



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign
Disaster Assistance

Regional Office for Latin America
and the Caribbean



WHO WE ARE

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has a regional office in San José, Costa Rica, and a field office in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to ensure that disaster experts are ready to immediately deploy to disaster-affected areas throughout the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region when needed.

USAID/OFDA also supports a network of disaster risk management specialists throughout the LAC region who continuously monitor disaster risks, coordinate technical assistance and training programs, and remain on standby to deploy during emergencies. In addition, USAID/OFDA maintains an on-call roster of approximately 400 local surge consultants in 30 countries who can be activated quickly to expand the capabilities and reach of USAID/OFDA assessment and response teams.

DISASTER RESPONSE

For more than 30 years, the USAID/OFDA regional office has responded to a variety of disasters in the LAC region, including droughts, earthquakes, fires, floods, storms, and volcanic eruptions. Since January 2007, the regional office has responded to more than 90 disasters, the majority of which were hydrometeorological events, including floods, tropical storms, and hurricanes. USAID/OFDA disaster experts work in close coordination with host government and disaster management agencies, as well as with the local and international humanitarian community, to save lives.

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Unplanned urbanization and population growth have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities in the LAC region, and natural disasters have grown in size and scope. The USAID/OFDA regional office supports disaster risk reduction programs that help mitigate disaster risk, prepare vulnerable communities for disasters before they strike, and reduce the social and economic impact of emergencies. USAID/OFDA supports a range of disaster risk reduction activities in the LAC region, including:

- Early warning systems that notify people before a tsunami hits or a volcano erupts, giving them time to move out of harm's way.
- Technical experts in areas such as urban search and rescue, the Incident Command System (ICS), emergency operations center management, disaster preparedness, forest fire control and prevention, and disaster risk reduction education. These experts provide technical assistance in preparedness and response strategic planning processes, policies and protocols, and developing disaster risk management programs. USAID/OFDA also supports the U.S. Geological Survey's Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), which helps scientists monitor volcanic activity, assess hazards, generate eruption forecasts, and develop early warning systems.
- Training programs—comprising more than 20 courses—that build the capacity of local and national entities in disaster management, first response, and disaster risk reduction. Established in 1989, the regional training program has trained more than 85,000 people and certified approximately 7,500 instructors in 32 countries. Many of these USAID/OFDA-trained individuals currently conduct trainings in their own countries using local resources, while others have assumed leadership roles in national disaster management institutions throughout the region.

PUBLICATIONS

The USAID/OFDA Regional Office for LAC produces numerous information products and publications, including:

- Aide Mémoire of the ICS Latin American Forum
- Aide Mémoire of the Latin American Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction in Higher Education
- Aide Mémoire of the Latin American Forum on Integrated Fire Management
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Community Development Practices
- Guide for Implementation of ICS in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Latin American and Caribbean Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction at the Local Level
- Mémoires of the Curricular Foundations of Disaster Risk Reduction Workshop
- Risk Management and Education, an Experience to Share