

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

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



Participants from the GoH and the Director of the National Disaster Office take part in the USAID/OFDA-funded school safety training program. Photo by Joseph E. Celestin.

USAID/OFDA Bolsters School Safety in the LAC Region

For nearly 25 years, USAID/OFDA, through the Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP), has been leading efforts to bolster disaster risk reduction (DRR) in schools and universities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The USAID/OFDA RDAP School Safety Program, which includes technical assistance and training activities, has helped hundreds of primary, secondary, and higher education institutes in the region become safer places for students and staff and a place to learn about disaster preparedness and prevention. In addition, the program has helped governments and communities from high-risk areas integrate DRR into schools' and universities' curricula and develop school safety decrees, policies, and national plans.

“The program has caused a huge impact in the region. The steps taken to strengthen schools’ resilience and preparedness will help save thousands of young lives, plus the lessons kids learn at school are taken home every day and the education continues,” said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Sidney Velado, who oversees the RDAP Program.

The program’s cornerstone, the School Safety Course, has been imparted and adopted by thousands of schools in more than 15 countries of the LAC region, helping them become better prepared to respond to emergencies. The course was adapted for use in the English-speaking nations of the Caribbean in 2008.

Both public and private sector actors have adopted the training program and materials in their efforts to reduce risk. For example, in Haiti this past October, a joint event took place between the Government of Haiti (GoH) Directorate for Civil Protection (DPC) and the GoH Ministry of Education to educate 15 trainers in school safety. This was the first event for public sector trainers, following an earlier training for teachers in schools sponsored by the DIGICELL Foundation (a private

Continues on page 2



Students from the St. John’s Anglican School Safety Club march to generate preparation awareness in their community. Photo courtesy of Tashy James.



Screenshot of the online course that will be available to the public beginning in February 2019. Photo by USAID/OFDA.

USAID/OFDA to Offer ICS Course Online

Beginning in February 2019, USAID/OFDA will begin offering—in Spanish—the online course ‘Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS)’ to the public. The course has been developed by USAID/OFDA to give the public access to ICS knowledge and tools including the development of coordination procedures, protocols, and emergency planning.

Since 2002, USAID/OFDA has offered a specialized ICS consulting program in the LAC region that aims to strengthen emergency management systems and enhance first responders’ capacity to respond to emergencies. USAID/OFDA promotes and supports the regional adoption and implementation of ICS in the LAC region as a standard incident management model, as it can be used to efficiently manage small or large-scale emergencies by integrating equipment, facilities, staff, processes, and communication under a common organizational structure and language.

USAID/OFDA ICS Thematic Specialist Luisa Alfaro commented “We expect to have a lot of participation from first responders to the course, as they have been asking us to develop it for years. I also expect a high level of interest from the private sector and large public organizations.”

Participants who complete the 16-hour course will receive a certification of completion and pre-enrollment is open now.

[Pre-Register Here](#)



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School Safety continued from page 1

entity) that used USAID/OFDA-created materials. These trainers from Haiti’s South, Nippes, and Northeast departments are part of a GoH school safety training program that will eventually cover all of Haiti’s 10 departments.

On the island of Grenada, Natasha James Munro received training as a school safety instructor/facilitator in 2010. She started school safety activities in her School the St. John’s Anglican School in 2010 by establishing a school safety committee and a corresponding school safety club for the school’s student body. The club provides students with the concepts and tools necessary to reduce disaster risks, foster emergency preparedness, and assist in implementing the school’s emergency response plan. The club recently celebrated their anniversary and had a ceremony in which they recognized members of the club with various awards.

In addition, a number of first response institutions in the region, including the Colombian National Firefighters Corps and the Colombian Civil Defense, have officially adopted the course as part of their training programs to ensure effective responses to emergencies in schools.

“The School Safety Course has served as an entry point for USAID/OFDA to work with public education ministries and universities throughout the region to promote not only emergency preparedness but also DRR in general. Through the course, governments and university leaders have seen the need to incorporate DRR into planning processes and policies and university thinking and curricula,” explained USAID/OFDA DRR in Education Thematic Specialist Manuel Ramírez, who coordinates the RDAP education component.

“USAID/OFDA is helping our partners to develop a culture of disaster risk awareness and preparedness in schools and universities throughout the region. And through the implementation of risk reduction plans and the facilitating of simulation exercises, students, teachers, and school administrators are much better prepared when disaster strikes,” said USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor Phil Gelman.



Participants of the School Safety Program receive hands-on training, techniques, and strategies that can be immediately implemented in their schools. Photo by Rose Luce Cadot USAID/OFDA.