



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

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Bids Fond Farewell to Julie Leonard

After thirteen years of dedicated, exclusive work with the USAID/OFDA Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Julie Leonard is leaving San José to begin a new chapter in her life. Since joining the team full-time as a regional advisor (RA), Julie has worked tirelessly and passionately in nearly every country in the region.

Despite thinking she would never work for the U.S. Government (USG), Julie has contributed to strengthening and maintaining relationships between the USG and governments throughout the region. Her amiable personality and professional dedication will be remembered and missed as she embarks on her newest adventure.

Among other tasks, Julie staffed the LAC sub-regional office in Barbados from 2002 to 2007 and served as the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) leader for the Haiti storms response in 2008. 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.

Julie was instrumental in promoting DRR in the Caribbean. She was deeply involved in one of USAID/OFDA's first large DRR programs with the Caribbean Development Bank and championed other regional initiatives. She worked closely with Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) to move the Comprehensive Disaster Management agenda forward throughout the region.

USAID/OFDA RA John Kimbrough commented, "I can't tell you the number of meetings I have been to where people ask 'how's Julie doing'



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USAID/OFDA RA Julie Leonard (center) helps take measurements during a post-tsunami survey by USG and Government of El Salvador authorities following the August 26 offshore earthquake and tsunami that affected El Salvador coastal areas.

or 'when is Julie coming back'; she is so beloved throughout the Caribbean".

Julie was particularly committed to building capacity in Haiti. In the early 2000s, Julie made important contacts with the Direction de Protection Civile and first-responder agencies, and oversaw the commencement of a USAID/OFDA training program. She led the USAID/OFDA response to the devastation caused by four major storms in Haiti in 2008, and spent nearly all of 2009 overseeing USAID/OFDA grants and coordinating with USAID/Haiti to develop a major 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.

Julie's latest area of focus has been DRR programming in Paraguay, Uruguay, and the Andean countries. She is also the USAID/OFDA regional focal point for tsunami warning system development, as well as for the incorporation of climate change adaptation into disaster risk reduction efforts.

Julie will continue to be part of USAID/OFDA from her new home in Florida as a member of the Support Relief Group. This warm-weather destination is appropriate as Julie has noted that she does not think she could stand the cold of her native Massachusetts after so many years in the LAC region.

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



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Julie Leonard and women in Burkina Faso, during her TDY to Africa in 2012.



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USAID/OFDA SRA Tim Callaghan, RA Julie Leonard, FIU International Hurricane Research Center Associate Director Erik Salna, and RDAP Technical Manager Fabián Arellano in front of the "Wall of Wind" at FIU.