



## Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, San Jose, Costa Rica

### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

## Regional Disaster Assistance Program Plans Activities for Coming Year

The USAID/OFDA Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) will continue to provide disaster and risk management training as well as technical assistance and support for activities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean during the coming year.

The RDAP began in 1989 with the goal of building disaster management capacity in countries throughout the region. Since its inception, the program has trained 71,797 individuals, including elected officials, civil service employees, and staff from local relief agencies. In addition, the program has certified 6,557 instructors in 30 countries to teach USAID/OFDA-approved courses.

International Resources Group (IRG) has managed the RDAP since 1998, through a series of contracts, extensions, and modifications with USAID/OFDA. The third year of the current RDAP contract began on June 20.

During this contract year, the RDAP plans to implement training and technical assistance activities in 29 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Training courses will be offered in forest fire management, incident command system (ICS) implementation, collapsed structures rescue, pre-hospital care, shelters and shelter management, school safety, and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

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Photo by Sidney Velado, USAID/OFDA



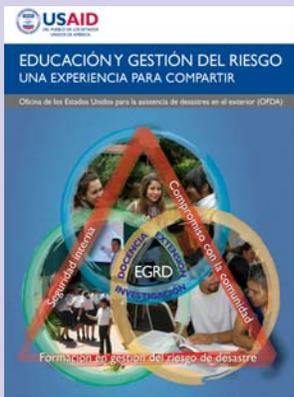
Photo by Melba Nubia, USAID/OFDA



Photo courtesy of the Puerto Vallarta Firefighters Corps

**RDAP training and technical assistance, clockwise from top left: RDAP specialist Mariela Chavarriga (left) visits volunteers constructing USAID/OFDA-funded emergency shelters in Chile; Colombian firefighters inspect USAID/OFDA-donated equipment, coordinated by the RDAP; an instructor addresses participants during a collapsed structures rescue course in Mexico.**

### DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



## Book Documents Experiences in Implementing School Safety Program

The RDAP is publishing a book, “*Educación y Gestión del Riesgo, una Experiencia para Compartir*,” which describes USAID/OFDA’s efforts since the 1980s to promote disaster risk management in schools throughout the region. The Spanish-language book also documents 16 notable experiences in implementing the USAID/OFDA school safety program.

The publication was compiled and edited by Manuel Ramírez, a school safety specialist who has worked with the RDAP for more than 13 years to promote school emergency preparedness plans and the integration of DRR themes into education curricula and activities.

“Our aim is to contribute to the process of forming students in the different levels and modes of formal education. The book highlights the processes and lessons learned in key elements of risk management as assumed by schools, including internal security, student education, and educational institutions’ involvement in the community, in work related to risk reduction, disaster response, and recovery,” Ramírez explained.

Those interested can download a digital copy of the book from the Regional Center for Disaster Information (CRID) website, [www.cridlac.org](http://www.cridlac.org), starting in August. The RDAP plans to translate the book into English this year.

## Regional Disaster Assistance Program

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Technical assistance events include targeted short-term consultancies to support and develop emerging themes central to disaster and risk management.

"One of our aims with the RDAP is to facilitate the exchange of information among the different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The capacities in one country are resources we can use to provide support for training and capacity building in another country. In addition, the program helps to coordinate assistance from technical experts in the United States in any given area, such as urban search and rescue (USAR)," explained USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado, who helps to coordinate the RDAP.

USAID/OFDA-supported disaster management activities planned for the coming year include a regional USAR exercise for USAID/OFDA-trained teams from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean; two regional forest fire management forums in Central America and South America; and a Caribbean regional school safety forum to be held in Belize.

Planned activities also include a regional DRR forum for universities, to discuss the integration of DRR concepts into higher learning, and a regional DRR forum to share best practices and lessons



Photo by Luisa Alfaro, USAID/OFDA



Photo by Clive Lorde, USAID/OFDA



Photo by Pedro Soto, USAID/OFDA

**Left, the first RDAP-supported firefighter mobilization exercise in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, took place in April 2010; top right, participants in the first RDAP collapsed structures rescue course in St. Lucia, held in October 2010; bottom right, an RDAP-organized regional stakeholders consultation in Guatemala in January 2011.**

learned from implemented projects. In addition, the forum will highlight the small grants program the RDAP developed last year to provide funding for community-level DRR projects.

The small grants program, launched in April, provides approximately \$30,000 per grantee to support projects implemented by local non-governmental organizations. Six projects have been approved so far in Belize, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and Panama. The RDAP hopes to approve another six or seven small grant agreements this year to complement other USAID/OFDA-funded disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Other RDAP projects slated for this year include developing interactive or e-learning courses on DRR and basic ICS, producing an English-language version of the Management of Emergency Operations course to give to national emergency management organizations in the Caribbean, and promoting increased involvement by members of the American Chamber of Commerce as well as other private sector representatives throughout the region in DRR work.

In addition, IRG subcontractor Development and Training Services, Inc. is helping to organize USAID/OFDA regional stakeholder consultations in the Caribbean and South America and update the existing USAID/OFDA Training for Instructors course, which teaches skills and processes for being an effective RDAP trainer.

### COMING UP

#### Caribbean DRR Stakeholders Meeting

USAID/OFDA and the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA) are organizing a Caribbean DRR stakeholders consultation meeting in Bridgetown, Barbados, on July 28.

The meeting, scheduled to take place the day after CDEMA's Technical Advisory Committee meeting, will feature presentations on USAID/OFDA's Regional DRR Strategy, the U.S. Southern Command's programming and priorities, CDEMA's Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy and Participating States Work Program Analysis, as well as the U.N. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction's programming support for the region. Following the presentations, participants will break into small groups to review USAID/OFDA's regional strategy, assess links with their country's or organization's DRR priorities, analyze opportunities for implementation, and identify areas of inter-institutional cooperation.

#### Firefighter Brigade Mobilization Exercise

USAID/OFDA is providing funding and technical assistance to the Envigado Volunteer Firefighters Corps to carry out a Forest Firefighter Brigade Mobilization Exercise in Envigado, Colombia, from July 28 to 31.

USAID/OFDA is also providing funding for two firefighters from Costa Rica and another from Bolivia to participate in the Colombian mobilization exercise and exchange best practices and lessons learned. USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist (DRMS) Luisa Alfaro will provide technical assistance for the exercise.

#### Documenting the ICS Experience in Peru

USAID/OFDA DRMS Dante Torres plans to participate in a meeting to discuss documenting the process of implementing the ICS in the city of Cusco, Peru. The ICS is a predefined chain of command that helps response personnel – firefighters, police, medical staff, and others – to collaborate more effectively during responses to emergency situations.

USAID/OFDA, through the RDAP, has provided training and technical support for ICS implementation in Cusco since 2007. The system became self-sustaining this year.

#### USAR training collaboration with BUSF

DRMS Torres is also scheduled to meet with international firefighter group *Bomberos Unidos Sin Fronteras (BUSF)* in Peru on August 9. The purpose of the meeting is to evaluate the Memorandum of Understanding with USAID/OFDA and review the annual work plan to promote USAR capacity building in Peru.

#### Fire Management Strategy Development

USAID/OFDA will provide technical assistance to Costa Rica's National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC) to develop a National Strategy on Comprehensive Fire Management. USAID/OFDA DRMS Alfaro and DRMS Fernando Calderón will participate in a strategy development workshop scheduled from September 5 to 9.

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