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EVALUATION FOR THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)/LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN (LAC) REGIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RDAP)

September 2019

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PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT

EVALUATION FOR THE OFFICE OF FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)/LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN (LAC) REGIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (RDAP)

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Contractor: Integra Government Services International LLC
1100 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005

USAID Office: USAID Office of Economic Growth, Education and Environment (E3),
Office of Economic Policy
USAID/OFDA LAC

COR: Yoon Lee, ylee@usaid.gov

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ACRONYMS

CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
CEPREDENAC	Coordination Centre for Disaster Prevention in Central America
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRMS	Disaster Risk Management Specialist
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRS	Disaster Response Support
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICS	Incident Command System
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LEAP	Learning, Evaluation, and Analysis Project
NDO	National Disaster Office
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
RDAP	Regional Disaster Assistance Program
RMTP	Risk Management Training Program
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SOW	Statement of Work
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This evaluation focuses on the past three years of the five-year Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) contract, which began in December 2015. The evaluation team employed a non-experimental, observation-based design and used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.

In mid-February 2019, before the field visits, the team conducted secondary data review and in-brief meetings with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance's (OFDA) Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) staff and RTI staff in Washington, D.C., and in San José, Costa Rica. The team then conducted 97 semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) and 14 focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 198 stakeholders over a four-week period in Costa Rica (San José), Peru (Lima and Cusco), Guatemala (Guatemala City), Honduras (Tegucigalpa), Jamaica (Kingston and Portmore Municipality), and Barbados (Bridgetown). Stakeholders included OFDA and staff, trainees, direct beneficiaries, nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives, instructors, first responders, and partners.

Upon completion of the fieldwork, the team led a combined out-brief in San José, with OFDA staff from Costa Rica and Washington, D.C.

The scope of this evaluation focused on assessing program management support, disaster response support, and capacity building for disaster risk management (DRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

- RDAP is a model of efficiency in terms of providing technical assistance. For example, RDAP harnesses the region's existing capacity instead of deploying external resources (except in cases where this is unavoidable).
- The RDAP "option year" contract format required the ending of activities months before the contract year, limiting the program's effectiveness. Compounding these difficulties related to the mechanism, the current contract has a "less than optimal yearly start date" around the end of December. If possible, the team recommends exploring the possibility of guaranteeing all years of the contract and revising the contract start date to a less difficult time period.
- In KIIs with RDAP staff, the team learned of a number of human resource management concerns. In addition to the lack of personnel development opportunities, other shortcomings include relatively low average compensation and benefits, variable salaries, and gender disparities in salaries for males and females appointed to similar roles.
- Although the interviewees generally welcomed the introduction of the intermediate-level sub-regional managers, they also identified challenges with how these managers function. The team heard in four FGDs and three KIIs that in some cases, these managers had become "an extra layer of bureaucracy," rather than an enabler of effective work. Specific concerns included variations in the managers' skill set and experience and lack of clarity regarding the intent of their role (i.e., supervision versus administration).

- Respondents in two KIIs mentioned that the new project manager brought renewed energy to the role but needs additional training and professional development to be more effective.
- The program lacked a clear strategy for succession planning and a mechanism for limiting the risk of a potential loss—at OFDA’s LAC office and at the DRMS level—of the substantial institutional memory that underpins its success.
- The absence of funding for a robust approach to Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning limits the possibility for RDAP to adequately curate and share knowledge.

II. DISASTER RESPONSE SUPPORT

- RDAP’s inclusion of country-assigned Disaster Risk Management Specialists (DRMSs) allowed for faster processes, particularly in the delivery of training and technical assistance. In addition, in-country DRMSs had a better understanding of the population, facilitating further development of national networks.
- In approximately 40 KIIs, excluding OFDA and RTI personnel, and 12 FGDs, respondents highlighted RDAP’s quick and comprehensive disaster response. They mentioned specific actions—such as the provision of emergency relief assistance, logistics support, and humanitarian coordination, including the support of Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs)—that stakeholders associate with RDAP. The program’s unparalleled training and technical assistance in the region has contributed to more efficient information management and faster responses during disasters and emergencies.
- RDAP needs to increase its coordination with other donors and key regional coordination mechanisms, such as the Coordination Centre for Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPRENAC) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), for optimal effectiveness in disaster response. Interviewees reported that this need was more pronounced in the case of CDEMA. RDAP should share information before and during disaster responses. The program should also permit CDEMA to include RDAP personnel, who are valued resources in the region, among its list of trainers for capacity strengthening support in member states.
- In-country DRMSs function as OFDA’s “eyes and ears”; their permanent presence and well-established networks help “open many doors” given their key coordinating role with governments and partners during disasters and emergencies in LAC. The surge capacity team of just under 400 people complements the DRMS role and adds to the flexibility and adaptability for a rapid response.
- Despite their contribution to RDAP’s success, the DRMSs receive inadequate funding for activities. This limits their ability to respond to requests from their government and NGO partners. According to interviewees in 16 KIIs and three FGDs, the small budget reduced the DRMSs’ impact and influence, especially in the Caribbean sub-region, because their government counterparts accorded greater priority to larger donations and donors.
- Not all DRMSs have full-time contracts. This situation has an impact on the morale and availability of DRMS staff, especially during disasters.
- While RDAP has encouraged a number of professional development activities, it does not include a systematic refresher training requirement, nor does it provide mandatory professional development objectives for its personnel. This negatively affects their effectiveness in offering technical assistance to national partners, who were often more adept with new technologies and other technical areas by virtue of their exposure to training and other skill development opportunities.

- The RDAP Emergency Response line item is annually under-budgeted, with the result that it is relatively depleted after supporting several emergencies since the start of the program year. RDAP's response capability could be severely compromised, should there be a need for a response during the imminent 2019 Atlantic hurricane season or any other disaster events in the near future. In order to mitigate this risk, increase RDAP Emergency Response line item significantly and/or increase flexibility to move funds from within the contract to Emergency Response when needed.

III. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

- RDAP has enhanced coordination in the region, building relationships among partners, such as National Disaster Coordination Agencies, the Red Cross, the police, and the army.
- RDAP supported analyses and studies focused on identifying potential hazards in different territories, leading to the mapping of high-risk areas and the prioritization of DRR activities according to 12 KIIs and five FGDs.
- RDAP supported the improvement of search-and-rescue efforts, saving lives during many incidences of forest fires in the region. These disaster risk management activities also contributed to the safeguarding of livelihoods and, indirectly, preserving cultural heritage in areas such as Petén, Guatemala, and Cusco, Peru.
- RDAP's approach, of training and certifying instructors using OFDA LAC's curriculum, allows in-country partner institutions at national and sub-national levels to conduct specialized training in areas such as disaster response, disaster management, and DRR, with guidance from DRMS. This creates an effective way to institutionalize national capacity for training, because the RDAP-trained national partners are able to provide training with little or no added involvement from OFDA.
- Interviewees in Peru and Honduras highlighted RDAP's focus on imparting DRR and risk management knowledge to youth and young adults through its initiative geared at schools and higher-education institutions. These activities directly contribute to building a culture of risk prevention, as encouraged by the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- In 11 KIIs and nine FGDs, key informants pointed to an urgent need for RDAP to update its courses, provide more advanced specialized courses, and use new technologies. Although there has been some progress in offering online courses, its reach and scope were limited by the small size of the training team, and the limited technical support provided for the online platform.
- KIIs in all six countries the team visited mentioned the importance of RDAP's small grants in institutionalizing local risk prevention and emergency response capacity. Nevertheless, communities with little or no experience in dealing with funding from international donors, and lacking formal accounting procedures, had difficulties in fulfilling RDAP's grant requirements. Increase RDAP Small Grant budget significantly and make the application process more user friendly, particularly by adjusting implementation time frames to improve the effectiveness of the grants.
- According to respondents in nine KIIs and four FGDs, indigenous populations—present in vulnerable communities in countries such as Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, and Peru—were largely underserved by RDAP. While RDAP is designed to respond to host country requests, the interviewees suggested there is room for RDAP to look for ways to incrementally include indigenous populations in RDAP's activities.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) commissioned this evaluation of the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) to generate inputs that will shape programming for the 5-year period commencing in 2020. OFDA, which is part of the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, requested that the evaluation team focus on the overall impressions of RDAP’s approach and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the program’s work to date. Consequently, this evaluation report furnishes OFDA with actionable recommendations that are informed by the findings and observations that emanated from the stages of the Statement of Work (Annex I).

Table I presents the evaluation timeline.

TABLE I: EVALUATION TIMELINE

DATES	ACTIVITY
February 2019	Secondary data review and in-briefing meetings with OFDA and RTI staff in Washington, D.C., and in San José, Costa Rica
March 2019	Travel and interviews in Costa Rica (San José), Peru (Lima and Cusco), Guatemala (Guatemala City), Honduras (Tegucigalpa), Jamaica (Kingston and Portmore Municipality), and Barbados (Bridgetown) Colombia was included in the initial planning but was removed due to the demands of the ongoing operation to support vulnerable Venezuelan migrants.
March 2019	Combined out-brief with OFDA staff in Costa Rica and Washington, D.C. in San José
May 2019	Submission of draft final report to OFDA
June 2019	Presentation of results to OFDA in Washington, D.C.
July 2019	Submission of final report to OFDA

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

RDAP is recognized as the linchpin for OFDA's capacity building programming in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region. Its focus is to provide OFDA with program management, training, technical assistance, and disaster response support throughout LAC. The overall aim of the program is to strengthen the capacity of personnel who work with national and local governments, thereby enabling them to adequately prepare for and respond to disasters and emergencies and to be increasingly able to handle such events without the assistance of external entities, including the U.S. government.

RDAP is the mechanism through which 27 LAC countries can access a range of training and technical assistance support, focused on five areas (*Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean—USAID/OFDA/LAC Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP) Training Portfolio*. January 2014.):

- Methods of Instruction;
- Disaster risk management (DRM);
- First response;
- Forest fire prevention and control; and
- School and University Safety Program.

Where required, RDAP provides immediate support to OFDA's response activities in the region, providing emergency relief assistance, logistics support, and coordination of humanitarian assistance, including the support of Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs).

Research Triangle Institute (RTI) implements the current RDAP contract, which is valued in excess of \$35 million and will expire in 2020. The initial holder of this phase of the RDAP contract was International Resources Group, which became a wholly owned subsidiary of RTI in January 2017.

Before the current RDAP contract ends in December 2020, OFDA would like to better understand the program's effectiveness. This independent performance evaluation provides an overall assessment of the main elements of the work that RDAP has undertaken to date and recommends improvements for the design of future programming. OFDA plans to use the results of this evaluation to inform the next version of the RDAP contract. This evaluation:

- Assesses the usefulness of RDAP's structural model in ensuring OFDA's ability to respond to disasters;
- Documents the program's overall effectiveness in improving regional preparedness for disasters and building the capacity of partners in DRM and disaster risk reduction (DRR) throughout the LAC region;
- Identifies the lessons learned from the program, particularly the strengths and weaknesses of RDAP's design and implementation, and how they contributed to the program's successes or challenges; and
- Provides recommendations for the direction and structure of any future programming.

3. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The evaluation sought to answer six primary questions, with a seventh question included related to the emphasis on protecting different groups who might need special attention, including women, children, disabled persons, and indigenous populations:

1. Has RDAP adequately and effectively supported OFDA staff in responding to disasters in the LAC region, including both slow- and rapid-onset natural disasters, and manmade disasters? In this regard, what has RDAP done well and what improvements can be made for future responses? Are adequate budgetary and staffing resources provided for under the current award?
2. To what extent have RDAP's DRM and DRR activities resulted in sustainable increased regional capacity to prepare for disasters and reduce the risks of their impacts?
3. To what extent do key stakeholders think that RDAP's interventions are meeting their needs?
4. Are changes required in RDAP's design, resourcing, staffing, and/or management to improve the program's efficiency?
5. Can RDAP be made more cost-efficient?
6. To what extent has the "small grants under contract" component been effective in helping OFDA reach its DRM and DRR goals? What improvements, if any, could be made to the "grants under contract" program to improve its outcomes?
7. Is the program inclusive for women and vulnerable groups?

4. EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

4.1 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The evaluation team applied a non-experimental, observation-based design, and used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, to answer the questions. The team focused on RDAP's overall effectiveness, reviewing the program through the three overarching tasks describing in the Statement of Work: program management support, disaster response support, and capacity building for DRM and DRR. Given cost constraints and the expressed preferences of OFDA's staff, RDAP's cost-effectiveness was assessed without a financial analyst, which limited its scope.

This evaluation covered the period from start-up, in December 2015, through the first quarter of 2019, accounting for more than 60 percent of the total implementation period. The evaluation was designed to effectively engage key sources, with specific questions used to guide the interviews and discussion regarding the program's accomplishments and the relationship between the RDAP's staff and stakeholders. The evaluation team's analysis targeted RDAP's capacity building efforts via RTI and explored its relationship with OFDA. Data sources included OFDA reports, program monitoring records, staffing data (which includes short-term consultants), key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), observations, and anecdotes.

The evaluation team used interviews as the primary source of evidence and relied on triangulation to confirm answers to individual questions. The evaluators employed a combination of rapid appraisal methods, mainly KIIs and FGDs, to access the required information and evidence (see the survey instruments in Annex III). The support of the OFDA and RDAP teams was crucial to gain access to the relevant staff, implementing agency representatives, and community stakeholders, given the relatively tight evaluation timeline.

To ensure quality control of the interviews, all semi-structured interviewing questionnaires underwent a multi-stage development and review process. Initially, the entire team developed the work plan and the deliverables schedule. Then, the evaluation specialist constructed the qualitative questionnaire. The evaluation director and team leader reviewed the questionnaire to assure the quality of the product. OFDA's focal point for evaluations provided guidance and oversight throughout this process.

This report includes an overview of the general findings for each evaluation question, an analysis of the answers along thematic lines (e.g., OFDA versus non-OFDA staff, types of key stakeholders, gender of the respondents), and actionable recommendations for the current RDAP contract and for future programming.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The evaluators reviewed documents and data before embarking on the fieldwork, including:

- Program documents and revised versions of these documents;
- Five-year country plans;

- Technical progress reports and status reports;
- OFDA’s quarterly performance reports;
- Work plans;
- RDAP’s 2012 Evaluation Report; and
- Research or other reports, as relevant.

The evaluation team also referenced external secondary sources for context and useful background regarding other data collection efforts in the field. See Appendix IV for a complete list of the documents the team reviewed.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The evaluation team conducted interviews between February 24 and March 21, 2019. To maximize the efficiency of interviews with program stakeholders (e.g., academic, governmental, NGOs, and beneficiaries), the evaluation team selected the visits and interviews using information and records provided by OFDA and RDAP personnel.

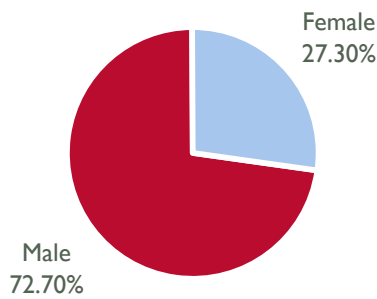
The team used a purposive sampling method, chosen to address the specific scope and nature of the program activities. For activities involving large numbers of participants, such as trainees, the evaluation sought to achieve a balance between individual and group interviews. A few interviews were conducted using the telephone, WhatsApp, and FaceTime, as some key informants were away from their duty stations or in unreachable areas while the evaluation team was in country.

The evaluation team conducted semi-structured interviews with 198 program stakeholders, as Table 2 demonstrates.

TABLE 2: RESPONDENTS BY CATEGORY

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS	TOTAL PEOPLE INTERVIEWED
102 respondents	96 respondents (14 FGDs)	198 respondents

FIGURE 1: INTERVIEWEES BY GENDER



The evaluators solicited the opinions of OFDA representatives; officials from national and municipal disaster organizations; U.S. embassy staff; personnel from the police, fire services, the military, and the Red Cross; representatives of NGOs and academic institutions; and program staff. The team asked these stakeholders about (among other topics) the program’s relevance, accomplishments, challenges, and potential for sustainability, and the working relationship between program staff and their partners, where appropriate.

These meetings were either one-on-one or in FGDs. Overall, the team conducted 102 KIIs (97 in-person and 5 by phone) and 14 FGDs with 96 people. As Figure 1 illustrates, the majority of interviewees were male, roughly aligned with the overall gender breakdown of the RDAP staff complement, per the organigram and related documentation.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The evaluation team designed data collection tools to establish links between stakeholder responses or observed activities and the main evaluation questions. Appendix III presents the tools used to gather and analyze beneficiary information:

1. *Individual interview protocols* – Semi-structured individual interview protocols contain questions and guidelines that solicit feedback in a one-on-one setting; and
2. *Group interview protocols* – Semi-structured group interview protocols contain questions and guidelines that solicit feedback in a group setting. These were also used with vulnerable youth (e.g., youth not engaged in the formal labor market and who benefit from RDAP).

The evaluation team compiled internal interview notes, forming the basis for cross-site analysis and discussion of the findings.

4.3 LIMITATIONS

The selection of interviewees and beneficiaries constitutes a purposive sample. This sampling method—also referred to as a judgmental or expert sample—is a type of non-probability sample that is selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study. This approach allowed the evaluation team to apply the program’s learning curve to select a sample that could best reflect the key issues. This approach was also commensurate with the time, resource, and source availability constraints of this evaluation.

Consequently, not all beneficiaries had an equal probability of being included in the sample. Nevertheless, all efforts were made to ensure the evaluation team visited a representative sample of sites and beneficiaries, including some who had performed well and others who had experienced challenges. In addition, the evaluation team made a conscious effort to also interview beneficiaries in rural areas, insofar as this was possible, in order to capture a full range of potential responses. While allowing for a comprehensive and cost-effective evaluation, the team’s approach does limit the generalizability of the findings. It is possible that more rural or difficult to reach stakeholders would provide a different perspective on RDAP.

Interviewees were selected to cover the broadest possible range in terms of gender and activity focus, as well as applicable demographics, geographical distribution, and special interests. However, the limited evaluation time frame did not lend itself to formal stratification or clustering.

This evaluation is not an impact assessment. The findings are based on information collected from the document review and from interviews with stakeholders, RDAP staff, and beneficiaries. The integrity of the information these sources provided to the evaluators determine the accuracy of the evaluation's findings. Furthermore, the amount of available financial data—and the previously mentioned lack of finance specialization on the evaluation team—limited the assessment of RDAP's cost-efficiency. As a result, a cost-efficiency analysis is not included in this report, even though interviewees made references to this subject in responses to Evaluation Question 5.

The evaluation team also encountered some difficulty in directly establishing the connection between the work specifically undertaken under RDAP in relation to the countries' disaster response and readiness. For example, stakeholders usually did not refer to RDAP. Instead, they spoke of USAID's or OFDA's assistance, including NGOs' disaster assistance projects being financed by OFDA through other grants. Although this lack of distinction is generally positive, as it recognizes USAID and OFDA's work in totality, rather than focusing on a specific program, it made it challenging for the evaluation team to ascertain RDAP's specific contributions with regard to OFDA's other work.

In addition, the evaluation team recognizes the need to quantify the qualitative findings, as much as possible. For FGDs, the team noted whether a topic was discussed, or an opinion stated. As some of the FGDs included up to 10 participants and the team did not record conversations, disaggregating the results below the FGD level proved difficult. Also, given the number of interviews and the condensed travel schedule, the team conducted many of the 116 KIs and FGDs with only one interviewer. The interviewers took detailed notes, but, as with all non-transcript qualitative interviews, there is a chance the team did not capture the universe of responses (i.e., the numbers reported could actually be lower bounds). Finally, the evaluation team promised confidentiality to the interviewees. Thus, the team purposefully does not specify respondents in some cases as it could lead to identification.

5. SWOT ANALYSIS

To better understand RDAP, the team conducted a SWOT analysis when analyzing the data. The graphics below illustrate the team’s SWOT analysis, accompanied by supporting quotes from stakeholders in the field. The team found that the strengths of the RDAP program included the trainings/capacity building of staff, the flexibility of the response and DRR model, and the established credibility. In terms of weaknesses, the team identified shortcomings in performance management, budget, and continued and advanced training. The RDAP program has the opportunity to introduce cross-training and hands-on training and advocate for emergency response policies. Threats to the program included demonstrated lack of experience by some trainers, limited incorporation of new technology, and insufficient inclusion.

FIGURE 2: SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS



Training/Capacity Building

"Trainer of trainers is an effective way to institutionalize capacity building nationally of individuals working in disaster assistance."

"Risk management knowledge building enhances disaster awareness, encourages NGO participation, and develops local skills... all of which increases national capacity in disaster awareness, prevention, and risk management."



Flexibility

"The agile RDAP model provides accessible real time information, which increases confidence while reducing bureaucracy."

"RDAP's flexibility and speed due to contract design and human resources, is a real strength."



Credibility

"RDAP has a place in the region, is respected and a sought-after partner."

"OFDA/LAC is well-recognized, has been around for years, and has prestige."

"Flexibility with people on the ground, with established communication with partners, gives OFDA amazing credibility."

WEAKNESSES



Performance Management

"There is no performance management, which can be demoralizing."

"There is a lack of personnel career plans and promotions, with some staff in the same position for 20 years."



Budget

"There is limited budget for disaster risk management specialists to address emerging needs and opportunities."

"With a limited budget, it is difficult to meet the demands of LAC. There must be a direct relationship between OFDA's wants, the region's needs, financial capacity, and project follow-through."



Need for continued and advanced training

"Course materials need updating and more advanced courses must be provided, for example, on Incident Command Systems, Emergency Operations Centers, Search and Rescue in Collapsed Structures, and also training for instructors."

"We need more advanced courses and workshops in key areas, such as damage assessment and needs analysis, shelter management, and search and rescue in urban collapsed structures."

OPPORTUNITIES



Cross-Training

Encourage regional disaster response coordination by organizing cross-country trainings, facilitating interactions within the regional community.

"Additional useful trainings would include trainees across the region in order to have exchanges with people from Latin America and the Caribbean."



Training

Organize more hands-on trainings and regional surge team deployments.

"OFDA's courses, with hands-on workshops have been crucial to become more effective in extinguishing forest fires."



Policy

Capitalize on OFDA's privileged position with governments to advocate for effective and efficient emergency response policies.

"Particularly with OFDA/LAC, because this program is very recognized and has been around all these years, it has its prestige... the government knows them."

THREATS



Trainers

Trainers appointed on deployment without required expertise or opportunity for requisite follow-up.

"Many team members have specific specialization, but there needs to be a process for guaranteeing a certain minimum level of expertise across the board."



Technology

New technology not sufficiently incorporated into training.

"There is a need for additional training in new technology, use of new technology, such as drones, in search and rescue, and the use of drones for mapping."



Translation

Insufficient focus on indigenous populations.

"There is a lack of translation of manuals into indigenous languages."

6. FINDINGS

6.1 FINDINGS OVERVIEW

TABLE 3: FINDINGS

EVALUATION QUESTION	FINDINGS
1) Has RDAP adequately and effectively supported OFDA staff in responding to disasters in the LAC, including both slow and rapid onset natural disasters, and manmade disasters? In this regard, what has RDAP done well and what improvements can be made for future responses? Are adequate budgetary and staffing resources provided for under the current award?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invaluable resource in emergency response • Increased efficiency and shorter response times for disasters/emergencies
2) To what extent have RDAP's DRM and DRR activities resulted in sustainable increased regional capacity to prepare for disasters and reduce the risks of their impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National capacity institutionalized • Insufficient hazard mitigation funding • Builds risk prevention culture
3) To what extent do key stakeholders think that RDAP's interventions are meeting their needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direct and less bureaucratic than other aid agencies • Increased technical skills in countries
4) Are changes required in RDAP's design, resourcing, staffing, and/or management to improve the program's efficiency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to improve human resource management • Need for program monitoring and evaluation • "Option Year" obstacles
5) Can the RDAP Program be made more cost efficient?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local surge staff are cost-efficient • Opportunity to expand e-learning • Contingency budget line concerns
6) To what extent has the "small grants under contract" component been effective in helping OFDA reach its DRM and DRR goals? What improvements, if any, could be made to the "grants under contract" program to improve its outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small grants increased the capacity of grantees in risk prevention • Bureaucratic processes limit inexperienced applicants
7) Is the program inclusive for women and vulnerable groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainings have targeted women and indigenous populations • Specialized plans for women and marginalized populations not uniformly designed/adopted

6.2 EVALUATION QUESTION I

Has RDAP adequately and effectively supported OFDA staff in responding to disasters in the LAC region, including both slow- and rapid-onset natural disasters, and manmade disasters? In this regard, what has RDAP done well and what improvements can be made for future responses? Are adequate budgetary and staffing resources provided for under the current award?

This question focuses on RDAP's effectiveness in supporting the response to rapid- and slow-onset disasters. First, the evaluation team presents general findings, such as quick and comprehensive response operations and preparedness for sudden-onset events. The team then presents the findings in relation to slow-onset events, followed by specific findings, classified based on (1) the adequacy of staff, particularly the importance of the Disaster Risk Management Specialists (DRMSs); (2) areas that require improvement, such as DRR; and (3) recommendations to achieve greater effectiveness of the emergency response activities, such as the budgetary allocation and coordination with key partners.

In approximately 40 KIIs, not including those with OFDA and RTI personnel, and 12 FGDs, interviewees recognized OFDA's quick and comprehensive response to disasters in the LAC region. Respondents highlighted the provision of emergency relief assistance, logistics support, and humanitarian coordination—including, if needed, the support of DARTs. These key informants added that OFDA regularly provided technical assistance to strengthen stakeholders' capacity in countries with different degrees of preparedness and needs and facing different kinds of sudden-onset disaster events (e.g., hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, and forest fires).

The evaluation team did not find information that detailed RDAP's involvement in supporting the response to slow-onset events. There was also no indication whether these events influenced an adjustment to the RDAP's approach.

PROVIDING VITAL CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH DRMS STRUCTURE

Country DRMSs function as OFDA's "eyes and ears"; their permanent presence and networks are ideal points of contact with LAC governments and partners during disasters and emergencies. Six key informants and participants in five FGDs in Honduras and Peru recognized the valuable work of the DRMSs with responsibility for the Incident Command System (ICS) and forest fires in emergency response and response preparedness. In-country DRMSs have a close relationship with national disaster management organizations, NGOs, and other stakeholders, and facilitate OFDA's access to key decision-makers, as well as to timely and useful information. By extension, this privileged access strengthens OFDA's coordination of assistance with local stakeholders and allows the agency to make knowledgeable resource allocation decisions within short periods—a prerequisite for efficient disaster response.

SUPPORTING ON-THE-GROUND ACTIVITIES

In Peru, Guatemala, and Costa Rica, among other countries, RDAP has supported vulnerability assessments that identified potential hazards to which different territories were exposed and led to the mapping and prioritization of high-risk zones. Despite these achievements, the evaluation team found the level of investment in DRR activities to be too small to result in any scalable mitigation of the identified hazards. That being said, RDAP is only one of many tools available to countries that want to conduct DRR and DRM activities.

LEADING DISASTER AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE PREPAREDNESS IN LAC

OFDA and other donors built and equipped National Emergency Operations Centers in Guatemala and Jamaica and Regional Emergency Operations Centers in Honduras and Peru. First responders in these countries reported that these structures improved their response capabilities. The decentralization through the Regional Emergency Operations Centers and training at the sub-national level has bolstered the quality of community-level response to disasters and emergencies. Personnel in all six countries informed the evaluation team that RDAP's support had contributed to improved information management and shorter response times for disasters and emergencies.

Recommended improvements

- If possible, increase the budget allocation to the Emergency Response line item, given current political and hydro-meteorological trends in LAC
- Boost coordination with other donors for increased impact and improved resource allocation decisions

The evaluation team learned that throughout the six countries, RDAP's training and technical assistance initiatives resulted in the development of a strong disaster response platform, but greater coordination with other donors and key regional coordination mechanisms—such as the Coordination Centre for Disaster Prevention in Central America (CEPRENAC) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)—would increase the effectiveness and response to disasters. Interviewees in the Caribbean sub-region mentioned that RDAP should increase its pre- and post-disaster coordination with CDEMA for a more effective response system.

OFDA and RTI leadership in Washington, D.C., and San José expressed concern over the limited amount of funding in the Emergency Response budget line item, given the number of emergencies already being supported since the start of the current program year. The atypical Venezuela Crisis in particular has brought budget issues to light due to the prolonged nature of the crisis. The leadership added that there was a risk that the funds could be exhausted before the Atlantic hurricane season reaches its usual peak (September–October).

6.3 EVALUATION QUESTION 2

To what extent have RDAP's DRM and DRR activities resulted in sustainable increased regional capacity to prepare for disasters and reduce the risks of their impacts?

This question addresses RDAP's sustainable capacity building. Two strengths of the program's potential sustainability are (1) the training of trainers, which is proving to be an effective tool to institutionalize national capacity; and (2) OFDA's support for a network of disaster coordination agencies, first responders, and surge capacity members for managing disasters and emergencies.

Opportunities to increase sustainability include (1) updating some training course content, especially with information on how climate change influences some of the topics; and (2) increasing the potential to strengthen local capacity over time, by creating training-of-trainers courses for indigenous populations.

DELIVERING EXTENSIVE TRAINING PORTFOLIO

RDAP supports instructor training, using OFDA's training curriculum, and certifies the trained instructors as trainers. This allows in-country partner institutions at the national and sub-national levels to conduct additional training courses in areas such as disaster response, disaster management, and DRR using their own trainers and other resources. Training of trainers involving local organizations is thus an effective way to institutionalize national capacity for training. However, interviewees reported high turnover among trainers and requested a method (e.g., an online database) to track potential trainers when seeking an instructor.

Whenever required, RDAP provides technical assistance to DRM and DRR course delivery through in-country and technical DRMSs. Most of the core courses RDAP currently offers are delivered by national institutions and local trainers, enhancing the sustainability of core RDAP courses. There is an opportunity for RDAP to coordinate more between the technical and in-country DRMSs. Technical DRMSs would also provide more training assistance if Forest Fire Prevention and ICS training units were separated.

Finally, interviewees mentioned they would appreciate more technical training in vulnerable migrants, cash transfer programming, water and sanitation, urban risk, and vector control.

STRENGTHENING LAC RESPONSE CAPACITY

Respondents in KIs and FGDs with government disaster coordination agencies, first responders, and surge capacity members noted how RDAP strongly supported skills development. They specifically highlighted RDAP's focus on problem-solving strategies, response timing and techniques, clear communication, and distribution of tasks and responsibilities among response actors. These skills are fundamental in increasing country capacity to respond to emergency situations and reduce disaster risk. From this perspective, the program has successfully promoted and encouraged self-management in emergency situations.

“OFDA supported the establishment of a network with other firefighters in the region (including Central America and South America) and the creation of the Confederation of Central American and Panama firefighters, and the development of a firefighters' manual that is used in all six countries. Another important contribution was a hands-on internship ... in Virginia, to assist the development of Costa Rica's firefighters integrated control center, and the training in Colombia of the Canine Unit, used for example, for search and rescue in collapsed structures.”

—Stakeholder, Costa Rica

Required improvements

- Update training modules and hand these over to national agencies for an increased “multiplier effect”
- Provide more advanced training for instructors for select courses
- Provide, from RDAP, support for DRR work, focusing on vulnerability reduction and strengthening resilience

NEEDING TO UPDATE COURSES

Key informants in 11 KIIs and nine FGDs requested that OFDA update some of the courses (e.g., *Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Management*, *Search and Rescue in Collapsed Structures*, *First Aid*, and *Incident Command System*), because the corresponding protocols have evolved. These interview respondents also suggested that RDAP incorporate more tools using new technology into its training “toolbox,” where applicable. They added that although RDAP now offers online training, it has been insufficiently resourced, with only one administrator and without the required level of technical support to make the platform appealing to use.

BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING NETWORK OF RESPONDERS

RDAP has contributed to creating and solidifying a network among key first response agencies, such as the Red Cross and firefighters in all six countries the evaluation team visited. This was evident during FGDs with surge capacity members, where their rapport and familiarity with technical matters (e.g., procedures for first response knowledge development and capacity strengthening) demonstrated their capacity. This capacity ultimately facilitates coordination and the delivery of assistance using proven methods and procedures. These networks could be further strengthened by creating regional exchanges, which would allow surge teams to work across national boundaries.

STRENGTHENING CULTURE FOR DRR AMONG YOUTH

In Costa Rica, Honduras, Jamaica, and Peru, respondents highlighted RDAP’s DRR work with schools and higher education institutions. This transfer of DRR and risk management knowledge to youth and young adults enhances their awareness and builds a culture of risk prevention, in line with the objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action. This activity also encourages their participation in community-focused organizations and NGOs, such as the Red Cross. The evaluation team heard that youths and young adults also use these tools in their professional development for varied disciplines, such as engineering, natural resource management, social communication, and business administration.

COORDINATING AND ENHANCING DRR ACTIVITIES

Key informants in all six countries observed that although RDAP does not implement the majority of OFDA’s DRR programming—other implementing partners undertake these tasks—there are opportunities for RDAP’s activities to build on and complement these activities. In the informants’ view, there is a need for RDAP to increase its focus on DRR work. This would complement OFDA’s current focus on emergency response. Moreover, the lessons from such response operations should generate a greater focus on vulnerability reduction and resilience strengthening in future activities. In so doing, RDAP would facilitate a more coordinated approach to DRR, and enable increased scalability of DRR activities in the medium to long term.

BOOSTING LOCAL CAPACITY

The evaluation team observed RDAP’s work to strengthen local capacity in Cusco, Peru. With the support and motivation of RDAP, the municipality designed a forest fire prevention and control activity, with a budget of \$3,639,181, that is also financed by the municipal government. RDAP trained the activity’s instructors and will support additional training of trainers.

After observing a training session in the San Salvador District, in Calca Province, the evaluation team learned that the main objective of the activity is “improvement of the capacities for prevention and response to forest fires and pastures in prioritized provinces of the Cusco region.” This activity covers 49 small farming communities, benefiting approximately 40,000 persons. The training will also include ICS at the regional and community level and will increase local institutional capacity to prepare for disaster and reduce the risk of impact. Based on the local government financing and community buy-in, the evaluation team views this activity as a strong example of RDAP’s work to boost local capacity.

TARGETING INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Countries such as Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru are including members of indigenous groups in their training, in order to build their capacity for lasting impact. The next capacity building step is for training-of-trainers’ courses to target members of indigenous groups, advancing the possibility for ownership and sustainability of the training among these communities.

KIs in other countries, such as Costa Rica and Honduras, reported that RDAP implemented pilot activities targeting indigenous groups, but interviews for this evaluation revealed that this is largely an underserved target group in the LAC region. More effort is required to incrementally include indigenous populations in the medium- to long-term, beginning with a needs and capacity assessment, followed by an implementation strategy, with activity targets.

6.4 EVALUATION QUESTION 3

To what extent do key stakeholders think that RDAP’s interventions are meeting their needs?

This question addresses RDAP’s role in fulfilling stakeholders’ needs. The responses noted that (1) RDAP has successfully supported forest fire prevention and management activities, safeguarding the local populations’ livelihoods and contributing indirectly to the preservation of cultural heritage in some locations; (2) RDAP has helped build relationships among first responders, which supports their coordination; and (3) RDAP has successfully provided the framework and methodology for many risk management courses and for first response.

PRESERVING LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

RDAP’s assistance has been crucial in the prevention and control of forest fires resulting from “slash and burn” agricultural practices in LAC, particularly in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru. Forest fires resulting from these practices can affect areas of important cultural heritage (e.g., Petén, Guatemala, which is home to Tikal National Park, and Cusco, Peru, which houses Machu Picchu, a UNESCO World Heritage site). According to FGDs in Costa Rica and Peru, RDAP’s prevention activities helped preserve the means of livelihood for populations in these regions. RDAP support has also improved search-and-rescue efforts in these areas, increasing first responders’ capacity to save lives.

ENHANCING COORDINATION

Discussions during KIs in the Caribbean sub-region revealed that RDAP’s training and technical assistance has contributed to building the relationship and developing disaster response procedures and protocols among partners such as the National Disaster Coordination Agencies, the Red Cross, the police and the army—all of which facilitate the response to emergencies and disasters.

In Guatemala, respondents from CONRED, the agency responsible for national coordination of disaster reduction, indicated that RDAP training helped strengthen coordination among the Red Cross, the police, the Army, and communities, which contributed to better management of information and shorter response times around the eruption of the Fuego volcano on June 3, 2018. The eruption resulted in a flux tower of ash, sending burning lava, rocks, and gas cascading down its slopes; more than 300 people were killed. Because of first response protocols and regular drills, people trained in first response acted quickly and warned residents to evacuate before the eruption. More than 3,000 people from at least eight communities were evacuated in advance and were taken to provisional shelters in safe areas.

In Barbados, Ministry of Education informants spoke very highly of RDAP's training of shelter managers. The ministry staff indicated that although the country had not been affected by major events such as those in Antigua, Barbuda, and Dominica in 2017, the training had created additional capacity for them to adequately respond if required.

IMPROVING TECHNICAL SKILLS AND POLICIES

In every country the evaluation team visited, interviewees mentioned similar experiences of taking ownership of training and technical assistance (e.g., by adapting and replicating OFDA courses using their own resources), although the evaluation team noted some variability, due to in-country economic realities. At present, the countries follow methods introduced during RDAP training, and are able to coordinate efforts, act with efficacy, and rapidly respond to disasters.

RDAP assisted Costa Rica to develop its DRM curriculum. One stakeholder noted that most risk management, prevention and control of forest fires, and first response courses were carried out using OFDA's methodology and in-country resources.

In October 2017, Hurricane Nate caused heavy rains and landslides in Guanacaste, Costa Rica. According to several participants in one FGD, the ICS was activated as part of the initial response. These respondents further stated that OFDA's first response training had been crucial to their ability to successfully undertaking search and rescue activities during these events.

In Barbados, key informants identified RDAP as a "driving force" in promoting resilience through risk mitigation. OFDA is also considered a strategic partner in emergency management activities in Barbados, with its technical assistance and other forms of support having played an important role in complementing the resources of the National Disaster Office (NDO). Interviewees spoke of OFDA as having contributed to the strengthening the capacity of the Emergency Management Advisory Council—the body that reviews and recommends emergency management policy to the cabinet of the Government of Barbados. Informants in two KIIs also spoke of RDAP's support for the development of the Tsunami Ready Recognition Program, an initiative that the NDO spearheaded.

According to the NDO, Hurricane Sandy (in 2012) was the last major disaster event that affected Jamaica. The NDO stated that RDAP played an important role in relocating vulnerable persons, in coordinating the response, and in damage assessment activities. Key informants also said RDAP was more direct and less bureaucratic than other foreign disaster assistance agencies, and that its assistance came "right away." In addition, when Hurricane Matthew threatened the area in 2016, RDAP deployed an advance team for preparedness, who assisted with the identification of potential risk areas. Although the threat did not materialize, the Government of Jamaica appreciated the support. The NDO acknowledged RDAP's inputs into the National Disaster Management Plan and Policies Manual, its

training and development of the National Shelter Program, and its training and establishment of the National Emergency Operations Center.

NEEDING TO PROVIDE MORE TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Although key informants in all FGDs and KIIs recognized the vital roles that RDAP's training and technical assistance have played to date, participants in five KIIs and six FGDs requested more advanced training courses in areas such as ICS, DRR, search and rescue in collapsed structures, hazardous materials, and medical first response. All four Latin American National Emergency Committees the evaluation team visited said they would like OFDA to design and implement a more advanced *EOC Management* course, as well as an updated *Training for Instructors* course, and to hand these courses over to them for replication.

Key informants mentioned to the evaluation team that the Caribbean countries have expressed interest in ICS, as it has been a weakness in recent emergencies. They would like RDAP to reconsider the difficult pre-conditions it had set for introducing ICS in the Caribbean sub-region.

In all surge capacity FGDs and KIIs, surge capacity team members in all six countries pointed to an absence of updated information on course availability. They added that, to their knowledge, fundamental courses such as the *Training for Instructors* and *Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis* had not been recently revised. They recommended that OFDA provide periodic course updates and that trainers of trainers be provided with refresher or supplemental training to ensure they remain fully equipped to support training and related technical assistance. The evaluation team was unable to determine whether OFDA had established minimum standards for trainers or whether they regularly tested trainers' knowledge.

In Honduras, key informants highlighted the applicability of ICS methodology and mentioned the need for additional courses. These interviewees noted how ICS training helped them successfully manage crowds at events such as football games and political rallies and assisted them with providing medical attention for people experiencing dehydration. During floods in La Ceiba and San Pedro Sula in October 2018, the Honduran government recalled that the surge capacity team had been activated (two per region) and how they were instrumental in, for example, supporting the management of emergency operations and rescue efforts. Two surge capacity members in Honduras mentioned that there had been a few or no qualified instructors for courses such as *Forest Fire Prevention*, *ICS*, *EOC Management*, and *Search and Rescue in Collapsed Structures*.

Altogether, respondents across the six countries recognized that RDAP's interventions have largely met their needs. However, rigorous assessments and feedback from cohorts over a fixed period would be required to guiding the revision of training courses and ensure adaptability based on respondents' experiences.

Needed improvements

- Increase technical capacity in areas such as food security and livelihoods, irregular migration, sexual and gender-based violence prevention, protection and social inclusion, cash transfer programming, and water and sanitation
- Enhance communication with surge team members to ensure they are aware of available and updated training courses
- Regularly update fundamental training modules and retrain instructors on these revised materials

In addition, existing and emerging needs in the LAC region have necessitated other skills and competencies for an effective response. Among the areas requiring increased technical mastery are food security and livelihoods, irregular migration, sexual and gender-based violence prevention, protection and social inclusion, cash transfer programming, and water and sanitation. Key informants in the countries visited suggested that RDAP proactively explore opportunities for strategic partnerships or invest in developing technical capacity in these and related disciplines, to better support their partners in the region. Key informants also suggested a closer focus on areas such as preventing vector-borne illnesses, urban risk management, and climate change adaptation.

The evaluation team did not find RDAP activities to generally focus on climate change or consider major environmental factors (green response) during their emergency responses.

6.5 EVALUATION QUESTION 4

Are changes required in RDAP'S design, resourcing, staffing, and/or management to improve the program's efficiency?

Responses to this question present suggestions for modifications to improve RDAP's efficiency. The KII's provide several suggestions. Interviewees in Washington, D.C., San José, and the six program offices the team visited almost unanimously identified the "option year" provision as a hindrance to RDAP's effectiveness. They also suggested that a start date other than mid-December would avoid lost momentum in program implementation.

In-country respondents saw NDOs as capable of effectively coordinating all of OFDA's programming support in their countries. Another suggestion was to identify funding for the design and implementation of a comprehensive planning, monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanism for RDAP.

Furthermore, although DRMSs effectively increase the program's efficiency, interview respondents identified factors, such as variable salary scales and employment conditions that negatively affect their morale and potentially have restricted their availability to respond to disasters and emergencies. While RTI's compensation and benefits system utilize multiple country specific data sources to apply location-specific competitive market rates and salary scales, interviewees expressed concerns with human resource management. However, it is difficult to objectively assess the program's efficiency in human resource management.

CONSTRAINING IMPLEMENTATION PERIODS: OPTION YEAR REQUIREMENT

RDAP's option year component is not updated until the option year is approved, using assumptions from 2015. The option year must be reviewed to reflect OFDA's current needs and requirements/priorities. During FGD and KII respondents in the six countries and in Washington, D.C., referred to RDAP's option year component "counter-productive" to achieving results. (This is beside the fact that the current RDAP contract starts in mid-December every year, coinciding with many holiday vacation requests.) The option year mechanism also imposes an early cut-off point for program delivery, which necessitates modification and realignment of activities and ultimately limits their effectiveness.

Although RDAP has not experienced any staff turnover due to this issue, key informants mentioned that there was an inherent element of risk associated with the option year mechanism, as contracts had to be

terminated for some months—unless RTI assumed the costs in the interim, with the assumption that the program would continue—and then renewed upon approval of the next option year’s funding.

CALLING FOR COORDINATION BY NATIONAL DISASTER OFFICES

Based on the information the evaluation team received from in-country interviews, NDOs are capable of serving as coordinating entities for all of RDAP’s programming support to their countries. OFDA concluded funding arrangements with NGOs for other activities, without including NDOs in their design or implementation. The interviewees proposed this change to increase the impact and efficient implementation of these activities and to better link them to the NDOs’ other activities.

LACKING PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TRACKING

The evaluation team learned that in Year 2 of the current contract, work began to develop a tool and a methodology for developing indicators to measure RDAP’s accomplishments, with Costa Rica selected to pilot this process (RDAP Quarterly Performance Report for September–December 2018). Year 3 saw the development of a work plan, followed by data collection to track metrics such as the number of persons trained, overseas internships, and the outputs of the annual operational plans. The monitoring and evaluation officer, the DRMS for Costa Rica, and the sub-regional manager participated in data analysis.

The evaluation team did not review information on RTI’s current performance management system. At present, the team understands that RDAP does not have enough resources to design and implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan, even though this would greatly enhance its effectiveness. This undertaking would require careful data collection, monitoring of results, a detailed and well-documented record of the indicators, substantial participation of program staff in every country in the region, and dedicated technical staff to guide its implementation. Given the limited budget, this is not a possibility for the current RDAP contract but should be a central component of the next contract.

RECOGNIZING DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS

Stakeholders in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Peru welcomed the presence of country assigned DRMSs, as their needs varied by country. With the presence of a national-level DRMS, stakeholders reported, processes were faster, and they felt this had helped improve RDAP’s effectiveness in delivering training and technical assistance. Key informants also mentioned that the in-country DRMS had a better understanding of the population, including nuances of indigenous populations and geographical areas, and facilitated the further development of national networks.

Conversely, interviewees reported that the variable rates in the DRMS pay scale was “a disincentive for more effort.” Although DRMS LOE has increased from Year One an average of 740 days (12%) by Year 4, with 17 out of 23 DRMS who are consultants at near full time LOE and 3 DRMS transitioned to full-time employees, at least 5 KIIs from multiple countries noted that not having all DRMSs work full time was a negative factor. They further stated that this setup could affect DRMS morale and availability, especially during disasters and emergencies. DRMSs mentioned that they rarely had the opportunity to interact with each other through training or other capacity building activities. Finally, DRMSs mentioned that technical DRMSs had limited access to activity budgets, which restricted their ability to provide on-the-ground assistance and training.

INCREASING DRMS BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS

Overall, the KIIs revealed that RDAP activity funds for each DRMS are quite limited. With this budget (\$30,000–\$40,000 per Latin American country), DRMSs have been unable to adequately respond to the requests of their government and NGO partners. The small budget made it difficult for them to meet OFDA’s requirements to fulfill the region’s requests and to determine what could be financed and what capacity exists for implementation. Respondents reported that this has reduced the DRMSs’ impact and influence, as their government counterparts accorded greater priority to larger donors. Without an increase in the funding, DRMS effectiveness is restricted, including cross-training opportunities among LAC countries.

Another challenge, according to some DRMS, relates to the relationship with their national counterparts. This stemmed from the fact that their counterparts were more adept with new technologies, because RDAP does not include a systematic refresher training requirement or provide mandatory professional development objectives for its personnel.

The situation was even more challenging for the Caribbean sub-region, where the DRMSs each support two or three countries. Of the two DRMSs the evaluation team interviewed, one supported two countries that were not geographically close to each other, and the other supported three countries in the southern Caribbean. This means the DRMSs had to divide the \$30,000–\$40,000 allocation for activities among or between countries and provide an allocation for a regional activity. The possibility to access additional funding from the Other Direct Costs budget line was not always guaranteed, given the competitive allocation of funds and the other activities funded from this budget line. Although the Caribbean sub-region’s population is significantly smaller than Latin America’s, the operating costs are higher; this fact has a negative impact on the Caribbean-based DRMSs’ ability to implement activities.

CONFRONTING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Key informants identified the human resource management component of the current RDAP contract as among its biggest weaknesses. In addition to the lack of professional development opportunities, respondents highlighted the following shortcomings:

In KIIs with RDAP staff, the interviewees listed a number of human resource management concerns. The most common issues included:

- lack of personnel development opportunities;
- low average compensation and benefits;
- variable salaries;
- Overtime only applying to DRMSs working during emergencies, so some staff do not receive overtime despite expending the same level of effort as others who do; and
- Lack of a performance management framework, with clear objectives, assessment criteria, and feedback opportunities from colleagues.

Recommended improvements

- Design and implement tools and guidelines for a formal procedure for annual performance management of all RDAP personnel, including a focus on 360-degree evaluations
- Implement the recommendations of the already conducted gender assessment
- Update training materials to make them more inclusive.
- Spread the executive decisions among more team members.

At least two KIIs stated that they believed there were gender disparities in salaries for males and females appointed to similar roles. This evaluation does not include salary and benefits market analyses across the 27 RDAP countries. Interviewees also noted that even though a gender assessment had been completed for RDAP, the findings were not implemented. One interviewee mentioned that suggestions to modify the language in training materials to achieve gender neutrality were “seen as too much work.”

Finally, interviews revealed that RDAP has a highly centralized management system, with ultimate authority embodied in the senior regional advisor, whose travel schedule has limited his physical presence in San José. This has, at times, led to delays in critical decision-making for program implementation. This led to another identified weakness related to succession planning; with no clear strategy or mechanism to facilitate succession for DRMSs, the program risks losing institutional memory.

CLARIFYING AND IMPROVING SUB-REGIONAL MANAGERS AND PROGRAM MANAGER ROLES

In five KIIs, informants agreed that the program manager was overwhelmed by the requirement to manage all the DRMSs, in addition to the many other tasks this person had to perform. The program manager therefore welcomed the introduction of the intermediate-level sub-regional managers, following the 2012 RDAP evaluation. Key informants said this change facilitated the supervision of DRMSs’ activities and expedited the reporting process.

The sub-regional managers also provide country-specific strategy and planning support to the DRMS. Their presence enables a more effective flow of information between the DRMSs and San José during the response to disasters in multiple sub-regions.

However, the informants cited challenges with how these personnel function, sharing that the sub-regional managers have become “an extra layer of bureaucracy,” rather than an enabler of effective work.

One interviewee pointed to difficulties in accessing information from the DRMSs, even when he solicited the support of the sub-regional managers; they were, he said, more cumbersome and “did not add value” in terms of the overall outputs.

Informants also mentioned that some of the sub-regional managers lacked the requisite technical skills, limiting their effectiveness. They added that there was a lack of clarity regarding their role and Terms of Reference. One interviewee asked, “Are they meant to be technical and supervisory leads for the DRMSs, or are their roles more administrative?” Another inquired, “How much supervision and quality control do they receive from RDAP leadership team in San José?” These key informants stated that although there had been improvements with the appointment of the new program manager, this person required more training and confidence to be fully effective in the role.

Recommended improvements

- Review the sub-regional managers’ Terms of Reference to clarify their roles
- Review sub-regional managers’ qualifications and experiences to ensure their profiles fit the tasks specified in the revised Terms of Reference, and take the necessary steps in line with the outcomes of the reviews
- Provide closer supervision of the sub-regional managers
- Provide training opportunities for the sub-regional managers, should the process for acquiring requisite skills not be disruptive to their workload

6.6 EVALUATION QUESTION 5

Can RDAP be made more cost-efficient?

Information from key informants across the six countries indicate that RDAP is cost-efficient, based on the ratio of its inputs to its outputs. Contributing factors include the strategy of prioritizing the use of regional human resources in emergency response, rather than mobilizing international personnel—lowering the relative operating costs in such instances. However, key informants highlighted the need to provide members of the surge team with standardized training and the need to apply uniform criteria for qualifying surge team eligibility and for surge team member selection. Surge team members also need opportunities to keep their skills updated (e.g., through e-learning courses and deployment in response to events). The evaluation team identified a need to better measure the real program implementation costs and to determine RDAP’s true level of cost-efficiency.

Based on the feedback from interviewees in seven KIIs and eight FGDs, RDAP is operating in a cost-efficient manner. Its practice of deploying regional surge capacity—comprising personnel from the LAC region who can mobilize quickly, without large international travel costs—is cost-effective. In addition, the local surge staff truly understand the country’s population, needs, and geography, which points to a certain level of operational cost-efficiency, compared to the costs of an international surge team.

IMPROVING RETURNS ON SURGE STAFF INVESTMENTS

However, the evaluation team was informed that not all surge team members received the same training, and that RDAP lacked uniform surge team selection criteria. When interviewing surge team staff, the evaluation team heard that some had waited for years before being activated, while others were still awaiting their first deployment. Surge team members deployed for sudden-onset events mentioned that post-deployment debriefs, and follow-ups varied, depending on the DRMS who coordinated the team. Variations in the selection criteria, training, and review are lost opportunities for learning and improvement across RDAP. These findings diminish the evidence of the surge system’s cost-efficiency.

IMPROVING BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Interviews with RDAP personnel revealed some resource management concerns under the current contract. In-country DRMSs and staff based in Washington, D.C., and San José mentioned similar concerns regarding the need to frequently shift money between line items, and the use of the contingency fund, which was being drawn on to meet shortfalls in other budget lines. Although this line item was envisioned to support some budget alignment, interviewees highlighted numerous budget realignments, alluding to budget management shortcomings. At least two KIIs stated that IRG underestimated the real costs of program implementation during the bidding process, in order to be competitive. Upon receipt of the contract, and as program implementation progressed, the implementer remained within the original approved ceilings and requested budget adjustments to realign budget lines to reflect program and staff needs. On occasion those needs, like increases in staff salaries, conflicted with the low rates IRG originally bid for the contract..

NEEDING TO UPDATE RDAP COST EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS

As Evaluation Question I findings indicate, key informants pointed to large variations in the level of DRMS remuneration. The issue of non-eligibility of some categories of staff for overtime pay is also a point of contention here. These findings indicate that although RDAP's costs are relatively low, the levels somewhat mask the true program costs. A more robust human resource management system would result in compensation and benefits commensurate with the level of effort of personnel. Thus, the evident high return on investment in personnel cost, when compared to the added value and benefits that accrue from their work, comes into question. A deeper cost-benefit analysis is required to better evaluate the extent to which RDAP is being implemented in a cost-efficient manner.

Recommended improvement

Undertake a deeper analysis of the true cost of implementing RDAP to obtain a more accurate measurement of its cost-efficiency

REQUIRING IMPACT MONITORING

Discussions in five KIIs and three FGDs indicated that OFDA had encouraged in-country DRMSs and OFDA staff to liaise with NGOs that implement OFDA grants in the region. Although this was seen as a positive development, the key informants suggested that OFDA should also assess how such projects influence the beneficiaries' well-being, to better gauge their outcomes.

Recommended improvement

Design and implement a comprehensive planning, monitoring and evaluation, and learning system to improve the program's efficiency

ENHANCING TRAINING AND E-LEARNING

RDAP has adapted training methods to accommodate the specific characteristics of individual countries and communities, enhancing the program's effectiveness (e.g., in relation to forest fire prevention and management). To make training courses more effective, manuals should also consider local factors, such as the languages and traditions of indigenous populations.

Virtual learning can make training courses and workshops more accessible to learners in new ways, as it does not require their physical presence and allows asynchronous participation. It can also be challenging for instructors and learners, who must adapt to the new approaches. Virtual learning methodology and deployment can vary, depending on the course and background of the people being trained. One possibility is independent training software. Another option would be for RDAP to build on existing e-learning courses, for example, e-learning courses from the Resilience and Disaster Risk Management Learning Lab run by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery and the World Bank.

Participants in five KIIs and four FGDs mentioned that the RDAP virtual learning module did not provide enough online support for training or allow trainees to ask technical questions. Another possibility is blended learning, a combination of face-to-face training (with instructors in a classroom) and online education (courses via the Internet or in other digital formats). This helps learners participate at a pace that works best for them and gives trainers much more flexibility. To keep pace with new generations, training also needs to account for unique needs and demands of youth and young adults.

6.7 EVALUATION QUESTION 6

To what extent has the “small grants under contract” component been effective in helping OFDA reach its DRM and DRR goals? What improvements, if any, could be made to the “grants under contract” program to improve its outcomes?

This question focuses on the effectiveness of the small grants under contract to reach DRM and DRR goals. Three of the six small grant recipients and another three respondents reported that small grant qualification requirements were “bureaucratic” and eliminated smaller entities from being able to access these grants. Some former applicants highlighted that application forms were available only in English.

The evaluation team recommends increased monitoring of administrative processes to expand the geographical coverage and build on previously successful small grants. Future monitoring could include annual reviews to assess administrative procedures and review grantees’ geographic and thematic diversity. Some grant recipients were unsuccessful in their follow-on applications but received no feedback on why RDAP had not renewed their grants.

TARGETING ENTITIES’ CAPACITY

The evaluation team observed that the small grants have played an important role in solidifying interest in risk prevention and emergency response capacity among universities and local NGOs. Increasing interest in these activities naturally leads to institutionalizing a country approach to risk prevention and emergency response. However, the likelihood of meeting the eligibility criteria relates directly to the applicants’ institutional capacity. Vulnerable communities, possessing little or no experience in managing funding from international donors and lacking formal accounting manuals and procedures, encountered difficulties in meeting RDAP’s grant requirements. For institutions with previous international experience, such as universities, the small grant technical and administrative requirements did not pose major challenges.

LACKING BUDGET AND LIMITING IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

All of the small grant recipients interviewed, and interviewees in two other KIIs, shared their concern regarding the average size of the small grants and the activity completion timeline. The average grant amount of \$30,000 per recipient was noted as a small amount of resources to implement a successful and sustainable risk mitigation project. All of these respondents also noted that the allotted eight-month time period was insufficient.

Another complicating factor is the grant application process. Informants mentioned “complicated and bureaucratic” processes that involved an inordinate amount of paperwork (all in English, and not catering to the other working languages in the LAC region) and stated that the relatively small amount of money did not merit the complexity of the application process. One San José-based interviewee mentioned that these challenges were “defeating the originally intended purpose of providing small amounts of money with a certain level of flexibility,” which was

Recommended improvements

- Monitor small grants applications to ensure greater coverage and build on the successes of previous grants, for increased impact and sustainability
- If possible, increase the grant size and project timelines to improve the likelihood of positive impacts from the small grants

meant to account for the limited administrative capacity of potential recipients and enable recipients to address urgent community-level priorities.

The lack of feedback to unsuccessful applicants was also counterproductive, as it discouraged them from investing time to prepare future submissions.

6.8 EVALUATION QUESTION 7

Is the program inclusive for women and vulnerable groups?

This question addresses the important component of inclusion and its possible contribution to increasing RDAP's effectiveness, sustainability, and reach. Three interviews and two FGDs revealed that training had been provided to indigenous populations and to women, with a targeted focus since the early 2000s. The recommendations are (1) to provide these populations with more training-of-trainers courses; and (2) to develop strategies to prevent the higher attrition rates of female trainees. Specific suggestions are to target vulnerable populations for training and develop course material that will engage these populations; and to continue seeking opportunities for collaboration with local actors, thereby increasing evidence of their inclusion. This includes a need for manuals and materials in indigenous languages.

Staffing patterns are dependent on applicants and local cultural context. In general, the RDAP staffing pattern leans towards men, which corresponds with global emergency response staffing patterns. The team noted a recent increase in the number of female employees. The team also observed a diverse set of DRMS staff and local surge staff.

INCREASING CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Respondents in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru told the evaluation team they were involved in providing disaster response and risk management training to indigenous populations using RDAP course materials. These training offerings have led to the formation of indigenous community brigades in Costa Rica and Peru, whose members bought the necessary equipment. RDAP could provide training of trainers' courses for indigenous populations in all the RDAP countries, building on these successes and increasing the capacity of these groups to respond at the community level.

Recommended improvement

Create policies, guidelines, and tools to monitor the adequate inclusion of special populations into the work of RDAP. For added reach, relevance and effectiveness: proactively identify specialist partners to support this goal.

Women have been trained and are members of these brigades. According to stakeholders, women—at least since the early 2000s—have an equal opportunity to participate in RDAP's capacity strengthening and training activities. Their participation has continued to increase and is being encouraged. However, interviewees said there were higher attrition rates among women in these brigades.

UNDERTAKING BETTER ASSESSMENTS OF PROTECTION NEEDS

The evaluation team received information that not all countries had explicitly developed measures for including vulnerable populations in their OFDA-related projects. Some countries, such as Costa Rica and Peru, commissioned studies that addressed the protection needs of vulnerable populations (e.g., wheelchair users, children, and the elderly population). Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, and

Peru have been working on protocols to address the needs of these subsets of the population, which were previously not included in discussions related to protecting vulnerable populations. One example is in Barbados, where protocols were being discussed for including persons with mental illness and homeless persons in their shelter management planning. The information that emerges from such studies and discussions will be helpful in addressing their specific needs in the event of disasters or emergencies.

COMMUNICATING IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru have incorporated indigenous languages in their training programs. In Peru, members of indigenous communities were trained as trainers, facilitating the training of other indigenous community members. They reported having modified the training materials to make them less wordy and easier to understand.

Other materials have been translated into indigenous languages to facilitate understanding. For example, Honduran authorities have broadcast warnings and other instructions in Arawak language to the Garifuna communities on the Atlantic coast during the onset of a forecasted tropical storm.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Stakeholders recognize RDAP as an effective provider of disaster response assistance and, to a lesser degree, of disaster preparedness activities. The evaluation team has outlined a number of areas to support continued improvement of this program. The team suggests that OFDA look to improve its branding, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency, and inclusion of women and vulnerable populations.

TABLE 4: CONCLUSIONS

EVALUATION QUESTION	CONCLUSION
<p>1) Has RDAP adequately and effectively supported OFDA staff in responding to disasters in the LAC, including both slow and rapid onset natural disasters, and manmade disasters? In this regard, what has RDAP done well and what improvements can be made for future responses? Are adequate budgetary and staffing resources provided for under the current award?</p>	<p>RDAP’s assistance has been crucial in the prevention and control of forest fires, sometimes in areas of cultural heritage sites. These actions improved search-and-rescue efforts and saved lives. RDAP-supported training has also fostered relationships and led to the implementation of procedures and protocols among first response partners—facilitating effective response to disaster and emergency events. RDAP’s support for developing risk management curricula in the countries the evaluation team visited made an important contribution to improving the knowledge, attitudes, and practices among target populations throughout the region. Nonetheless, evaluation informants called for more investment in DRR, stating that this was urgently needed to complement RDAP’s priority focus on disaster response.</p> <p>Stakeholders in Latin America described their application of RDAP’s training to regular activities; for example, using ICS techniques to manage large crowds at sporting events. Respondents in the Caribbean sub-region indicated that they, too, would like to implement ICS training and technical assistance activities, as this has been repeatedly identified as an important component of their emergency response. They would like RDAP to remove the preconditions for introducing ICS training in the sub-region, noting that this is crucial for an optimal response to major events.</p>
<p>2) To what extent have RDAP’s DRM and DRR activities resulted in sustainable increased regional capacity to prepare for disasters and reduce the risks of their impacts?</p>	<p>The various courses (including the training for instructors and certifying them accordingly) of the RDAP are a key facet for ensuring the sustainability of the program. This provided the catalyst for local volunteers—with the support of local institutions— leading training courses such as in DR, DM, and DRR; and subsequently became an effective way to institutionalize national capacity for training. Human resources, such as the members of the surge capacity teams and the in-country DRMS, would largely be available post the conclusion of the RDAP, given their long history of working in the region. The networks and protocols that were promulgated by RDAP over the years were also seen as having the potential to be sustainable.</p>
<p>3) To what extent do key stakeholders think that RDAP’s interventions are meeting their needs?</p>	<p>The evaluation team heard about RDAP’s strength in approximately 40 KIIs (not including OFDA and RTI personnel) and in 12 FGDs, with respondents highlighting OFDA’s quick and comprehensive response to disasters and emergencies in the LAC region. Through its interventions, permanent presence, and networks, OFDA has earned a reputation for assisting governments to develop solid disaster response platforms, and for providing effective responses to disasters throughout the region over many years.</p>

	<p>OFDA has a strong and unique brand identity linked with high standards (e.g., training) and knowledge of the field—factors that differentiate OFDA from other donors. Stakeholders in all six countries emphasized that their training courses (e.g., on risk management, shelter management, forest fire prevention and management) had all been certified by OFDA.</p> <p>It was difficult to routinely establish the distinct impact of RDAP’s interventions, in relation to enhancing countries’ disaster response and readiness. Very few stakeholders the evaluation team interviewed knew about RDAP. Most referred to “OFDA’s assistance,” and sometimes referred to USAID, recognizing OFDA’s work in totality, rather than RDAP specifically. At times, this presented a challenge for the team to fully ascertain RDAP’s specific contributions in relation to other OFDA funds.</p>
<p>4 and 5) Are changes required in RDAP’s design, resourcing, staffing, and/or management to improve the program’s efficiency? Can the RDAP Program be made more cost efficient?</p>	<p>An emerging conclusion from this evaluation was that RDAP is a model of efficiency in its provision of training and technical assistance in LAC. Its emphasis on employing the skills and harnessing the region’s existing capacity, instead of deploying external resources, is a contributing factor. Engaging RDAP personnel to liaise and coordinate with partner NGOs also had a net contribution to supporting the efficiency of OFDA’s work.</p> <p>Despite these achievements, the observation was that the RDAP is insufficiently resourced, as its configuration does not include personnel with the responsibility to design and implement a comprehensive planning, monitoring and evaluation, and learning strategy or plan. Additional programmatic aspects that require improvements are to determine the true cost of compensation and benefits for all its personnel, in order to better gauge its overall efficiency. Since personnel are employed with variable terms and conditions, it is difficult to objectively assess the program’s efficiency in human resource management.</p>
<p>6) To what extent has the “small grants under contract” component been effective in helping OFDA reach its DRM and DRR goals? What improvements, if any, could be made to the “grants under contract” program to improve its outcomes?</p>	<p>RDAP’s small grants program is funding promising DRR and DRM activities across the region. Although the funded activities are showing promise, limitations around grant sizes, implementation periods, and paperwork requirements restrict grantees and limit the overall potential of these grants.</p>
<p>7) Is the program inclusive for women and vulnerable groups?</p>	<p>Although there have been some efforts to engage in activities that target vulnerable populations, RDAP has no overarching strategy that guides this work in all the countries. Some countries, such as Costa Rica, registered progress in some aspects of inclusion, while others undertook initial activities. However, the process of harnessing the learning and the knowledge that were generated from these initiatives is not clearly developed. It is also not clear whether this technical area fits within the priorities of the program, even though responses from five KIIs and three FGDs point to the need to prioritize inclusion as an area of focus.</p>

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

The evaluation team found challenges in contract design and human resource management. To improve RDAP's efficiency, certain elements of the contract, such as the option year, need to be reviewed. In addition, efforts to emphasize performance management and professional development would improve overall RDAP management.

IMPROVING CONTRACTING MECHANISM AND PROGRAM START DATE

- Replace the built-in option year component with guaranteed funding for future RDAP contracts.
- Organize the contractual arrangements to ensure a more convenient start date.

INCREASING PROGRAM EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS AND IMPACT MONITORING

- Undertake a deeper analysis of the true cost of implementing RDAP to obtain a more accurate measurement of its cost-efficiency. Consider conducting a cost-benefit analysis of RDAP.
- Design and implement a comprehensive planning, monitoring and evaluation, and learning system to improve the program's efficiency.

STRENGTHENING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Develop a strategy and a mechanism for succession planning for future staff turnover, to limit the risk of a potential loss of the substantial institutional memory that underpins RDAP's success.
- Share top-level decisions among more team members.

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF DRMS

- Ensure all in-country DRMS hold full-time contracts and are fully dedicated to RDAP.
- Develop and institute annual professional development plans.
- Provide DRMSs with annual training opportunities (refresher training or to build new skills) and make these obligatory.
- Review DRMSs' compensations and benefits to ensure they are determined based on market rates and establish a transparent remuneration system.
- Provide annual opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange and learning among DRMSs.

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF TECHNICAL DRMS

- Provide annual budgetary allocations to facilitate their work.
- Ensure greater alignment between RDAPs technical DRMs and the work being done by in-country DRMS.

- Separate the ICS and Forest Fire Prevention portfolios.
- Include personnel with skills and experience in other technical areas, such as support to vulnerable migrants, cash transfer programming, water and sanitation, urban risk, and vector control.

INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF SUB-REGIONAL MANAGERS

- Review the Terms of Reference and functions of the sub-regional managers to streamline this role—supervisory versus administrative tasks, level of authority compared to regional advisors, and skills and competencies.
- Ensure incumbents have the requisite skills and competencies, and are fully trained and capable of fulfilling assigned tasks.
- Develop a staff management plan, including monthly one-on-one meetings between supervisors and staff, to provide DRMSs with adequate guidance and support. Provide closer supervision of sub-regional managers to ensure activities align with performance objectives.

ENHANCING PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- Provide additional training and professional development opportunities to help the program manager become more confident and, by extension, more effective in this central role.

INCREASING PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

- Assess the instruments and methodology designed and implemented in Costa Rica pilot monitoring activity to track and evaluate RDAP's progress toward its targets. The results of the pilot need to be evaluated to determine its utility and cost-effectiveness, with the intention of replicating this in all of the LAC partner countries to monitor and evaluate RDAP.

8.2 DISASTER RESPONSE SUPPORT

RDAP has helped create a regionally recognized disaster response platform, with innovative training and technical assistance initiatives, and stakeholders are recognizing the quick and comprehensive responses to disasters in the LAC region. RDAP can continue to build on this progress through continued and updated training, systematic reviews, and coordination.

STRENGTHENING SURGE CAPACITY

- Ensure the skills and experiences of surge capacity members are kept up to date by giving them opportunities to deploy in emergency events in their countries or neighboring countries, and training them in information management, communication process planning, and modern communication tools (e.g., satellite phones and related response tools and technologies).
- Involve surge team members in simulation exercises and provide them with a procedures manual to ensure better use of this important resource.
- Facilitate yearly meeting for all active surge capacity members to discuss their experiences and strengthen their network.

- Establish standards or requirements for courses taken, and other qualifications, to specify the selection process and criteria for being added to the surge capacity roster.
- Develop and deliver workshops and training courses to enhance surge capacity building, including providing surge team members with access to online training courses.

REINFORCING DISASTER RESPONSE

- If possible, increase the size of the RDAP contract, including adding funds to the disaster response and contingency line items. The budget should reflect the size and frequency of recent political and disaster-related events in the region and allow RDAP to simultaneously respond to multiple events.
- Some disaster assistance agencies, such as the Swedish International Development Agency, are considering the environmental impact of their disaster response activities (“green response”). To remain at the forefront of disaster response, RDAP should engage with key actors inside and outside the region to further develop this concept within the OFDA response mechanism in the short to medium term.
- Undertake systematic reviews and document the lessons learned for use in improving future response events in the region, and for sharing with other regions.

FACILITATING COORDINATION

- Increase coordination with other donors and key regional coordination mechanisms, especially CDEMA.

8.3 CAPACITY BUILDING FOR DRM AND DRR

The evaluation team recommends building on the following areas to bolster capacity building for DRM and DRR efforts: updating current training methods, integrating more innovative training methods, advocating for policy, and including local communities, women, and vulnerable populations.

ENHANCING DRR

- Align RDAP and DRR work, focusing on the inclusion of vulnerable groups and strengthening resilience by increasing the investment in DRR.

STRENGTHENING TRAINING

- Increase technical capacity in areas such as food security and livelihoods, irregular migration, preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence, protection and social inclusion, cash transfer programming, and water and sanitation.
- Implement the recommendations of the previous gender assessment.
- Update the training materials that are available to countries and systematically hand these over to NDOs for delivery in their countries.
- Organize more workshops with participants of other countries to capture opportunities for participants to learn from exchange of experiences.

- Provide more advanced training for instructors for courses such as *Search and Rescue in Collapsed Structures*, *First Response*, and *Hazardous Materials*.
- Institute a requirement for trainers to be undergo periodic updating and refresher training, to maintain the optimal delivery of courses.
- To guarantee consistently high-quality training outcomes, implement an objective system for the evaluation of trainers and training courses. Regularly evaluate trainers and set criteria for retraining or removing trainers who do not meet the minimum standards.

ADVANCING TRAINING INNOVATIONS

- OFDA has been successful in promoting in-country self-reliance and the training of best practices in emergency response. To go one step further, consider developing a web page that provides information on the latest versions of the training courses, to help disseminate these materials.
- In training and manuals, include information on the impact of climate change in relation to fire prevention and control, drought monitoring, vector-borne illnesses, and the latest techniques in first aid.
- Two countries the evaluation team visited, Guatemala and Peru, have large indigenous communities; Bolivia and Mexico also have substantial indigenous populations. Guyana and Dominica are also home to indigenous communities. Consider including these communities' languages, traditions, and other nuances as part of the training materials and workshop on forest fire prevention and control.
- Support the implementation of e-learning courses and workshops with online technical staff. Wherever possible, maintain the format of RDAP's traditional classroom courses when offering these online courses. Ensure that these offerings reflect the preferences and demands of youths and young adults. Create an e-learning resource center, where RDAP could provide technical support through chat rooms at set times, a question-and-answer portal, or regular blended learning options for groups.

PROMOTING POLICY DIALOGUE

- Because some countries reported high turnover of trained personnel, including instructors, RDAP should request that the partner NDOs develop an online database of its trained personnel, with contact information. This platform needs to be user friendly, allowing stakeholders to easily access and update their information.
- To enhance RDAP's potential impact and cost-effectiveness, OFDA should look to increase response coordination. A coordinated response would increase effectiveness in disaster situations and reduce duplication of effort. The dialogue should promote the use of systematic after-action reviews to ensure lessons learned are captured, analyzed, and incorporated into future programming.

INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- In training courses and workshops, incorporate community feedback loops, because they understand and know better the people in their area.
- Promote and encourage the participation of local NGOs.

- Given the high incidence of forest fires that have resulted from “slash and burn” agricultural practices, work closely with indigenous communities—especially small-scale farmers—to prevent these events.
- Involve communities and municipal governments as much as possible. Community participation in training can strengthen community organization and cohesion. If the communities understand better the risk they face, and how they can reduce those risks by doing things differently, it will increase local capacity to prepare for disasters and reduce the risk of their impacts.

INCLUDING WOMEN AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Improve the RDAP’s application and practice of gender equality and protection of vulnerable populations (e.g., indigenous persons and disabled persons). Approach this as a cross-cutting issue in RDAP’s activities.
- Devise policies, guidelines, and tools to monitor the adequate inclusion of special populations into RDAP’s work for added reach, relevance, and effectiveness. Proactively identify specialist partners to support this goal.
- Institute a policy to provide training to indigenous communities in their native languages.

IMPROVING EFFICIENCY OF SMALL GRANTS

- Overhaul the management of the small grants program for improved effectiveness.
- Simplify grant guidelines, procedures, and application forms and make them available in Spanish, French, and Portuguese.
- Given the positive reviews and strong potential for community-level impacts, increase the maximum small grant amount size. Larger small grants would provide greater flexibility and enhance implementation opportunities. As the other RDAP budget line items also seem to be heavily utilized, this increase would best come from increasing the overall size of the RDAP contract.
- Expand the time frame for project activities to enable longer activity implementation timelines.
- Small grant recipients typically pilot cost-effective and community-oriented policy innovations. RDAP should gather the knowledge from these grants to explore innovative policies for disaster preparedness and response. The grant results should be better integrated into RDAP, with regular meetings organized with recipients as a bottom-up approach to integrating best practices into the program.

ANNEX I. SCOPE OF WORK

EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK FOR THE OFDA/LAC REGIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This Statement of Work (SOW) describes the terms of a performance evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), which is scheduled to end in December, 2020. This evaluation is intended to provide OFDA with both an independent review of the program and an informed basis upon which to plan for future programming.

I. BACKGROUND

USAID/OFDA sits within the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) and is responsible for facilitating and coordinating United States Government (USG) humanitarian assistance overseas in response to all types of international disasters, including slow onset (droughts, famine), natural (earthquake, floods), or manmade (conflict or war) disasters. OFDA is responsible for planning, coordinating, developing, achieving, monitoring, and evaluating assistance for international disaster relief, disaster risk reduction, and disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness.

The primary responsibility for disaster response and management rests with the government of the affected country. OFDA assistance is intended to supplement and support, not replace the response, preparedness, and mitigation efforts of the affected country's host government. OFDA also supports the U.S. Embassy and USAID Mission, if present. OFDA carries out its mandate in coordination with the host government, other donor governments, international organizations, United Nations agencies, private voluntary organizations, other USG agencies and non-governmental organizations.

OFDA's programming in the LAC region is field-driven, responding to needs identified by the OFDA regional office in San Jose, Costa Rica. It is the Regional Office that maintains the lead in communication with implementing partners and beneficiaries, assessment and needs identification, and development of the regional Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) program. In support of its broader LAC strategy and program, OFDA provides program management, technical assistance, training, and disaster response support throughout the LAC region through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP).

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY TO BE EVALUATED

OFDA/LAC awarded the first iteration of RDAP in 1989, and since then it has become the cornerstone of OFDA/LAC's capacity-building program in the LAC region. The goal of the program is to increase the capacity of local and national authorities, non-governmental organizations, and communities in the region to prepare for and respond to disasters, ultimately reducing and obviating the need for USG and other external disaster assistance. To meet these goals the program uses training, technical assistance (TA), grant

support, and, when required, direct assistance in responding to disasters. RDAP seeks to ensure that training courses in LAC are replicable by staff of national disaster agencies, first responders, and others involved in disaster management. Training follows a sequence designed to establish national capacity through certification of trainers to carry out continued training with little or no OFDA/LAC involvement.

OFDA/LAC and RDAP complement the training program with TA to community, municipal, national, and regional disaster entities to strengthen their longer-term capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters. TA ranges from standardizing procedures and protocols for emergency operations centers to reviewing technical documents related to disaster management. OFDA/LAC and RDAP offer technical assistance in response to specific requests that meet the strategic goal of self-sufficiency in all phases of the disaster cycle.

To advance the OFDA/LAC 2015-2019 Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, OFDA/LAC currently funds a contract with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to implement RDAP. This contract is scheduled to expire in December 2020. Disaster Risk Management Specialists (DRMS) operationalize the strategy through stakeholder consultations with key counterparts in each country to develop country annual plans for approval by RDAP staff and OFDA/LAC.

According to their contract with OFDA, RTI provides a network of 4 Sub Regional Managers covering the entire LAC region. In addition, RDAP has 21 country consultant DRMS and five technical specialist DRMS that work throughout the region as coordinated by OFDA/LAC headquarters in Costa Rica. The DRMS are the primary providers under RDAP for both capacity-building training and TA on disaster preparedness and mitigation. During disasters, when activated by OFDA/LAC, DRMS deploy to disaster sites under supervision of a Regional Advisor, where they perform damage assessments, assist in the establishment of temporary shelters, and monitor/distribute other non-food items as required. They are assisted by “thematic consultants” specializing in particular technical areas such as incident command systems, urban search and rescue, school safety, emergency medical response, disaster risk reduction in higher education, and wildfire management. RDAP also maintains a substantial number of surge capacity experts in each country of the region to support response as needed. As of October 2018, RDAP has agreements with 400 surge capacity experts (surge staff), ranging from 24 people in Haiti to 9 in St. Kitts and Nevis and 3 in Trinidad and Tobago. Potential surge staffers are usually identified through OFDA trainings, to be called upon as required for disaster response efforts.

The RDAP SOW contains three “tasks” with a number of “sub-tasks” and components. The evaluator should evaluate each of the tasks and sub-tasks individually. The tasks and sub-tasks are:

Task 1 - Program Management Support

Sub-task 1 - Information Product Support

Sub-task 2 - Administrative Logistical Support

Task 2 - Disaster Response Support

Sub-task 1 - Commodities and Field Support

Task 3 - Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Capacity Building

Sub-task 1 - For each of 27 countries covered by RDAP, a 5-year strategic plan, annual operational plans, and quarterly work plans

Sub-task 2 - Technical assistance and training for national partner governments

Sub-task 3 - Training development

Sub-task 4 - Support for regional DRR activities

Sub-task 5 - Grants under contract

Details of all tasks, sub-tasks and their components may be found in the RDAP contract (attached).

3. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

This is a performance evaluation of USAID/OFDA's LAC RDAP, which is scheduled to end in December, 2020. This evaluation is intended to provide OFDA with both an independent review of the program and an informed basis upon which to plan for future programming. In particular, the evaluation will:

- Assess the usefulness of RDAP's structural model in ensuring OFDA's ability to respond to disasters;
- Document the overall effectiveness of the program in improving regional preparedness for disasters and building the capacity of partners in DRM and DRR throughout the LAC region;
- Identify lessons learned from the program, specifically, the strengths and weaknesses of the design and implementation of RDAP, and how they contributed to the program's successes and/or challenges.
- Provide recommendations for the direction and structure of any future programming.

4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Proposed evaluation questions are set forth below. The "context" statements are included as a guide for the evaluator to follow in framing additional, necessary sub-questions, as required to ensure comprehensive and useful answers.

Question 1) Has RDAP adequately and effectively supported OFDA staff in responding to disasters in the LAC, including both slow and rapid onset natural disasters, and manmade disasters? In this regard, what has RDAP done well and what improvements can be made for future responses? Are adequate budgetary and staffing resources provided for under the current award?

Context: These questions should be addressed regarding Task 2 and all sub-tasks separately. The evaluator should discuss RTI's work related to the Venezuela Regional Crisis as well as RTI's work related to other disasters in the region including, but not limited to: Hurricane Matthew, Hurricane Maria, and the Fuego volcano eruption in Guatemala in 2018.

Question 2) To what extent have RDAP's DRM and DRR activities resulted in *sustainable* increased regional capacity to prepare for disasters and reduce the risks of their impacts?

Context: This question should be addressed regarding Task 3 and all sub-tasks separately. In answering this question, the evaluator should seek to understand and explain any observed differences among targeted countries regarding successful (i.e., effective and sustainable) "uptake" of either training support or technical assistance provided under RDAP. The evaluator should also examine the degree to which the outcomes of RDAP training and technical assistance outputs are monitored and measured under RDAP.

Question 3) To what extent do key stakeholders think that RDAP's interventions are meeting their needs?

Context: "Key stakeholders" includes, but may not be limited to, trainees, partner-government officials with duties related to RDAP's disaster-related assistance, and partner-government officials in a position to accurately opine on partner-government disaster responses. The evaluator should identify additional potential stakeholders in its proposal. This question should be addressed, as appropriate, with respect to all program tasks and sub-tasks individually.

Question 4) Are changes required in RDAP's design, resourcing, staffing, and/or management to improve the program's efficiency?

Context: This question should be answered with respect to issues including but not limited to:

- The Program's multiple reporting and planning requirements including country strategies and operational plans.
- The Program's use of staff, including: the use of both country-specific and "thematic" consultants; Disaster Risk Management Specialists; the use of part-time staff; Sub-Regional Managers; Training Specialists; Information Officers; and Surge Roster Consultants.
- Aspects or components of the Program that might either be better performed through a separate implementation mechanism, or eliminated.

Question 5) Can the RDAP Program be made more cost efficient?

Context: The evaluator should assess how any potential follow-on program might be better designed to achieve the program's overall goal of "increasing the capacity of local and national authorities, non-governmental organizations, and communities in the region to prepare for and respond to disasters, ultimately reducing and alleviating the need for USG and other external disaster assistance" while doing so in the most cost-effective manner.

Question 6) To what extent has the "small grants under contract" component been effective in helping OFDA reach its DRM and DRR goals? What improvements, if any, could be made to the "grants under contract" program to improve its outcomes?

Context: The evaluator should also consider the possibilities for increased cost-effectiveness through use of multi-year and multi-country grants under RDAP, examining the advantages and disadvantages of both.

5. METHODS

This performance evaluation will employ both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The evaluation team is expected to include staff from OFDA/LAC as participants in any key informant interviews and focus group discussions in order to provide explanations and project-specific information and facilitate understanding and context for the rest of the evaluation team. Although the evaluator should propose the best methods for responding to the evaluation questions and purpose, USAID considers that interviews with the following stakeholders would be necessary:

OFDA's leadership, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe, Middle East (ALE) Division Leadership, LAC DC Team, OFDA's Contracting Officers and Acquisition Management team, Venezuela Response Team, Costa Rica-based Staff, Venezuela DART staff, RTI staff at all levels of the contract including its Washington staff, Chief of Party, Program Manager, Sub-Regional Managers, Information

Officers, Select Disaster Response Management Specialists, Select Surge Staff, and Administrative staff; host country officials, small grant recipients, select host country disaster response agency leadership, and other program beneficiaries.

The evaluator is requested to provide the following respecting each evaluation question: data source; data collection method including sampling methodologies; and data analysis method.

The evaluator should plan for field work in the following six (6) countries supported under RDAP: Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Barbados, and Jamaica.

6. DELIVERABLES AND TIMELINE

The final evaluation report must be submitted no later than four months after the award date.

i. Evaluation Design

The evaluator will submit a workplan with detailed methods, including logistics and team, and draft instruments (including, e.g., quantitative questionnaires, interview guides, etc.) within four weeks of award. The evaluation should include identification of key questions, methods, main features of data collection instruments, and data analysis plans. Final approval from OFDA/LAC is necessary before any fieldwork may begin.

ii. In-brief with OFDA/LAC Washington

Before commencing fieldwork, the evaluator will meet with OFDA/LAC and OFDA's monitoring and evaluation specialists for an in-brief in Washington to discuss the evaluation methods, develop the team's travel itinerary and meeting schedule, share contact information, etc.

iii. Washington Meetings to Begin Evaluation

Evaluation activities should begin with a review of all documents related to the award. Once this is complete, the evaluation team should hold its Washington-based meetings first.

iv. Team-Building Meeting in Costa Rica

When the initial meetings in Washington are complete, the evaluators should travel to San Jose, Costa Rica to finalize the schedule, discuss methods, logistics, etc. OFDA/Washington staff will participate in these meetings via VTC or by phone.

v. Collect Data from at least six (6) LAC Countries

Evaluators will then travel to at least the following six (6) LAC countries (Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Barbados, and Jamaica) to collect data in consultation with Sub-Regional Managers, DRMSs, host country governments, surge consultants, NGO recipients and program beneficiaries.

vi. Out-briefs with LAC Field Staff

Upon completion of fieldwork data collection, the evaluator will conduct an out-briefing in San Jose with LAC field staff, outlining preliminary findings and conclusions. This will allow LAC field staff to provide context or clarify information. OFDA/LAC Washington staff will participate via VTC.

vii. Out-briefs at OFDA/Washington

Evaluators will also hold out-briefs with OFDA staff in DC to relay preliminary findings and recommendations. These out-briefs will include OFDA's leadership, ALE leadership, OFDA's Contracting Staff and Acquisition and Management team, OFDA/LAC Washington Team, and OFDA's monitoring and evaluation specialists, among others.

viii. Draft evaluation report

Within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the out-briefing, the evaluator will submit a draft evaluation report to OFDA/LAC (Washington and field staff) for review. The evaluation report will include both a written narrative as well as a visual presentation. USAID will share the draft of these documents with peers for comment and return to the evaluator for incorporation of comments, observations, and suggestions within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt. The evaluation report should include a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

- Findings should be specific, concise, and supported by reliable, valid quantitative and qualitative data.
- Conclusions should be based on identified findings and be adequately supported by the data.
- Recommendations should be supported by a specific set of findings and conclusions, and should be action-oriented, practical and specific.
- The evaluation report should not exceed 40 pages, excluding annexes (site reports, list of contacts interviewed, bibliography, maps of areas where interviews conducted, interview transcripts, etc.) and must be written in English.
- OFDA/LAC will provide comments on the draft report within fourteen (14) calendar days of receipt.

ix. Finalizing the Evaluation Report and Presentation

Within 14 calendar days of receiving comments from USAID, the contractor will submit a revised report and visual presentation to OFDA/LAC Washington for review and comment. If additional revisions are needed, within 14 days of receiving the revised documents, OFDA/LAC Washington will provide those recommended changes to the Evaluation team for further updating of both documents. The Evaluation Team will then have 14 days to finalize both documents.

x. Presentation to OFDA LAC Washington

Once both the evaluation report and visual presentation are complete, the OFDA/LAC team will invite members of the evaluation team to present their evaluation findings and recommendations to OFDA Washington staff at-large. The OFDA/LAC team will coordinate this broader presentation.

7. TEAM COMPOSITION

A proposed team structure is set forth below. The evaluator should propose the best composition for completing the evaluation. All team members should be familiar with the USAID Evaluation Policy and be proficient in English. Spanish proficiency is preferred. All team members will be required to provide a signed statement attesting either that they have no conflict of interest, or describing any existing or potential conflict of interest. USAID/OFDA may delegate one or more staff members with technical expertise in the LAC field or in monitoring and evaluation to participate in selected evaluation activities as part of the evaluation team. USAID/OFDA will pre-define any staff's level of involvement by indicating the purpose of their inclusion, their role on the team and in which components of the evaluation they will participate, their expertise in the topic or sector, their expertise in evaluation design or implementation, and their anticipated LOE. USAID/OFDA maintains primary responsibility for management of its own staff.

Team Leader:

· The Team Leader must have at least seven (7) years of practical experience in disaster response and disaster risk reduction, including evaluations;

- Have at least five (5) years of experience working in Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Have excellent interpersonal skills, the ability to identify and manage potential conflicts before they arise, excellent organizational and management skills, and demonstrated ability to solicit and effectively utilize inputs from a wide range of sources and perspectives;
- Have no existing or contemplated fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner;
- Spanish fluency required.

Evaluation Specialist:

The Evaluation Specialist must have at least 5 years of experience evaluating development and/or humanitarian assistance programs that includes both qualitative and quantitative analysis, with significant experience managing and/or evaluating disaster assistance and risk reduction programs. Spanish fluency required.

Logistics Specialist:

The Logistics Specialist will be in charge of scheduling all meetings and coordinating all aspects of travel to and from countries, among other duties. OFDA/LAC will assist the evaluator in making contacts with local government and other partners to the extent feasible. This will include an informational letter to inform stakeholders that the evaluation is taking place and that they will be contacted by the evaluation team. OFDA/LAC will provide contact information for key points of contact, but requires the evaluation team to request and communicate with additional contacts during fieldwork.

8. FINAL REPORT FORMAT

1. Abstract
2. Executive Summary
3. Evaluation Purpose
4. Background on the Context and the Strategies/Projects/Activities being Evaluated
5. Evaluation Questions
6. Methodology
7. Limitations to the Evaluation
8. Findings, Conclusions, and (If Applicable) Recommendations
9. Annexes

(See the USAID Evaluation Toolkit for the “How-To” Note on Preparing Evaluation Reports and an optional Evaluation Report Template. Also see ADS 201mah – USAID Evaluation Report Requirements.)

The evaluation abstract of no more than 250 words should describe what was evaluated, evaluation questions, methods, and key findings or conclusions. The executive summary should be 2–5 pages and summarize the purpose, background of the project being evaluated, main evaluation questions, methods, findings, and conclusions (plus recommendations and lessons learned, if applicable). The evaluation methodology shall be explained in the report in detail. Limitations to the evaluation shall be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methods (e.g., in sampling; data availability; measurement; analysis; any potential bias such as sampling/selection, measurement, interviewer, response, etc.) and their implications for conclusions drawn from the evaluation findings.

Annexes to the report must include:

- Evaluation SOW (updated, not the original, if there were any modifications);
- Evaluation methods;
- All data collection and analysis tools used in conducting the evaluation, such as questionnaires, checklists, and discussion guides;
- All sources of information or data, identified and listed;
- Statements of difference regarding significant unresolved differences of opinion by funders, implementers, and/or members of the evaluation team, if applicable;
- Signed disclosure of conflict of interest forms for all evaluation team members, either attesting to a lack of or describing existing conflicts of interest; and
- Summary information about evaluation team members, including qualifications, experience, and role on the team.

Per ADS 201 maa, Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report, draft and final evaluation reports will be evaluated against the following criteria to ensure quality.

- Evaluation reports should represent a thoughtful, well-researched, and well-organized effort to objectively evaluate the strategy, project, or activity;
- Evaluation reports should be readily understood and should identify key points clearly, distinctly, and succinctly;
- The Executive Summary should present a concise and accurate statement of the most critical elements of the report;
- Evaluation reports should adequately address all evaluation questions included in the SOW, or the evaluation questions subsequently revised and documented in consultation and agreement with USAID;
- Evaluation methodology should be explained in detail and sources of information or data properly identified;
- Limitations to the evaluation should be disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.);
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence, and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay, or simply the compilation of people's opinions;
- Conclusions should be specific, concise, and include an assessment of quality and strength of evidence to support them supported by strong quantitative and/or qualitative evidence;
- If evaluation findings assess person-level outcomes or impact, they should also be separately assessed for both males and females; and
- If recommendations are included, they should be supported by a specific set of findings and should be action-oriented, practical, and specific.

See ADS 201 mah, USAID Evaluation Report Requirements and the Evaluation Report Checklist and Review Template from the Evaluation Toolkit for additional guidance.

ANNEX II. EVALUATION METHODS

LEAP III applied a non-experimental, observation-based design, in undertaking this program evaluation. The evaluation team used a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to get answers to the questions, as was appropriate. The team focused on RDAP's overall effectiveness. Given cost constraints and OFDA staff preferences, the aspect of RDAP's cost effectiveness was assessed without a financial analyst, which limited its scope.

This evaluation covered the project's implementation from the start in December 2015 through the first quarter of 2019; accounting for over 60 per cent of the total implementation of the project. The evaluation was designed to engage key sources in an effective way. Specific questions for stakeholders were used to guide the interviews and discussion regarding the project's accomplishments and the relationship between the project's staff and stakeholders. The team's analysis targeted RTI's capacity building efforts and explore its relationship with USAID/OFDA. The data sources used included USAID/OFDA reports, project monitoring records, staffing data which includes contractors, interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and anecdotes.

While the evaluation team relied on triangulation to confirm answers to individual questions, the team used interviews as the primary source of evidence. The evaluators employed a combination of rapid appraisal methods, mainly key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), to access the required information and evidence. The support of the USAID/OFDA and RDAP teams was crucial to gain access to the necessary staff, implementing agency representatives, and local community stakeholders, given the relatively tight timeline with which the evaluation was designed.

To ensure quality control of the interviews, all semi-structured interviewing questionnaires underwent a multi-stage development and review process. Initially, the entire team developed the work plan and the deliverable schedule. After completing the work plan, the evaluation specialist constructed the qualitative questionnaire. The program director and team leader reviewed the questionnaire and quality assurance of the product. USAID/OFDA's focal point for evaluations provided guidance and oversight throughout this process.

This report therefore includes an overview of the general findings for each evaluation question; an analysis of the answers along thematic lines (i.e. USAID/OFDA versus non-USAID/OFDA staff, types of key stakeholders, gender of the respondents, etc.), and actionable recommendations for the current RDAP and for future programming.

ANNEX III. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

OFDA Survey Instruments

KII Instrument

General Information

Good morning (or afternoon), my name is ----- and I work for Integra, a small business based in Washington D.C. We are in [country], evaluating the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), a USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) initiative. The Program is designed to provide humanitarian assistance to the Latin America and Caribbean region, in response to international emergencies and disasters; as well as help vulnerable populations prepare for, mitigate the impact of, respond to, and recover from adverse events. This evaluation of the project is being carried out to provide inputs to support the development and implementation of the project.

I will ask you a series of questions on topics related to the Project. Through the interview, we are interested in hearing your opinion and experience of your involvement in the project to help us learn, evaluate and improve the project. At the end of the interview, you will have the opportunity to share anything you consider relevant to the topic that was not discussed in the interview or ask questions. The interview should take between 45 minutes to one hour. You have been selected to provide your opinion because you have been involved in the activities of the project, however participation is voluntary. All the information you provide is strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the evaluation team. We are not going to report any of your answers that individually identify you. If you have any additional questions/concerns after the interview, please contact Ben Wood bwood@integrallc.com

General descriptive questions for interviewees:

- A) Name
- B) Gender
- C) Age (over/under 30?)
- D) Name of the interviewer
- E) Location (name)
- F) Location type (urban/rural)
- G) Employer type

Questions for all interviewees

- 1) In your words, what has been your role in relation to RDAP? What are/were your major goals in working with the program? (Background)
- 2) What aspects of working with the Program have been important in your ability to achieve your goals? Have there been any negative factors? (EQ3)
- 3) How would you describe the process of implementing RDAP? Especially related to Disaster DRM/DRR)/DRS? (EQ1) Must
 - a. What factors helped this?
 - b. What factors hindered it?
 - c. Are any of those factors unique to name of the country?
- 4) What do you see as the major achievements or successes of RDAP? (EQ1)

- a. What factors assisted or made those achievements possible?
 - b. What factors impeded those achievements?
- 5) What have been the major bottlenecks/challenges/problems for RDAP? (EQ5)
 - a. What factors contributed to those bottlenecks/challenges/problems?
 - b. What factors alleviated or countered those bottlenecks/challenges/problems?
 - 6) What additional training would be useful to you in the future to help you increase the efficiency at your activity? (EQ5)
 - 7) Which of these interventions and approaches mentioned above are more likely to sustain without additional support? Why? (EQ2)

The project has a particular emphasis on protecting different groups who might need to receive special attention, including women, children, disabled people, indigenous population, etc.

- 8) Are you aware of differences in opportunities to participate in the program for these types of individuals? (EQ3)
- 9) How might these special populations might be better assistance in future OFDA work? (EQ4) (*for all interviews, save this for the last question*) Would you like to add anything?

Optional questions for interviewees

- 10) What types of local support and resources are there for DRM/DRR/DRS (E.g. response capacity, training) in the local area? (Background)
- 11) What does the program offer related to Disaster Risk Management (DRM)/Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/Disaster Response Support (DRS)? What differentiates it from the existing options of DRM/DRR/DRS? (Background)
- 12) Based on your experience, which interventions and/or approaches have been more effective when it comes to promoting DRM/DRR/DRS? Why? (EQ1)
- 13) To what extent did your relationship with/support from the program promote any improvements in the implementation of DRM/DRR/DRS? (EQ1)
- 14) If RDAP could be redesigned and/or re-implemented, what changes would you recommend the project undertake in the future (if any)? Knowing what you know now, what changes would you make for the project strategy? (EQ4)

For small grant recipients

- 15) Are you familiar with RDAP small grants activity? Yes or no. If yes, go to the next questions. If not go to question 11. (EQ6)
- 16) Have the grants component been effective in promoting DRM/DRR? Why? Go to question 10 (EQ6)
- 17) If the small grant activity could be redesigned and/or re-implemented, what changes would you recommend the activity undertake (if any)? (EQ6)

For RTI and USAID interviewing

- 18) What are the most important challenges and effective strategies regarding the sustainability of the RDAP activities? (EQ2)
- 19) To what extent will you continue with the model that has been established as a result of your work with the program? What, if any, changes do you anticipate? (EQ2)
- 20) What are the most important lessons learned from formulating and implementing DRM/DRR/DRS? (EQ4)
- 21) What do you regard as the most important impacts of the program, if any? (probe for institutional capacity building, regional cooperation, civil society impacts) (EQ3/EQ1)
- 22) What are the most important challenges and effective strategies regarding the sustainability of RDAP's legacy? (EQ2)

Focus groups instrument

General Information

Good morning (or afternoon), my name is ----- and I work for Integra, a small business based in Washington D.C. We are in [country], evaluating the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), a USAID/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) initiative. The Program is designed to provide humanitarian assistance to the Latin America and Caribbean region, in response to international emergencies and disasters; as well as help vulnerable populations prepare for, mitigate the impact of, respond to, and recover from adverse events. This evaluation of the project is being carried out to provide inputs to support the development and implementation of the project.

I will present you a series of questions on topics related to the Project. Through the discussion we are interested in hearing your opinion and experience of your involvement in the project to help us learn, evaluate and improve the project. At the end of the discussion, you will have the opportunity to share anything you consider relevant to the topic that was not discussed in the interview or ask questions. The discussion should take between 45 minutes to one hour. You have been selected to provide your opinion because you have been involved in the activities of the project, however participation is voluntary. All the information you provide is strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of the evaluation team. We are not going to report any of your answers that individually identify you.

Let me say from the beginning that there are no right or wrong answers - we are interested in all your opinions and we want to hear what you have to say whether it is positive or negative. We want everyone to participate. You do not have to raise your hands to tell us what they think. If you have something to say, please express it with confidence. However, we ask that you please speak one person at a time so that each person can be heard clearly and please respect the opinions and contributions of everyone.

Any questions before we start?

General descriptive questions

Provide them a one page to fill up the info of the following questions,:

- A) Name
- B) Gender
- C) Age (over/under 30?)
- D) Name of the interviewer
- E) Location (name)
- F) Location type (urban/rural)
- G) Employer type

Questions for all interviewees

- 1) What is the general perception of RDAP in your line of work/ community? (Background)
- 2) What are/were your major goals in working with the program? (Background)
- 3) How effective has the relationship with the program been in allowing you to advance those goals? Have there been any negative factors? (Q1)
- 4) What does the program offer in Disaster Risk Management (DRM)/Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)/Disaster Response Support (DRS)? To what extent do they meet your needs? (EQ3)

- 5) What training/ technical assistance/disaster response has been the most beneficial to you/ your family/your community? (Q1)
- 6) Tell me a story about a positive experience in working with the program. (Q3/Q6)
- 7) How have you/ your family/ neighbors benefited from the project? (Q3/Q6)
- 8) What do you regard as the most important impacts of the program, if any? (probe for institutional capacity building, regional cooperation, civil society impacts). (Q2/Q6)
- 9) What have been the biggest challenges in working with the project? (Q4/Q6)
- 10) What are the most important challenges and effective strategies regarding the sustainability of RDAP's legacy? (Q2)
- 11) What have been the major bottlenecks/challenges/problems for RDAP? (EQ5)
 - a. What factors contributed to those bottlenecks/challenges/problems?
 - b. What factors alleviated or countered those bottlenecks/challenges/problems?
- 12) The project has a particular emphasis on protecting different groups who might need to receive special attention, including women, children, disabled people, indigenous population, etc.
- 13) Are you aware of differences in opportunities to participate in the program for these types of individuals? (EQ3)
- 14) How might these special populations might be better assistance in future OFDA work? (EQ4)
- 15) *(Save this question for last)* Would you like to add anything?

Optional questions for trainee stakeholders

- 16) How did you find out about the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP)? (Background)
- 17) Describe your relationship with program staff and management? (Background)
- 18) What emphasis have the program placed on the issue of early warning systems, education to build culture of safety, disaster preparedness and institutional strengthening? (Q1)

Optional questions for small grant recipient stakeholders

- 19) Have the grants component been effective in promoting DRM/DRR? Why? (Q6)
- 20) If the small grant activity could be redesigned and/or re-implemented, what changes would you recommend the activity undertake (if any)? (Q6/Q4)
- 21) Are you aware of differences in opportunities to participate in the training/small grant for males vs. Females, indigenous population? (EQ3)

ANNEX IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Annual Operational Plan AOP / Quarterly Work Plan Barbados 2018-2019
2. LAC-RDAP Evaluation Scope of Work (July 2012)
3. RDAP Portfolio (January 2014)
4. RDAP Mid-Term Evaluation Presentation Initial Findings (2012)
5. RDAP Mid-Term Evaluation Presentation Final (January 16,2013)
6. RDAP Mid-Term Evaluation Report (January 14,2013)
7. Proposed changes to RDAP Technical Proposal (2015)
8. RDAP Volume II: Revised Technical Proposal (August 20, 2015)
9. RDAP Work Plan and Budget December 2015-December 2016 (January 2016)
10. RDAP Work Plan and Budget December 2016-December 2017 (December 2016)
11. RDAP Work Plan and Budget December 2017-December 2018 (December 2017)
12. RDAP Work Plan and Budget December 2018-December 2019 (January 2019)
13. RDAP Pipeline Budget Analysis (as of June 30, 2018)
14. Barbados Country Plan 2015-2020 (Draft)
15. Plan Quinquenal Peru 2016-2020
16. Jamaica Five Year Plan 2015-2020 (Draft)
17. Plan Operativo Anual (POA) POPE-001 / para DRMS 2017 (Costa Rica)
18. Plan Quinquenal Honduras 2016-2020 (Borrador)
19. Plan Quinquenal Costa Rica 2016-2020 (Borrador)
20. Plan Quinquenal Colombia 2015-2020 (Borrador)
21. Plan Pais Quinquenal Peru 2015-2020
22. Plan Pais Quinquenal Guatemala 2015-2020
23. Quarterly Performance Report December 2015-Marzo 2016 (April 2016)
24. Quarterly Performance Report Marzo 2016-June 2016 (July 2016)
25. Quarterly Performance Report September 2016-December 2016 (February 2017)
26. Quarterly Performance Report December 2016-March 2017 (April 2017)
27. Quarterly Performance Report September 2017-December 2017 (January 2018)
28. Quarterly Performance Report March 2018-June 2018 (August 2018)

29. Quarterly Performance Report June 2018-September 2018 (November 2018)
30. Quarterly Performance Report September 2018-December 2018 (January 2019)
31. RDAP en Peru 2016-2018
32. USAID/OFDA LAC Disaster Reduction Plan 2015-2019
33. USAID/OFDA LAC Newsletter September 2018
34. USAID/OFDA LAC Newsletter October 2018
35. USAID/OFDA LAC Newsletter November 2018
36. USAID/OFDA LAC Newsletter January 2019
37. USAID/OFDA LAC Small Grants Newsletter October 2014
38. USAID/OFDA LAC Small Grants Newsletter October 2016
39. USAID/OFDA LAC Small Grants Newsletter November 2017
40. USAID/OFDA LAC Technical Assistance Brochure Incidence Command System
41. USAID/OFDA LAC Technical Assistance Brochure Integrated Fire Management
42. USAID/OFDA LAC Technical Assistance Brochure Urban Search and Rescue
43. USAID/OFDA LAC Technical Assistance Brochure Emergency Management Systems
44. USAID/OFDA LAC Technical Assistance Brochure DRR in Higher Education
45. USAID/OFDA LAC Technical Assistance Brochure DRR in Elementary and Secondary Education
46. PAHO Report: Response to the Epidemic of Zika Virus in the Americas December 2015 - 2016

B. PERSONS INTERVIEWED

As confidentiality was agreed with all key informants, names will not be shared

Statistics - Interviews and Focus Group discussions

Semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions were conducted over a period of four weeks in six different countries: Costa Rica, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Barbados with 198 key informants from the following stakeholders:

Stakeholder classification	Number of persons interviewed
OFDA	15
RTI	20
Government	38
NGOs	17
Small grant recipients	10
Trainees	45
Instructors	3
Universities	13*
Surge capacity members	15
First responders	10
Direct beneficiaries	10
Project partners	3
Total	198

*Universities are included in grouping for small grant recipients and universities. The total count deletes double counting from these interviews.

ANNEX V. CONFLICT OF INTEREST FORMS



Evaluation Conflict of Interest Form

Name	Benjamin Wood
Project Title	Evaluation for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)/Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP)
Organization	Integra Government Services International, LLC
Evaluation Position	Activity Director
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:</p> <p><i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.

Signature	<i>Benjamin Wood</i>
Date	6/8/19



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Evaluation Conflict of Interest Form

Name	Josephine Shields
Project Title	Evaluation for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)/Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP)
Organization	Integra Government Services International, LLC
Evaluation Position	Team Leader
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i> <i>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</i> <i>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</i> <i>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i> <i>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i> <i>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</i> 	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.

Signature	
Date	06/14/19



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Evaluation Conflict of Interest Form

Name	Francisco Molina
Project Title	Evaluation for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)/Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP)
Organization	Integra Government Services International, LLC
Evaluation Position	Evaluation Specialist
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.

Signature	
Date	5/20/2019





Evaluation Conflict of Interest Form

Name	Sharon M. Alvarez Huitron
Project Title	Evaluation for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)/Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP)
Organization	Integra Government Services International, LLC
Evaluation Position	Logistics Specialist
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation. 	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change.

Signature	<u>Sharon Michel Alvarez Huitron</u>
Date	5/9/2019



A Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business
 1110 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 750 ■ Washington DC 20005 ■ (202) 898-4110 ■ www.integrallc.com

ANNEX VI. TEAM MEMBERS' CREDENTIALS

KEY PERSONNEL

M&E SPECIALIST/ACTIVITY LEAD, BENJAMIN WOOD

In addition to being LEAP III Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Dr. Wood will serve as the activity director on this OFDA evaluation team. Dr. Wood is an evaluation specialist with extensive experience in monitoring and evaluation, with a focus on improving the quality and reliability of impact evaluations. He has conducted and managed several rigorous evaluations of international development projects, including estimating the influence of Malawian food price policies on health, Rwandan agricultural commercialization schemes on poverty, and Ugandan road construction projects on market access. He will oversee the evaluation from the perspective of Integra, the prime contract holder of LEAP III.

TEAM LEAD, JOSEPHINE SHIELDS

Ms. Josephine Shields would serve as the team leader of this evaluation, with ultimate responsibility for drafting the evaluation report, leading the key-informant interviews, and presenting the findings to USAID. She is an internationally recognized expert in disaster preparedness and risk reduction. She has over 20 years of experience working in the disaster preparedness field, including over 8 years of working on these issues in the Latin American context. Ms. Shields previous jobs include liaising with high level government officials and managing staff on the front lines of disaster management. She most recently served as the head of the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies' Country Cluster Support Team in the English-speaking Caribbean and Suriname. She is a native English speaker who is also fluent in Spanish and French.

EVALUATION SPECIALIST, FRANCISCO MOLINA

Mr. Francisco Molina would serve as the evaluation specialist on this evaluation, with responsibility for developing the survey instruments, leading the focus group discussions, and analyzing the survey data. He has more than 28 years of experience designing and conducting evaluations and was the Senior Economist as USAID/EI Salvador for 13 years. He has extensive experience in environmental and natural threats. His past experiences include work with USAID designing and developing employment generation projects to assist vulnerable people affected by natural disasters. He also served as UNICEF emergencies focal point and coordinated UNICEF emergency assistance, designing and updating early warning emergencies platforms. He is a native Spanish speaker who is also fluent in English.

LOGISTICS SPECIALIST, SHARON MICHEL ALVAREZ HUITRON

Ms. Sharon Alvarez Huitron would serve as the logistics expert on this evaluation, with responsibility for setting up the interviews in Costa Rica and the six target countries. Given her background, she would also assist with the focus group discussions and in analyzing the evaluation data. She has her Master's degree in Public Policy with a concentration in program evaluation and organizational management. She previously served as a Project Analyst in the Innovation in Citizen Services Unit at the InterAmerican Development Bank. Ms. Alvarez Huitron is a native Spanish speaker who is also fluent in English.