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POUNDS OF PREVENTION

- A Disaster Risk Reduction Story -

"Pounds of Prevention" is a series of short articles that illustrate how disaster risk reduction works and why it is important. Take a behind-the-scenes look at aid work in action, long before the disaster occurs. How is that possible? Read on!

FOCUS: PERU

Peru faces myriad natural hazards, from earthquakes to volcanic eruptions and El Niño flooding to tsunamis. Given the breadth of these different disaster risks, USAID and its partner CARE/Peru are working together with the people of Peru, through a multi-pronged approach, to forge stronger disaster risk management practices at the local level.

First, USAID and CARE/Peru joined forces with the Government of Peru National Civil Defense Institute and National Meteorology and Hydrology Service as part of a project to improve community-based early warning systems in the southeastern regions of Puno and Cusco. With USAID funding, CARE/Peru outfitted twelve meteorological stations in Puno with scientific monitoring and operational equipment. With these improvements, the National Meteorology and Hydrology Service can measure high and low temperatures, weather conditions, and precipitation levels and deliver this critical information to remote areas that previously did not receive daily forecasts or special weather advisories, including flood warnings.

New weather stations collect data that feed into forecasts and advisories.

Second, alongside the technological advances in early warning, the project also organized 115 disaster preparedness workshops that brought together heads of households, community leaders, regional and local government authorities, and members of the press in 23 hazard-prone communities—18 in Puno and 5 in Cusco. The community members and other participants constructed hazard maps and risk scenarios, as well as identified and equipped emergency response teams in each of the 23 communities. During the workshops, the communities also developed and practiced early warning and emergency drills, as well as distributed preparedness information through public awareness campaigns and the media.

Community members living in high-altitude neighborhoods of Puno map hazards and emergency response actions.

Third, USAID— in conjunction with the Government of Peru, including the regional governments of Cusco, Piura, Puno, and San Martin; private businesses; and partners in Peru's humanitarian network, including CARE/Peru—supported the International Transitional Shelter Competition. Eighteen international and Peruvian businesses presented 54 economically viable transitional shelter models for consideration, and the jury selected four winning models suitable for different risk scenarios in four climate zones: high-altitude, inter-Andean valley, Amazonian, and coastal desert. The effort culminated with the government's decision to incorporate the winning shelter models into Peru's national disaster response policy.

A winning transitional shelter model from the International Transitional Shelter Competition is on display. All photos are courtesy of CARE/Peru.

Thanks to USAID support, Peru's national and regional governments have joined forces with the private sector and humanitarian network to adopt and assimilate innovative techniques to improve community disaster preparedness and emergency response through enhanced education, information, and technology.