



**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 Signs Letter of Understanding with UNGRD**

USAID/OFDA and the Government of Colombia's National Disaster Risk Management Unit (UNGRD) have signed a letter of understanding to work together to strengthen Colombia's National Disaster Risk Management System and overall disaster preparedness.

The agreement provides guidelines for inter-institutional cooperation, knowledge sharing at the regional level, and technical assistance to help achieve the disaster risk reduction (DRR) and response preparedness objectives defined by the UNGRD.

Specifically, the two organizations agreed to collaborate on capacity building for urban search-and-rescue, damage assessment and needs analysis, resilient cities, and land-use planning and improved construction methods. They will also partner to promote disaster risk management in schools and universities, early warning systems, climate change adaptation, and forest fire prevention and control programs.

USAID/OFDA and UNGRD also agreed to continue promoting private sector participation in DRR activities in Colombia.

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) Tim Callaghan and UNGRD Director Carlos Iván Marquez signed the letter of understanding in Bogotá on July 17.

Representatives from the USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), Colombian Civil Defense and Military Forces, Colombian Red Cross, National Firefighters System, and National Learning System attended the signing ceremony.

USAID/OFDA has supported disaster risk management efforts in Colombia since the 1980s.



Photo courtesy of Carolina Giraldo, UNGRD

**UNGRD Director Carlos Iván Marquez, left, and USAID/OFDA SRA Tim Callaghan sign the letter of understanding in Colombia.**

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**



Photo courtesy of Fernando Calderón, USAID/OFDA

**From left: USAID/OFDA disaster risk management specialist Fernando Calderón, seismologist Manuel Rodríguez, Christian Aid representative Claudia Herrera, and businessman Juan Bendeck, former head of the Honduras Permanent Emergency Commission (COPECO), attend a recent meeting on private sector involvement in disaster management in Honduras.**

**Involving the Private Sector in DRR**

As part of its regional DRR Plan for Latin America and the Caribbean, USAID/OFDA works to foster strategic relationships between private enterprise, governments, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in order to increase in-kind and monetary support for disaster response and strategic partnerships for risk reduction activities.

As part of these efforts, USAID/OFDA has met and collaborates with representatives from the private sector in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and other countries in the region.

Traditionally, private-sector contributions to disaster management involve the donation of emergency relief supplies to benefit populations affected by disasters.

Today, however, with support from USAID/OFDA, other donors, and U.N. agencies, businesses and chambers of commerce and industry throughout the region are engaging in

a wider spectrum of disaster management activities as part of their social responsibility efforts. Activities range from providing support for disaster early warning systems, forest fire brigade mobilization exercises, and temporary shelter plans and designs, to logistics assistance during disaster response operations.

For example, in Bolivia and Paraguay, recent USAID/OFDA-supported forest fire brigade mobilization exercises have featured substantial support from the private sector.

With USAID/OFDA technical assistance, the Dominican Republic tourism sector is working to identify local hazards, reduce and mitigate disaster risks, and improve disaster response preparedness.

In Honduras, USAID/OFDA technical specialists have met with COPECO, NGO Christian Aid, the Cortés Department Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Honduran National Society of Industries to

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## COMING UP

### USAID/OFDA DRR Course in Nicaragua

Through RDAP, USAID/OFDA will provide a DRR course to representatives of disaster management agencies and partners in Nicaragua. The course, designed and taught by RDAP specialists, will take place in Managua from August 7 to 9. The course aims to provide concepts, information, tools, and instruments that will increase the overall understanding of disaster risk management in general and the topics of risk reduction, transfer, and financing more specifically.

### Regional DRR and Higher Education Forum

The "Latin American Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction in Higher Education" is scheduled to take place in Panama City, Panama, from August 28 to 30. This regional forum will assemble representatives from universities, disaster management agencies, and governments to discuss the role of higher education in DRR.

The Latin American and Caribbean University Network for Emergency and Disaster Risk Reduction (REDULAC), Universidad Especializada de Las Américas (UDELAS), and Superior Central American University Council (CSUCA) are organizing the event, with support from USAID/OFDA and the U.N. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

Discussion panels will cover themes such as incorporating DRR in student programs, DRR research by universities, university outreach targeting DRR, social media and DRR, university networks and their contributions to DRR in the region, DRR communities of knowledge and practice, and more.

For additional information or to register as a participant, please see the REDULAC web site: [www.redulac.net](http://www.redulac.net). The deadline to register has been extended until August 10, or until available spaces are filled.

Organizers expect approximately 200 participants to attend.

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### RDAP Signs Additional Small Grant To Support DRR Work in the Region

RDAP recently signed a small grant agreement to support an urban DRR project in Santiago, Chile.

Through the RDAP agreement, USAID/OFDA will provide \$44,690 to the Foundation of the University of Chile School of Architecture and Urbanism to reduce seismic risk and vulnerability in Yungay and Matta, two neighborhoods in Chile's capital city.

The 12-month project will implement a seismic risk management program in the two neighborhoods in collaboration with community leaders, Santiago Municipality, and the Government of Chile's National Emergency Management Office (ONEMI).

The project's goals include organizing community members around seismic risk prevention and mitigation activities, identifying vulnerable areas and safe zones, and installing public signs indicating the location of safe zones and emergency shelters. The project will also provide technical considerations for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of earthquake-damaged homes and historical buildings in the area.

RDAP launched the Small Grants Program in April 2011 to provide funding for DRR activities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Since then, the program has provided nearly \$340,000 to support community-level DRR projects implemented by local NGOs.

Other recent small grant awards support local DRR projects in Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru.



Photo by Fernando Calderón, USAID/OFDA

**USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado, right, and other panelists address participants at the seminar on public-private alliances for DRR, held in Lima, Peru, in June 2012.**

## Collaborating with the Private Sector

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discuss increased collaboration for DRR activities. Ideas include establishing DRR training opportunities for entrepreneurs and supporting hurricane preparedness awareness activities.

The private sector in Peru, represented by the Peruvian National Society of Industries (SNI), met earlier this year with the Government of Peru's National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI) and NGO partner CARE/Peru, to discuss contributions to a USAID/OFDA-supported DRR project that aims to reduce vulnerability to natural and technological disaster risks in Peru.

As part of the project, CARE/Peru is working with INDECI and Peru's National Service for Meteorology and Hydrology to produce national guidelines for community-based early warning systems. In conjunction with national officials and the private sector, CARE/Peru will also identify and offer shelter options for various disaster scenarios and climatic conditions.

USAID/OFDA also supports regional events to facilitate knowledge exchange and increase public and private sector cooperation in disaster risk management.

The most recent event, a seminar entitled "Partnerships between the Public and Private Sectors for Disaster Risk Management: Continuity of Government and Continuity of Operations During Disaster Situations," took place in Lima, Peru, on June 7 and 8. The event was organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), ISDR, USAID/OFDA, and the Government of Peru, through INDECI and the National Center for Disaster Risk Estimation, Prevention, and Reduction (CENEPRED).

Seminar participants underscored the importance of adopting a preventive approach to disaster risk management that emphasizes participation and the collective and coordinated efforts of governments and other social actors, including the private sector.

The various private sector groups and enterprises, including regional development banks, the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce, Peruvian SNI, Jockey Plaza shopping center, and DHL logistics company, shared their experiences in disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts.

Sub-regional organizations at the seminar, including the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), Central American Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters (CEPRENAC), Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Response (CAPRADE), and Southern Common Market's Specialized Meeting on Socio-Natural Disaster Risk Reduction, Civil Defense, Civil Protection, and Humanitarian Assistance (REHU), reviewed and discussed their numerous activities to promote public-private alliances for disaster management.

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