

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

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



USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard sits with families in Burkina Faso during a trip to help evaluate needs in response to the food insecurity and complex emergency in Africa's Sahel region in July 2012. Courtesy of Julie Leonard, USAID/OFDA

### Colleagues throughout Latin America and the Caribbean Remember Julie Leonard, Humanitarian Extraordinaire

Colleagues from the USAID/OFDA regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), national governments, first response agencies, humanitarian organizations, communities, and friends throughout the region are remembering and honoring USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard, a dedicated disaster management professional who passed away on April 28 after a brief battle with cancer.

USAID/OFDA sends condolences to her family.

A true humanitarian at heart, Julie worked passionately and tirelessly in virtually every country in the LAC region during her nearly two decades with the USAID/OFDA regional team, which included 13 years of dedicated, exclusive work as a USAID/OFDA regional advisor. Her amiable personality and professional perseverance are remembered by those whose lives she touched, as everyone grapples with the loss of this incredible woman.

“Today marks a sad day for the USAID/OFDA family, as we have lost one of our own. Julie was a true humanitarian and was completely dedicated to her work,” said USAID/OFDA Director Jeremy Konyndyk.

USAID/OFDA Deputy Director Carol Chan noted that Julie “was passionate about helping the poorest of the poor and gave 110 percent all the time... She was responsible over her career for saving millions of lives and reducing the suffering of millions. She made a difference!”

“Everyone in the San José regional office and throughout the LAC region will miss Julie greatly. She was a key part of our team for many years and we hope to continue to carry out her legacy for years to come,” said USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor Tim Callaghan.

“We must give thanks for every day that we could live with her, for all the lessons and smiles she shared, and give thanks for every life that Julie helped save,” said Colombia-based USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist (DRMS) Jacqueline Montoya.

Jamaica-based DRMS Audrey Mullings agreed. “We remember her for her kindness and thoughtfulness as a wonderfully caring human being, and in the field of disaster management for her professionalism, dedication, and interest in the region.”

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### A Distinguished Career In Disaster Management

USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Julie Leonard worked closely with the LAC regional team since 1998, participating in responses to Hurricane Mitch in Nicaragua and Honduras as well as to the effects of the El Niño phenomenon in Peru.

She became a regional advisor in September 2002 and staffed the LAC sub-regional office in Barbados until January 2007. Julie was deeply involved in one of USAID/OFDA's first large disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs with the Caribbean Development Bank and championed other regional initiatives. She worked closely with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency to move the comprehensive disaster management agenda forward throughout the region.

Julie was particularly committed to building capacity in Haiti. In the early 2000s, Julie made important contacts with the Direction de la Protection Civile and first responder agencies, overseeing the commencement of the USAID/OFDA training program in Haiti. She served as the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) leader managing the response to the devastation caused by four major storms in Haiti in 2008. Julie also spent

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Julie smiles during her retirement party at the USAID/OFDA/LAC regional office in September 2015. Photo by Margarita Franco, USAID/OFDA



Regional Advisor Julie Leonard (right), with Lorna Inniss of Barbados' Coastal Zone Management Unit and an Australian scientist at the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) in 2006, reviews how seismic activity is monitored, and how tsunami warning messages are generated and disseminated. Courtesy of the PTWC

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Following the news of her death, condolences came pouring into USAID/OFDA from near and far.

“Costa Rica and the entire region mourns the loss of this functionary; we know the qualities that characterized her dedication to the themes that engage both the National Commission for Risk Prevention and Disaster Response (CNE) and USAID/OFDA,” wrote CNE President Ivan Brenes.

From Peru, Luis René Vallenás, Deputy Director of Operations Management from the Response Division of the National Civil Defense Institute (INDECI), noted that Julie was a distinguished humanitarian “who visited Peru on countless occasions and demonstrated her great vocation for service and commitment to those most in need in our country. We wish to express our profound and heartfelt condolences to her family and her colleagues at USAID for this irreparable loss.”

“Julie was a role model... Her patience and wicked sense of humor made dealing with all sorts of natural disasters less

of the horror than it could have been,” commented Mary Ellen T. Gilroy, Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados, from 2004 to 2007.

In the Caribbean, Julie will be remembered for her work to strengthen early warning systems for tsunamis and other coastal hazards, as well as community preparedness efforts “down to the last mile,” a subject she was always happy to discuss with anyone who was interested.

“I can’t tell you the number of meetings I have attended where people would ask ‘how’s Julie doing’ or ‘when is Julie coming back?’” said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor John Kimbrough, who oversees USAID/OFDA disaster response and risk reduction activities in the Caribbean.

For everyone who knew Julie, the knowledge that she is gone is a sad and somber reality that is offset only slightly by the fact that she lived a deeply dedicated, purposeful existence that improved the lives of countless people around the world. She will be sorely missed, but her legacy lives on.



Julie with USAID/OFDA staff and residents of Cali, Colombia. Courtesy of Jacqueline Montoya, USAID/OFDA

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nearly all of 2009 overseeing USAID/OFDA grants and coordinating with USAID/Haiti to develop a major recovery and reconstruction plan. When the January 2010 earthquake struck, Julie was on the first flight into Haiti and played a major role in the initial response programming.

During her later years with the USAID/OFDA regional office, Julie focused on DRR programming in Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Andean countries. She also served as the regional focal point for tsunami warning system development as well as for the incorporation of climate change adaptation into DRR efforts.

Outside of the LAC region, Julie served on a DART in West Darfur, Sudan, in 2005, as part of the Sahel Assessment Team in 2012, and on the Ebola DART in Guinea in 2015. After departing the LAC team and transitioning to the USAID/OFDA Support Relief Group in October 2015, she deployed to Nairobi, Kenya, where she assisted with the ongoing USAID/OFDA Ebola response until she fell ill earlier this year.

Prior to joining USAID/OFDA, Julie worked both as an independent consultant and for various non-governmental organizations, including a stint as country director for Save the Children/Canada’s office in Peru. Her consultancies focused on the development of children’s rights programming and general development themes.

Julie held a Bachelor’s degree in Legal Studies from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a Master’s degree in International Studies from the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.



A respected humanitarian professional, Julie also developed close personal relationships with individuals with whom she worked. Photo by Robert Dunsmore, USAID/OFDA

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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