

# IRG Project Profiles



USAID/OFDA shelter in Arequipa, Peru

## DISASTER AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, flooding, drought and tsunamis, and man-made hazards can cause devastating economic and social impacts for countries with limited risk management capabilities. International Resources Group provides technical assistance through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to countries in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region to reduce their vulnerability to disasters.

Working in collaboration with in-country USAID offices, U.S. embassies, and local disaster management entities, IRG provides the full spectrum of services in preparedness, mitigation, training, and risk management to increase a country's own self-sufficiency in risk management.

### Activities

Under this project, IRG guides, manages, and implements seven major activities for OFDA/LAC: planning, training, mitigation, technical assistance, response, monitoring and evaluation, and management.

**Planning.** IRG prioritizes activities and systematically updates implementation plans for all program components, consistent with the region's changing needs. Planning activities continue during contract implementation as staff, consultants, and trainers participate in regional and sub-regional meetings. IRG

Region: LAC  
Sector: Relief & Reconstruction  
Duration: June 1998–May 2008  
Client: USAID/OFDA

administrative and financial staff, based in San José, Costa Rica, help OFDA/LAC prepare annual work

plans and budgets; establish accounting controls; and procure and maintain supplies and equipment for USAID.

**Training.** Working closely with regional and national disaster managers and practitioners, IRG full-time regional staff and consultants analyze each country's training capacity, identify regional and country-specific training needs, develop and test new courses, conduct regional and national workshops and courses, serve as instructors and subject matter experts, update course materials, and provide logistical support for training events. IRG is also developing a core group of resident instructors to carry out national training programs beyond the life of the project.

**Mitigation.** IRG has helped identify, develop, and implement pilot mitigation activities throughout the region. For example, the Emergency Operations Management and Control initiative, which responded to Hurricanes Mitch and Georges, was undertaken in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Costa

### Selected Training Courses

- ◆ Forest Fire Training Program for Central America (COPCIF)
- ◆ Hazmat First Responder Course (PRIMAP)
- ◆ Search and Rescue in Collapsed Structures Course (BREC)
- ◆ Advanced First Responder Course (APAA)
- ◆ Incident Command Course (SICIE)
- ◆ Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis Course (EDAN)
- ◆ Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis for Decision Makers Course (EDAN-TD)
- ◆ Training for Instructors Course (CPI)
- ◆ Disaster Management Course (APD)
- ◆ School Safety Course (CUSE)
- ◆ Training for Instructors Course (TFI)
- ◆ Damage Assessment and Needs Analysis (DANA)
- ◆ Introduction to Disaster Management (IDM)
- ◆ Shelters and Shelter Management (SSM)

Rica. IRG supports activities related to creating the Pan-American Climate Information System and implementing mitigation measures to reduce region-wide vulnerabilities resulting from El Niño/Southern Oscillation impacts. Working through the Central America Mitigation Initiative, IRG developed a conceptual framework and a plan for mitigation and preparedness interventions. IRG led post-earthquake housing construction workshops in Colombia; a post-flood program in Venezuela to reduce risks in educational institutions at all levels; and a regional program strategy for the prevention and control of forest fires.

**Technical Assistance.** IRG provides strategic planning services and technical assistance to host-country governments and disaster-related organizations. IRG's customized strategy for risk management—Plan País—addresses specific country requirements based on a detailed diagnostic of the disaster potential, the current risk-management structure and capacity, and the political framework surrounding emergency operations. This blueprint has been operational in 18 Latin American countries and eight independent island states in the Caribbean since June 2000. IRG also reviews, revises, and tests countries' National Emergency Plans and assists U.S. Embassies in writing and customizing their Disaster Relief Plans.

**Response.** IRG assists in needs and damage assessments; recommends appropriate assistance and oversight of U.S. government-donated, disaster-response funds and supplies; and cooperates with U.S. Embassies in determining the best plan of action for U.S. government disaster assistance. In the course of disaster response, IRG also helps identify post-disaster mitigation opportunities.

**Monitoring and Evaluation.** IRG's Plan País allows for continual monitoring of a country's vulnerabilities and capabilities so that modifications

can be made throughout the program without delaying or jeopardizing implementation. IRG's monitoring and evaluation system for training programs and resource personnel involves evaluating each course and all technical assistance activities for content, effectiveness, and applicability. The evaluation component allows gauging the practitioner's views on the relevance of training received compared to actual performance during response at the disaster site, immediately following the event and/or once rehabilitation is underway. IRG's instructor database identifies and catalogs every instructor trained by OFDA/LAC over the last ten years.

## Key Accomplishments

IRG successfully combines its work in strengthening national emergency and disaster management systems, identifying mitigation opportunities, and developing the risk-management concept among disaster agencies while supporting timely disaster response interventions. For example, subsequent to IRG's disaster response efforts after Hurricanes Mitch and Georges, IRG reprogrammed funds to design and carry out the Central America Assessment of the Central American Mitigation Initiative. This comprehensive assessment, posted to the USAID Web site, served as a reference for other OFDA Annual Program Statements. Concurrently, IRG completed ahead of schedule a previously planned regional risk-management activity to be responsive to the client's priorities.

## IRG Disaster Responses

- ◆ Hurricane Mitch (1998) in four Central American countries
- ◆ Hurricane Georges (1998) in the Dominican Republic
- ◆ Earthquake (1999) in Colombia
- ◆ Flooding (1999) in Venezuela
- ◆ Hurricane Keith (2000) in Belize
- ◆ Earthquake (2001) in El Salvador
- ◆ Food shortage (2002) in Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua