



LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



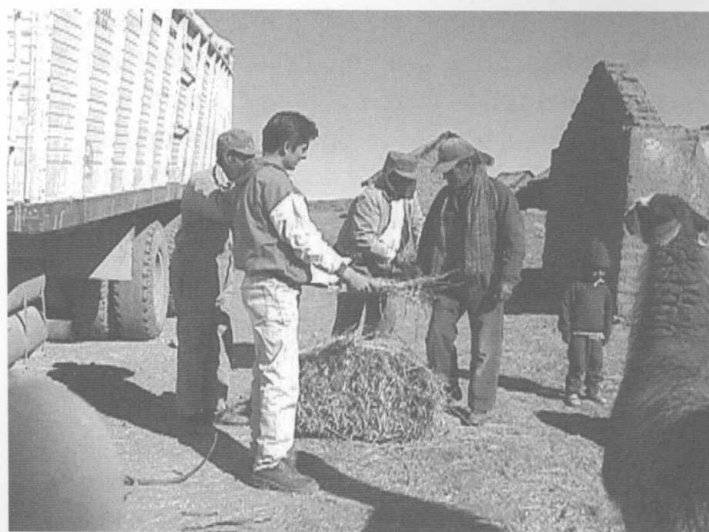
Left Photo

Community leaders in Honduras are trained in risk management and emergency response by Central America Mitigation Initiative (CAMI) technical advisors. (Photo courtesy of CAMI)



Right Photo

Peruvian residents prepare to cut and distribute USAID/OFDA plastic sheeting for construction of emergency shelters. (Photo by Carlos Cordoba, USAID/OFDA)



Farmers in Potosí, Bolivia distribute USAID/FFP fodder for livestock affected by intense cold weather and snowstorms in June and July 2002 (photo by Carlos Cordoba, USAID/OFDA).

half of the livestock in the affected area. According to USAID/Bolivia and WFP, the extreme weather conditions impacted approximately 6,200 pastoral farming families and caused at least 20 deaths.

On July 12, U.S. Ambassador V. Manuel Rocha declared a disaster due to the effects of the winter storm emergency. USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 through USAID/Bolivia to CARE to support the cost of transporting blankets and other USAID/OFDA-funded relief supplies to benefit approximately 2,800 families. The funds were also used to assist CARE in the transport of in-country stocks of P.L. 480 Title II development program food during the following three months.

USAID/FFP provided an additional \$50,000 to address livestock emergency activities caused by the heavy snowfall. The funds were used to buy and transport fodder to the remaining livestock, which is the main source of livelihoods for the rural poor in the affected area.

USAID/OFDA Assistance\$50,000
Other USG Assistance.....\$50,000
Total USG Assistance.....\$100,000

Chile

Floods

From late May to early June 2002, heavy rains affected Chile's central and southern regions,

with the most extensive flooding occurring in Santiago. According to Chile's National Office of Emergencies (ONEMI), the flooding caused 14 deaths, displaced 83,971 residents, destroyed at least 237 homes, and affected 221,842 people. The heavy rains flooded roads throughout the area, and left many communities without electricity and water. More than 75 percent of the streets in Santiago were flooded, including the capital's main highway.

On June 5, U.S. Ambassador William R. Brownfield declared a disaster due to the effects of the torrential rains and flooding. USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Santiago to the Chilean Red Cross, Hogar de Cristo Caritas de Chile, and ONEMI for the local purchase of emergency relief supplies for flood victims.

USAID/OFDA Assistance\$50,000

Guatemala

Drought

During 2000 and 2001, Guatemala experienced dry conditions and irregular patterns of rainfall, leading to widespread drought conditions by late July 2001. The drought also caused severe damage to crops, particularly coffee and sugar, reducing employment and wages in the coffee industry by 50 percent, according to Anacafe, the National Coffee Association. Falling international coffee prices and reduced seasonal employment opportunities for small farmers and the landless poor further decreased food security among affected populations. These adverse conditions also contributed to pockets of acute malnutrition in isolated communities, particularly in poorer areas of the country such as El Quiché, Huehuetenango, Chiquimula, Chimaltenango, Baj Verapaz, and San Marcos. In October 2001, USAID/Guatemala estimated that between 100,000 to 125,000 families were at risk of food insecurity nationwide.

On October 18, 2001, U.S. Ambassador Prudence Bushnell redeclared a disaster due to the continuing effects of the drought. USAID/OFDA provided \$125,000 to the University Research Corporation (URC), USAID/Guatemala's nutrition partner, to support an enhanced therapeutic feeding program.

Strengthening Community Preparedness in Guatemala through CAMI

The urban Las Vegas neighborhood of Guatemala City has not escaped the social ills that have beset numerous communities on the periphery of many of Central America's cities. High unemployment levels and poverty have created an environment conducive for the formation of adolescent gangs. Many women have turned to prostitution in order to support their families while others have abused drugs and alcohol.

In addition, physical conditions constantly put Las Vegas at the mercy of natural events. This community of approximately 725 residents is situated at the base of a steep ravine, through which the small Río Frío tributary runs. During the rainy season, the unstable, denuded hillsides give way causing dangerous landslides. The unfavorable natural conditions are exacerbated by construction in upper class neighborhoods located above Las Vegas. Builders have become accustomed to dumping unwanted construction materials onto the hillsides without regard for the implications of their actions.

USAID/OFDA launched CAMI to assist the most severely affected countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

During the dry season, the Río Frío slows to a trickle, which means that the effluent it normally carries comes to rest in the Las Vegas neighborhood. In addition, with the absence of sewers — and in many cases latrines — the residents of Las Vegas use the river banks as toilets, worsening sanitary conditions.

The Central America Mitigation Initiative (CAMI) project, implemented by the Social Pastoral of Caritas-Guatemala, became active in Las Vegas to begin resolving some of the problems that contribute to the community's extreme vulnerability. CAMI was developed as part of the USG's \$630 million response to Hurricane Mitch in 1998. USAID/OFDA launched the three-year, \$11 million initiative to assist the most severely affected countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. CAMI's goal is to mitigate or negate the impact of natural disasters

in Central America by financing activities that increase the forecasting and response capability and infrastructure of national, regional, and community authorities and organizations.

The CAMI-funded project in Las Vegas began by strengthening the community's preparedness efforts through training and technical support. An emergency response committee was established, with subcommittees that focus on evacuation, emergency shelter, transportation, food, security, first aid, search and rescue, and environmental sanitation. With participation of the Las Vegas community, the committee developed a standard emergency response plan with a clear assignment of functions in the event of a disaster. Evacuation routes were marked with signs, and an area risk map was placed on a signboard in the center of the Las Vegas neighborhood. At the request of the community, the CAMI project provided funds to assist in refurbishing a small shed where the emergency committee operates. In addition, the community carried out simulations of emergency evacuations.

Beyond the original scope of the CAMI project, the Las Vegas emergency committee has taken proactive steps to address other issues. In an effort to complete latrine coverage in Las Vegas,
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Training workshops for community leaders, such as this seminar in El Salvador, stresses USAID/OFDA's commitment to community preparedness (photo courtesy of CAMI).