



**U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

***LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN –
Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation Programs***

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2004

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Background

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are vulnerable to a range of natural hazards, including earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, tsunamis, landslides, volcanoes, and drought. At times, El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) meteorological events, as well as poor land use management, exacerbate the effects of some of these hazards. In addition, disasters triggered by environmental or technological incidents, such as forest fires, chemical and oil spills, and transportation accidents, pose a potential threat to the LAC region. Some LAC countries are also at risk for complex emergency disasters involving civil unrest, which often result from political or economic instability.

Recognizing these vulnerabilities, USAID/OFDA supports disaster preparedness and mitigation programs aimed at reducing the loss of human life and lessening economic impacts caused by disasters. These programs may include risk identification, prioritization, and reduction, as well as post-disaster recovery and short-term rehabilitation projects. In the LAC region, USAID/OFDA also promotes local and national self-sufficiency in disaster preparedness and management. USAID/OFDA's programs build upon and strengthen the capacity of established national and regional disaster management institutions, many of which have proven the ability to meet most emergency needs after an event.

USAID/OFDA's commitment to the development of risk management practices in LAC is best illustrated through the Risk Management Training Program (RMTP) established in 1989. Over the years, USAID/OFDA has adapted the RMTP to meet the increased levels of capacity in LAC by changing from a strictly instructional approach to a focus on technical assistance in terms of planning, strengthening, and centralizing the role of national organizations in disaster management. USAID/OFDA's technical assistance also enhances local and regional abilities to respond to emergency needs by increasing awareness and understanding of mitigation activities and encouraging intra- and inter-government coordination in all risk management initiatives.

In addition to the RMTP, USAID/OFDA supports the development of risk management capacities in LAC through a number of grants and programs in the region. In FY 2004, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$3.9 million for ongoing disaster preparedness and mitigation projects in the LAC region.

USAID/OFDA/LAC Preparedness and Mitigation Assistance

Regional Programs and Grants

- **Risk Management Training Program (RMTP)**: The RMTP is a multi-course program with instruction in disaster management concepts, training methodology, and technical disciplines. The program also provides technical assistance, which includes guidance for strategic planning and organizational development processes, facilitation in the development and evaluation of national and local risk management training programs, support for organizations to implement inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, and assistance in the preparation of local, departmental, and national emergency action plans. The RMTP began in Latin America in May 1989 and expanded in 1991 to include the Caribbean countries. Since the program's inception, USAID/OFDA has trained more than 34,000 participants and certified more than 2,100 active instructors in 26 countries. Many of these USAID/OFDA-trained individuals have assumed leadership roles in national disaster management organizations and gone on to conduct training in their own countries using their resources. Since 1998, USAID/OFDA has contracted the International Resources Group (IRG) to implement the RMTP. In addition, the contract with IRG provides USAID/OFDA with a network of

disaster assistance experts located throughout the LAC region who are available to deploy to disaster sites, perform damage assessments, and provide guidance on disaster preparedness and mitigation activities. Total funding to IRG since 1998 amounts to \$20,339,332..... **FY 04 \$2,911,441**

- **Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Program:** From 2003 to 2007, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), with financial support from USAID/OFDA, is providing technical assistance to increase the capacity of health professionals to respond to disasters in the LAC region. PAHO is working to increase and improve advocacy, technical information services, and human resources training in health, environment, and all related sectors. Specific PAHO activities include production and dissemination of training materials and health guidelines, support for developing building codes for health and water facilities, and health surveillance for local communities in the immediate post-disaster period. Total USAID/OFDA funding since the inception of the program is \$1,000,000.....**FY 04 \$500,000**
- **Private Sector Involvement in Disaster Assistance:** USAID/OFDA is supporting a two-year pilot initiative by the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) to promote private sector engagement and contributions to emergency management activities before, during, and after disaster events in the LAC region. This program will bring emergency management training to private enterprises, as well as create awareness among businesses regarding disaster preparedness and mitigation. PADF will also help businesses to develop disaster management strategies that encourage quick mobilization of private sector resources. In FY 2004, USAID/OFDA provided \$430,513 toward the implementation of this project.....**FY 04 \$430,513**
- **International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG):** INSARAG is an inter-governmental network established in 1991 by the United Nations and member groups to promote collaboration on urban search and rescue and related disaster response issues. Members include countries and organizations with international urban search and rescue capacity as well as governments and organizations of disaster-prone countries. USAID/OFDA has collaborated with INSARAG by providing financial support for the annual meetings of INSARAG’s Americas group and by funding the translation from English to Spanish of field manuals and guidelines. In addition, USAID/OFDA’s Senior Regional Advisor for the LAC region currently serves as Chairman of INSARAG’s Americas group. In FY 2004, USAID/OFDA provided \$150,000 in support of INSARAG activities in LAC.....**FY 04 \$150,000**
- **Assessment of Risk Management in LAC Region Higher Education:** This project, implemented by Florida International University (FIU), is designed to capture the current state of disaster, emergency, or risk management instruction in higher education institutions in the LAC region. The program involves the collection of data on types of programs, requirements for matriculation, curricula, syllabi, faculty profiles, and modes of instruction. In FY 2003, USAID/OFDA provided \$51,455 to FIU to complete this comprehensive assessment by the end of 2004.
- **Forest Fire Equipment Donation:** Complementary to ongoing specialized forest fire prevention and management courses offered as part of the RMTP, USAID/OFDA in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service provided equipment valued at \$448,844 to help first responders in Latin American countries combat forest fires. USAID/OFDA donated the equipment to Ministries of the Environment and Institutes of National Parks and Forests, as well as to firefighter brigades in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela. The equipment included rakes, pumps, fire extinguishers, canteens, first aid kits, helmets, gloves, and other protective clothing.
- **Strengthening of Volcano Monitoring Efforts:** USAID/OFDA supports the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) that provides technical assistance to volcano monitoring organizations throughout the world. In Mexico and Central America, USGS/VDAP provides technical assistance to the Centro Nacional de Prevención de Desastres and

the Observatorio Vulcanológico de Colima in Mexico; as well as to the Instituto Nacional de Sismología, Vulcanología, Meteorología, e Hidrología and the Coordinadora Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres in Guatemala; the Instituto Nicaragüense de Estudios Territoriales in Nicaragua, the Servicio Nacional de Estudios Territoriales in El Salvador, and the Observatorio Vulcanológico y Sismológico in Costa Rica. In South America, USGS/VDAP partners with Ecuador’s Instituto Geofísico and Escuela Politécnica Nacional, Colombia’s Observatorio Vulcanológico y Sismológico de Manizales, and Peru’s Universidad Nacional de San Agustín and Instituto Geofísico. In the Caribbean, USGS/VDAP works with the British Geological Survey in Montserrat and the Institute de Physique du Globe de Paris in Martinique. USGS/VDAP assistance training includes how to conduct risk assessments, development of early warning plans, and transfer of seismic monitoring equipment and technology. Funding for activities in the LAC region is part of a world-wide USAID/OFDA initiative with the USGS.

Caribbean Programs and Grants

- Disaster Mitigation Facility for the Caribbean (DMFC): As part of a five-year program from September 2001 to September 2006, USAID/OFDA is providing a total of \$3.0 million to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to establish a Disaster Mitigation Facility. The program supports activities that promote sustainable development through reduced risk and losses from natural hazards in the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean. In addition, the DMFC will work to fully incorporate natural hazard considerations into new development projects financed by the CDB.

Total USAID/OFDA FY 2004 LAC Preparedness and Mitigation Assistance \$3,991,954