



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

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



Photo by Sergio David Gutierrez, USAID/OFDA

Members of the Nicaraguan Red Cross and National Firefighters Corps participate in a USAID/OFDA Incident Command System course organized by the International Resources Group.

The Incident Command System

This month, first responders and emergency management officials in Barbados participated in the first English-language version of the USAID/OFDA basic course on the Incident Command System (ICS).

The ICS is a predefined organizational model and chain of command that helps first responders – police, firefighters, medical personnel, Red Cross and other aid workers – collaborate more effectively during responses to emergency situations.

During the past five years, nearly 6,000 men and women from throughout Latin America have successfully completed the basic ICS course, developed by the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in both Spanish and Portuguese as part of its ICS project. During the same period, more than 2,045 participants have taken the more advanced ICS course.

The ICS project has its roots in a USAID/OFDA survey conducted in the early 1990s that suggested the

region's emergency response institutions had various organizational and operational deficiencies when it came to responding to disasters.

USAID/OFDA decided to promote and facilitate the adoption of a predefined model for organizational management in response to emergencies, and determined that the model best suited to the realities of Latin America was the ICS, developed in the 1970s in California in response to extensive forest fires.

USAID/OFDA launched its ICS project in May 2003 with a technical team composed of representatives of USAID/OFDA, the International Resources Group (IRG), which implements the USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department in Florida.

Today, 14 Latin American countries are involved in the ICS project: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nica-

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'Time to Pass the Baton' Explores Risk Reduction

A new USAID/OFDA publication, *"Time to Pass the Baton: Disaster Risk Reduction from the Perspective of Environmental Management, Land Use Management, Finance and Public Investment,"* gathers valuable reflections on using risk reduction as a development tool.



The book, released this month by the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), suggests strategies for the region in disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response. A Spanish-language version of the book was published in July 2007.

The 304-page book has its roots in a series of USAID/OFDA-sponsored forums that began in mid-2005 to foster debate on risk reduction in three critical and interdependent areas as part of sustainable development – land use, environmental management and public finances. The forums sparked the creation of "communities of practice" which have become a means for continued debate, reflection, and exchange of ideas.

The book is dedicated to the memory of LAC regional office founder Paul C. Bell, Jr., who dedicated his life to disaster risk reduction in the region. The publication was made possible in part because of a contribution from the Bell family.

The Spanish version has become a valuable reference tool for policymakers throughout Latin America, according to International Resources Group (IRG) technical director Juan Pablo Sarmiento, who compiled the book as part of the USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Farewell to Juan Pablo Sarmiento

The staff of the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean thanks departing International Resources Group (IRG) technical director Juan Pablo Sarmiento for his 20 years of service to the USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program and the people of the region. Juan Pablo will continue to focus on USAID/OFDA-related disaster risk reduction work through a program at Florida International University.

COMING UP

Meeting on Tsunami Preparedness

USAID/OFDA regional advisors Julie Leonard and Sidney Velado participated in the Best Practices Meeting on Tsunami and Coastal Hazards Community Preparedness and Readiness in Central America and the Caribbean, on August 11, 12, and 13 in Panama. USAID/OFDA has supported the development of an intergovernmental Early Warning System for Tsunamis and other Coastal Threats to the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions since 2005.

Fuerzas Aliadas PANAMAX 2008

USAID/OFDA military liaison officer Dana Chivers and USAID/OFDA disaster expert Manuel Santana, a regional consultant with the International Resources Group, are participating in Fuerzas Aliadas PANAMAX 2008, a U.S. Southern Command joint and multinational training exercise co-sponsored with the Government of Panama. The event is focused on ensuring the security of the Panama Canal. Civil and military forces from 20 countries in the Americas are participating in the exercises, held in the waters off the coast of Panama and on land in El Salvador and Honduras from August 11 through 22.

Caribbean Hurricane Season Rotation

Staff from the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean are rotating through Bridgetown, Barbados, to provide preparedness and response coverage during the 2008 hurricane season. USAID/OFDA regional advisor Julie Leonard will be in Barbados from August 18 to 29; USAID/OFDA regional advisor Rene Carrillo will be there from September 8 to 19.

Joint Humanitarian Operations Training

USAID/OFDA military liaison officer Dana Chivers will speak at the upcoming Joint Humanitarian Operations Course in San Antonio, Texas. Members of the U.S. Southern Command will attend the September 23 and 24 event. The two-day USAID/OFDA training allows U.S. military leaders to discuss their relationship with USAID and partners and prepares participants for collaborative work during disaster response and humanitarian operations.

INSARAG Americas Annual Meeting

Representatives of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), including INSARAG Americas President Tim Callaghan, USAID/OFDA senior regional advisor for Latin America and the Caribbean, and members from participating countries Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, United States, and Venezuela, will hold their annual meeting in Guayaquil, Ecuador, on September 23 and 24. Representatives of INSARAG countries from other regions, including Austria, Germany, Korea, New Zealand, and Switzerland, will attend the meeting as observers. USAID/OFDA provides support to INSARAG efforts in the Americas.

Congratulations to Bogotá USAR Team

USAID/OFDA congratulates the urban search and rescue (USAR) team of the Colombian Red Cross, Bogotá Chapter, for having met all of the requirements of the internal and external evaluations according to INSARAG Americas guidelines. The USAR team is the first in Latin America to achieve this distinction, and will be recognized during next month's INSARAG Americas annual meeting in Ecuador.

Incident Command System Training

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ragua, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela.

The 1.5-day basic ICS course provides first responders with an overview of the system and how it works. The more advanced four-day ICS course is geared toward decision-makers and provides participants with the capabilities necessary to apply the system during large-scale events. It covers ICS principles and structure, installations, resources, expansion and contraction of the structure, the incident action plan, mobilization, demobilization, and closure.

USAID/OFDA provided its first basic ICS course in English in Barbados on August 11 and 12. Twelve representatives of that country's first-response organizations, including police, firefighters, emergency response and health officials, and the recently formed urban search and rescue team, along with four IRG consultants from the Caribbean, participated in the course.

"USAID/OFDA is helping strengthen the capacities of first-response institutions and supporting countries in their efforts to establish procedures and protocols for managing emergencies," said IRG disaster expert María Luisa Alfaro, who oversees the ICS project.

DISASTER RESPONSE



A Guatemalan emergency response worker surveys some of the damage caused by landslides in Zacapa.

Photo by Jorge Molina, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA Provides Assistance To Flood Victims in Guatemala

USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 for the purchase of relief supplies for families affected by floods and landslides in Guatemala in July. More than 5,000 people in the department of Zacapa left their homes in search of temporary shelter the weekend of July 21, prompting Guatemalan President Alvaro Colom to declare a state of emergency in the region, according to USAID/Guatemala. More than a dozen people were killed in the floods and resulting landslides.

USAID/OFDA disaster expert Jorge Molina, a surge consultant with the International Resources Group (IRG), which implements the USAID/OFDA Risk Management Training Program in Latin America and the Caribbean, visited some of the affected areas to evaluate the damage and assess needs. Based on Molina's report, the USAID/OFDA funds were used to purchase bottled water; clothing; personal care items such as soap, shampoo, and toothpaste; and cleaning supplies such as brooms, dish soap, and disinfectant, among other items.

IRG regional consultant Ricardo Berganza helped coordinate the USAID/OFDA response with representatives of the Government of Guatemala in Guatemala City.

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