

## OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (USAID/OFDA)

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA

### USAID/OFDA Supports the Development of the Central American Firefighters Competencies Manual

On August 4, the Central American Confederation of Firefighter Corps (CCBICA) launched the first Central American Firefighters Competencies Manual, which was designed with USAID/OFDA's support through an 18-month, collaborative process among the nine CCBICA-affiliated national firefighter corps. The launch event was held at the CCBICA F-5 Operations Center, located in Heredia, Costa Rica, with the participation of firefighter corps delegations from every Central American country.

The competencies manual, which defines the essential knowledge and skills required to serve as a firefighter in the region, aims to harmonize the capabilities of fire departments in Central America to respond to the most common emergency situations with the same practices and service standards. The document is composed of two volumes and 24 chapters that cover a variety of subjects, including vehicular rescue, fire control and extinguishing, collapsed structure rescue, liquefied petroleum gas-related emergencies, and the Incident Command System.

Speaking during the launch event, USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist (DRMS)

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USAID/OFDA DRMSs Fernando Calderón (left) and Manuel Ramírez (right) provided technical assistance to create the manual. Photo courtesy of CCBICA



During the onsite workshop, students visited an area near Manizales that was covered by a debris flow from Nevado del Ruiz Volcano. Photo by Jacqueline Montoya, USAID/OFDA

### USAID/OFDA Supports Graduate Certificate on Local Development, Land-Use and Disaster Risk Management

In late July, a group of 14 university professors and professionals from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Panama completed the USAID/OFDA-funded Graduate Certificate Program on Local Development, Land-Use, and Disaster Risk Management Planning. The Florida International University (FIU) Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Program—supported by USAID/OFDA since 2008—launched the certificate program in October 2016 with the participation of Argentina's Cuyo University, National University of Colombia, Chile University, and Mexico's Quintana Roo University.

Led by professors from the five participating universities, the post-graduate certificate program consists of six online courses that focus on disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change; DRR and urban planning and governance; planning for land-use, local development, and risk management; and development and planning policies in Latin America.

FIU DRR Program Director Juan Pablo Sarmiento noted, "This academic program provides students the knowledge, methodologies, and tools needed to address

territorial insecurity in human settlements throughout Latin America, with an emphasis on DRR processes and climate change adaptation."

After completing the eight-month online program, the group of students participated in a four-day onsite workshop in Manizales, Colombia, organized with the academic direction of the National University of Colombia's Environmental Studies Institute to complement the online courses. The culminating practicum, which was held from July 26 to 29, took place at a timely moment in Manizales, as the city's 12-year land-use plan was going through its final approval phase. This enabled course participants to learn directly from local technical and municipal actors about topics and legal arguments that must be considered to incorporate DRR in a city's land-use and local development policies, as well as how to ensure the sustainability of an urban model. They also learned about the mechanisms used by Colombia's National Disaster Risk Management System to incorporate DRR in cities' land-use and development plans. Additionally, they participated in an actual case study in which different sectors, institutions, and communities are working together

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Fernando Calderon, who worked with DRMS and School Safety Consultant Manuel Ramirez to provide technical assistance during the manual's design process, expressed to the audience, "This manual is an example of integration, passion, and particularly, of humbleness. It demonstrates that even though each Central American organization has a different culture and way of doing things, it is possible to work together and reach an agreement. On behalf of USAID/OFDA, I would like to express our congratulations, gratitude, and continuous support to all those who devoted their knowledge, efforts, and dedication to create this manual."

SRA Tim Callaghan said, "I would like to extend my congratulations and admiration to CCBICA for the development of this competency manual. This document shows the spirit of collaboration, passion, and unity that exists among Central American fire departments and their interest to provide the best service to the region's communities."



CCBICA President Héctor Chavez (center) hands over a plaque to USAID/OFDA DRMS Fernando Calderón as an expression of gratitude for USAID/OFDA's support during the manual's design process. Photo courtesy of CCBICA

## USAID/OFDA Donates Equipment to Guatemala's Emergency Operation Center

On August 10, USAID/OFDA, through the Central American Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters (CEPREDENAC), donated 10 network terminals and one server to Guatemala's National Coordination for Disaster Management (CONRED). The equipment, which was installed in CONRED's National Emergency Operations Center, was donated within the framework of CEPREDENAC's Strengthening Institutional Capabilities for Disaster Risk Management Program, supported by USAID/OFDA.

Since 2016, USAID/OFDA has supported CEPREDENAC to help strengthen the capabilities and standardize procedures across national disaster risk management agencies in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.



CEPREDENAC Administrative Director Juan Pablo Cambronero (right) delivers equipment to CONRED Executive Secretary Sergio García Cabañas (left). Photo by Ricardo Berganza, USAID/OFDA

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to incorporate DRR and environmental management into land-use and local development processes.

Rodrigo Sepulveda, a student from Chile who participated in the certificate program said, "Our visit to Manizales represented a great opportunity to observe the process of land-use planning in a city, and see how the academic sector, government entities, and the community work together."

USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor (SRA) Tim Callaghan commented, "Land-use planning is considered one of the best DRR practices and it is at the core of our training and technical assistance programs. By incorporating DRR in land-use policies, communities can construct more sustainable land developments and reduce the likelihood of houses being built on hazard-prone sites."

Since 2008, USAID/OFDA has supported strategic higher education partner FIU to train new generations of professionals in Latin America, including urban planners, architects, builders, and politicians, to incorporate DRR into national plans for disaster risk management.

The next graduate certificate program begins on September 11, 2017. Professionals interested in participating can find more information, and complete the application form before August 31, at this link: <http://drr.fiu.edu/news/2017/certificado-en-planificacin-para-el-desarrollo-local-ordenamiento-territorial-gestin-del-riesgo/>.



Students observe a scale model of the hydraulic and slopes stability works that are now being built in Manizales. Photo courtesy of Juan Pablo Sarmiento, FIU

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