



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

February 2013

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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo courtesy of the University of El Salvador

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) Tim Callaghan (left) and University of El Salvador Rector Mario Roberto Nieto sign an agreement for mutual collaboration in disaster risk management activities.

Supporting DRR in the Region's Universities

USAID/OFDA works with universities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to promote the incorporation of disaster risk reduction (DRR) into higher education.

As part of these efforts, USAID/OFDA supported the DRR in Higher Education Forum in Panama City, Panama, in August 2012. The meeting gathered 136 representatives from 104 organizations in 21 countries in the Americas to discuss the DRR research potential of higher education institutions and how these institutions can help apply DRR concepts to national disaster management efforts.

Inspired by the forum, universities throughout the region are embracing their commitment to incorporate DRR into institutional plans and education curricula, as well as community outreach activities.

With support from the Latin American and Caribbean University Network for Emergency and Disaster Risk Reduction (REDULAC), USAID/OFDA and others, REDULAC chapters in Chile and Colombia have held national forums to promote DRR

activities in higher education and strengthen university networks in their countries.

Additionally, several universities have signed cooperation agreements with USAID/OFDA, pledging to implement safety and risk reduction measures on campus, form a student body educated in disaster management, and coordinate community-based DRR efforts with national response organizations and other public and private entities.

Specifically, the agreements state that the parties will work to strengthen DRR activities in the areas of staff training, research, internal safety, and community outreach.

The most recent of these agreements was signed on February 11 between USAID/OFDA and the University of El Salvador.

REDULAC recently published the official report from the DRR in Higher Education forum in Panama. Interested parties can download the document from the REDULAC web site, using the following link: http://www.redulac.net/redulac/images-foro-presentaciones-documentos/Memorias_Foro%20Panama.pdf.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Visits Urban DRR Projects in Guatemala

USAID/OFDA representatives recently met with partners implementing two USAID/OFDA-funded urban DRR projects in Guatemala.

The projects, implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Project Concern International (PCI), aim to increase the resiliency of vulnerable populations in urban neighborhoods of Quetzaltenango and Mixco, respectively.

During the February 25 and 26 visit, USAID/OFDA SRA Tim Callaghan and Regional Advisor Phil Gelman met with CRS and PCI staff, in addition to participating community members in each project area.

Staff from USAID/Guatemala, USAID/OFDA, and PCI also met with Mixco Mayor Otto Pérez to formally present the Mixco urban DRR project to city officials. SRA Callaghan reported that the meeting was quite productive, with participants exchanging ideas about the project's official inauguration in March.



Photos by Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA

Top: USAID/OFDA SRA Tim Callaghan speaks with CRS project participants in Quetzaltenango. Bottom: USAID and PCI staff present the urban DRR project to Mixco Mayor Otto Pérez (right) and other officials.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Supports Tsunami Trainings

With support from USAID/OFDA, other U.S. Government agencies, and the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Tsunami Information Center is providing tsunami preparedness training to seismologists, volcanologists, and emergency response authorities in Central and South America.

The first training, which took place in El Salvador from February 11 to 15, included USAID/OFDA-sponsored participants from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Panama. Nicaraguan representatives also participated with funding from UNESCO.

The second regional training event will take place in Chile from March 4 to 8. USAID/OFDA is funding the participation of representatives from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

The trainings aim to inform country representatives about the new alert system that the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center is implementing for Latin American countries located along the Pacific coast. The trainings also include lessons learned from past tsunami events, challenges in implementing effective early warning systems, evacuation considerations, and simulation exercises to test emergency protocols and procedures.

USAID/OFDA Meets with Local Partners

USAID/OFDA's Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), which provides DRR and response training and technical assistance throughout the region, is holding a series of meetings with partners and other stakeholders in the countries covered by the USAID/OFDA-funded program. The meetings provide an opportunity for USAID/OFDA and RDAP staff to plan activities in coordination with local emergency authorities and partners, in accordance with national priorities.

Since February 1, meetings have taken place in Colombia, organized by disaster risk management specialist (DRMS) Jacqueline Montoya; El Salvador, organized by DRMS Sergio David Gutiérrez; Belize, organized by DRMS Beryl Armbrister; Honduras, organized by DRMS Fernando Calderón; and Costa Rica, also organized by DRMS Calderón.

Upcoming meetings will take place in Panama on March 7, organized by DRMS Manuel Santana; Paraguay on March 13, organized by DRMS Carlos Córdova; Nicaragua on March 14, organized by DRMS Gutiérrez; Ecuador on March 25, organized by DRMS Michael Camchong; Bolivia on March 26, organized by DRMS Córdova; Chile on March 26, organized by DRMS Mariela Chavarriga; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on April 4, organized by DRMS Cecil Shillingford; Mexico on April 10, organized by DRMS Pedro Soto; and Saint Kitts and Nevis on April 11, organized by DRMS Audrey Mullings. Meetings in other countries will take place later in the year.

USAID/OFDA Signs Colombian DRR Agreement

On February 1, USAID/OFDA, the Government of Colombia (GoC) national emergency system leadership, and private sector representatives signed an agreement to cooperate on efforts to improve the response capacity and resilience of the institutions, businesses, and communities that make up Colombia's National Disaster Risk Management System.

The cooperation agreement states that the parties will work together to improve emergency preparedness and response, hazardous materials handling, early warning systems, public-private partnerships, DRR, climate change adaptation, and post-disaster damage assessments and needs analysis.

Representatives of the GoC National Disaster Risk Management Unit, the Colombian National Business Association, the organization Integral Responsibility, which represents the Colombian chemical industry, the Colombian Security Council, and USAID/OFDA signed the agreement.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo by Jose Zuniga, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA DRMS Beryl Armbrister (right) provides the first installment of the USAID/OFDA-funded small grant to Ulric Alphonse, Chairman of the Laborie Disaster Preparedness Committee.

Small Grant Funds DRR Project in Saint Lucia

With funding from the RDAP Small Grants Program, the Laborie Disaster Preparedness Committee in Saint Lucia is working to help the community become more resilient to the impacts of natural disasters.

Specifically, the committee is working to establish a rainwater harvesting system to alleviate water shortages in the area, particularly when pipe-borne water is not available.

As part of the \$30,000 project, the disaster preparedness committee will install rooftop rainwater collection systems and 18 water storage tanks in various public schools, churches, and a health center in the Laborie area.

The committee will also hold public meetings in the various communities to inform residents about the project and provide guidelines for how the system will work during emergency situations.

The rainwater harvesting project will benefit approximately 10,000 inhabitants.

The funding provided to the Laborie Disaster Preparedness Committee is the first RDAP small grant to be awarded in the Caribbean region.



Photo by Beryl Armbrister, USAID/OFDA

A committee member points out the planned location of two rainwater storage tanks in a remote village in Laborie, where water pressure from the public supply is weak or inexistant.

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



Tel: +(506) 2290-4133
E-mail: ofdalac@ofda.gov
Internet: www.usaid.gov