Miami warehouse.

Crisis Management Exercise in Barbados
USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado will represent the
LAC Regional Office during the upcoming State Department
Crisis Management Exercise for U.S. Embassy staff in
Bridgetown, Barbados. The June 19-20 exercise will cover the basics for responding to emergencies affecting embassy staff.

USAID/OFDA Networks with Key Partners
LAC regional advisors will meet with representatives of key
NGOs as well as government officials in various countries in
the coming weeks to review USAID/OFDA capabilities and
coordination with other humanitarian agencies. Senior Regional
Advisor Tim Callaghan and Regional Consultant Manuel Santana
will attend the next Partner Day, scheduled for June 20 in the
Dominican Republic.

Helping Nicaragua Recover
From Tropical Storm Alma

USAID/OFDA has provided $50,000 to benefit families in
Nicaragua affected by Tropical Storm Alma.

The storm struck the Pacific coast of Nicaragua on May
29 and tore the roofs off of 1,140 houses in the departments of
León and Chinandega, according to preliminary estimates from
Nicaragua’s Civil Defense.

The USAID/OFDA funds will be assigned to the organiza-
tion Save the Children to help repair the roofs of an estimated
128 damaged homes in León and Chinandega.

Save the Children has been working in the department of
Chinandega for the past six years, implementing a USAID-funded
food security program. Save the Children has also been work-
ing in the department of León to implement health programs in
remote communities. Because of these activities, Save the Chil-
dren has developed and maintains strong relationships with
local authorities in the storm-affected areas.

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan and
and two other representatives of the LAC regional office traveled
to Nicaragua in late May to assess damages and coordinate the
U.S. Government’s humanitarian assistance in the wake of Tropi-
cal Storm Alma.

DISASTER RESPONSE

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