

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Since its establishment, the USAID/OFDA/LAC Program has carried out the mandate entrusted to it by the American People. Expressed in its mission, to save lives, ease human suffering and reduce the social and economic impact stemming from disasters all around the world.

While fulfilling this mission with increased determination and resources, we continue to help provide assistance to the communities and countries that request it and who suffer the consequences of adverse events.

Staff training before the adverse event takes place, has been a tool in addition to the help we provide when disasters strike. For the past two decades, USAID/OFDA/LAC has promoted the improvement of institutional capabilities, and staff skills, in Latin America and the Caribbean region in order to respond effectively to the different problems and challenges they have to face in order to reach their goals of humanitarian assistance.

With this training, we have been able to observe, within the countries we have supported and worked with, an increased capability as a direct result of the organization, knowledge and skills they are acquiring. The staff responsible for handling adverse events, the relief teams and the educational centers themselves, are becoming more efficient in assisting those affected.

However, we have taken an additional step in our management strategy, preventing risks from materializing in communities, or if already present, promoting efforts to mitigate them. For that purpose, a department dedicated to the education of disaster risk management has been created with the objective of promoting and supporting educational and security procedures in educational institutions.

In conjunction with other institutions, the educational process we have supported has been gradually eradicating the culture of disaster by replacing it with one of risk reduction, strengthening the ability to be prepared when disaster strikes and defining strategies for recovery. This process starts early in the students' lives.

The children have been learning the true dimensions of disaster risk management and its commitment to security at school, at home and within the community.

Through these efforts, we now offer this book to all educational communities K-12 and in colleges and universities, with the objective of disseminating relevant facts in this field and presenting experiences that should be kept in mind in order to develop a culture of prevention.

Timothy Callaghan
Regional Coordinator
USAID/OFDA/LAC

Michael Curry
Project General Manager RDAP/
IRG/USAID/OFDA/LAC

FROM TRAINING TO EDUCATION

The suggested route

In the eighties 1980S, the USAID / OFDA / LAC Program took on the challenge of promoting an innovative methodology for the training of the region's aid agencies' staff in order to increase the preparation of the first response teams and the brigades responsible for emergency and disaster assistance.

To improve their performance, the Instructors Training Course, known as TFI and whose methodological backbone is based on the Interactive Teaching Method, was designed and validated in 1989.

After being implemented for more than twenty years, the TFI has supported the creation of a common platform for countries to teach higher quality techniques and procedures, which are, for instance, used by firefighters, rescue teams, and members of other rescue groups.

Furthermore, it has been possible to promote a greater commitment to the quality of education in academies and in response organization schools.

Encouraged by the success achieved with the TFI and continuously responding to the current training demands, USAID / OFDA / LAC broadens its contribution in this field, promoting and supporting the design of new courses on various topics related to the preparation for responding in emergency cases

The positive outlook of the USAID / OFDA / LAC contribution, and the rising need for training has increased the number of courses up to sixteen available within the OFDA / LAC Training Portfolio.

We are currently not only designing courses for classroom settings, but are also designing virtual courses scheduled to be launched in the near future.

In addition, we are gradually achieving the goal of having our courses implemented by the specialized international agencies.

In 2001, USAID / OFDA / LAC added the School Safety Course (SSC), designed by the Program of Emergency Preparedness from the Partners of the Americas Association, to its portfolio. During that same year, SCC materials were reviewed and updated and the first groups of men and women instructors were trained. Because of this, its content became known to and implemented by all levels and types of formal education in 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

With its implementation, not only were the direct objectives pursued by the SCC, aimed at training staff of educational institutions and response agencies to establish security plans in schools, colleges and universities achieved, but the inclusion of our main focus, which we now call disaster risk management, was also achieved.

It should be noted that the education sector had previously been practically uninvolved with this issue as it was believed that emergencies "were a matter for doctors, aid workers and donors". It was believed that they were responsible for prevention.

With a perspective relevant to the needs and the reality of the countries' education sectors the USAID / OFDA / LAC Office of Education, has been promoting initiatives pertaining to syllabi in relation to the inclusion of disaster risk management in study plans and curricula to ensure that students in formal education, including college students, become knowledgeable in and commit to, risk reduction and are able to efficiently comply with the task of aiding in adverse events and recovery.

Based on the experience acquired, the Office of Education developed an approach method for the subject, which has been tested and is continuously evolving.

The method is based on three core themes for the development of the subject in educational institutions: internal security, students training in disaster risk management and a commitment on behalf of educational institutions and the education sector with regard to risk reduction, adverse events management and the recovery of the country and its communities.

The model is being used and adapted to the specific realities of each country and institution, as required. In any case, this model, as a guide, has been a success as it has clarified what is expected that every school does and achieves in disaster risk management, beyond its own particularities.

Tangible achievements are currently being experienced in the region, which are beyond the quantitative estimate, as they cannot be monitored from an office due to the extensiveness of the region, the growing number of institutions that are getting involved and, at the same time, due to the changes experienced by students and educators themselves.

For this reason, USAID / OFDA / LAC has decided to include, in this book, some of the existing significant experiences we have had the opportunity to promote and support.

It was a pleasure to commend Mr. Manuel Ramirez, the USAID / OFDA / LAC Office of Education disaster risk management "catalyst" the task of: guiding the book's design, writing the referential framework and facilitating the systematization process of the selected success stories.

Sidney Velado
Regional Advisor
USAID/OFDA/LAC

Fabian Arellano
Technical Project Manager
RDAP/IRG/USAID/OFDA/LAC

FOREWORD

Within the curricular framework of the School Safety Course (SCC), designed in 1995 in its first version and updated in 2010 (USAID / OFDA / LAC, 2010), the conceptual framework that has guided the technical assistance and support provided by the Disaster Risk Management Education Area, the Regional Programme for Disaster Relief of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, a branch of the Agency for International Development of the United States of America, can be easily inferred.

Since the late eighties 1980s, there was a clear intention of working in education for disaster risk management with a comprehensive, permanent and relevant focus on reality, which has been evolving into what we know today. Although the course is mainly aimed at preparing, it is clear that the approach which guides it transcends the disaster and shows interest in education as a preventive and educational exercise.

Fifteen years after the SSC was written and validated, the approach has obviously been enriched by the practice and experience obtained by professionals and students in this area.

Undoubtedly, having had a conceptual reference throughout this chosen path, with a medium and long term outlook as befits all continuous learning, has enabled us to have a guide which has made it possible to define where we are going, to easily identify what is required to develop the procedures and to create conditions that promote the integration of efforts and achieve significant results, despite differences between institutions and countries.

For this reason, as we share with you some of the experiences that are being developed in Latin America and the Caribbean and in which, from time to time, the USAID / OFDA / LAC Department of Education has been a witness and participant, we think it is relevant also to share the ideas that have guided our work, the result of the dynamic and constructive relationship between theory and practice.

We hope that by sharing this approach and the basic conceptual position of the Office of Education, the interpretation of the experiences presented is apparent, without attempting to impose a line of thinking on issues as broad and complex as those related to disaster risk management and education.

What we want is to promote personal and group reflection, from which to draw new positions, enriched as a result of the analysis, interpretation and explanation of what is read and thus, building a new platform of knowledge in order to make it possible for experience to evolve, based on a more elaborate thinking, akin to the realities in general.

The book, in its content, follows a route which begins at the conceptual approach that served as the basis for the development of the experiences that are later shared.

The first chapter of the book entitled “Disaster Risk Management: Preliminary Concepts” starts from the analysis of the concepts “event” and “adverse event” (emergency and disaster) and is then supplemented with a comprehensive approach to the issues of disaster risk management and resilience.

Chapter Two refers to education and its characteristics as a means to attain a new paradigm, a new way to observe, assess, interpret and act on the risk and adverse events. It refers to the step we must take to move from disaster culture to prevention, mitigation and risk management culture in general.

Chapter Three analyses the importance of the school and educational community as a place where you can clearly see the result of efforts made by society and the educational sector in training current and new generations on risk reduction, disasters and security in their facilities. The issue is tackled from the perspective that little is possible in the educational field if the school does not accept the challenge, responsibility and commitment to work on this topic. This chapter also mentions the institutional core themes with regard to risk management, which serve as reference for promoting planning and development in schools: admonitory, coherent, integrated and solid on the matter itself.

In Chapter Four “Disaster Risk Management: its development in educational institutions foSCCs on the elements to be taken into account in order to ensure that schools are truly performing risk management. It helps educational communities to have safer facilities, a good comprehensive training in disaster risk management and true commitment to the efforts that communities and countries undertake in seeking to prevent and mitigate risk, and attend to adverse events and recovery.

In Chapter Five “Some evidence of what has been achieved”: is to be taken as a first step in helping to avoid important facts that explain the current situation in the region from getting lost through the years. It also serves as a reference when new projects are about to get started in order for decisions to be made, hence allowing them to be sustained on more solid grounds and to avoid duplication by maximizing the resources available.

In Chapter Six: the systematization of sixteen experiences is presented. These works were elaborated by recognized professionals from several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and deal with subjects related to risk management as they were implemented in some education sector institutions.

They have significant value due to the development process used and the results obtained, but, especially due to the lessons generated and which served as guidance for those involved in its implementation, as well as for those still engaged in such procedures and activities.

We are confident that, because of their importance, these experiences will serve as reference at a time when countries wish to fulfill their hoped and face similar challenges to those introduced in the book.

Our spirit of teaching, which is based on building rather than directing, in participation more than in individual management, in the value of collective commitment rather than on individual will and in a deep respect for life in all its forms and expressions rather than by ill-conceived development, invites us to understand this book, as an information vehicle on what has been achieved on the subject in Latin America and the Caribbean. It includes establishing terms that can guide the interpretation of events in the field of education for risk management in countries, facilitating planning, promoting the recognition of education and the school itself as a means to stimulate and strengthen disaster risk management in communities and assessing the importance of practice, as an exercise to confirm that: all that we dream of, think of and plan is possible to achieve when we all decide to work together in life.

Manuel Ramirez Rojas
Risk Management Education Specialist
RDAP Project

A charitable publication built by many, for the welfare of present and future generations of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This book is a way to disclose the work that has been developed, since the late eighties 1980s, by many individuals and institutions.

The visionary thinking and faith in education set forth by people such as Mr. Paul Bell Jr. RIP, and Mr. Ricardo Bermudez P., Director and Advisor, respectively, of the USAID/OFDA/LAC, Dr. Hugo Prado M., Disaster Program Representative for the Pan-American Health Organization and Dr. Manuel Obando V., Director of Operations Costa Rica National Emergency Commission, became the guidance and motivation for us, the staff who did the first trials on this issue.

The commitment of authorities of Ministries of Education, universities, national emergency agencies, scientific institutes, relief agencies, and of technicians and specialists in disciplines related with emergency preparedness in schools, enabled us to begin our voyage on a route that has allowed us, to date, to open spaces for the inclusion of disaster risk management in education and institutions of the countries' Education sSector.

In addition, two decades after the start of that journey, the number of national and international organizations working hard to include risk and disaster reduction in schools and communities has increased and, with a joint effort from the local staff, greater opportunities for their development were achieved.

There are currently thousands of teachers, educators, and professionals from various specialities who, in many cases, working even without the necessary support from the political, administrative, and financial bodies, have been promoting, creating, and transmitting new knowledge, enriching values and shaping attitudes that are gradually having a significant impact; demonstrating that it is possible to strengthen education and institutions so they are better equipped to offer greater opportunities to students in the new paradigm of risk reduction and in new lifestyles associated with human development.

In short, it is the creation of a new culture, one that must respond satisfactorily to the curve balls thrown at humanity's highest values and which contributes to the building of educational communities and populations that are better prepared to reduce risks, to react appropriately in the face of adverse events and to become determining factors in recovery tasks.

A privileged witness

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The USAID / OFDA / LAC Office of Education would like to give special thanks to the authorities of the Ministries of Education, national disaster risk management institutions and other related areas of sustainable development, for their support given to its staff while performing the systematization of the experiences introduced in this book.

Our thanks and congratulations to the men and women authors of the systematized projects, for the dedication and quality with which they successfully reflected the experiences and lessons learned from selected experiences, those that undoubtedly will continue to provide valuable resources to promote education on disaster risk management and safety in the schools of the region.

Our thanks to the consultants of the USAID / OFDA / LAC RDAP Program for their support during the process of systematization, and congratulations on having promoted and assisted in field experiences which resulted in valuable models worth publishing, recognizing that there are still more significant projects that deserve disclosure in the future.

Our gratitude to those who reviewed the book's contents and whose recommendations and contributions were crucial in ensuring the quality of this publication.

And to the USAID / OFDA / LAC office staff, based in San José, Costa Rica, our appreciation for the support in the graphic design of the book and for their contributions to enrich its content.

Our special thanks as well to Mrs. Angelina Alvarez who, in her capacity as editor, made recommendations to facilitate the fluency and clarity of the document.

Likewise, our gratitude to the company INTERNEM for their commitment and understanding when addressing the requirements demanded.

And especially, our gratitude, respect, and admiration to the hundreds of thousands of professionals and students of all levels and forms of education in Latin America and the Caribbean for their commitment and achievements in their management of risk disaster that has motivated and justified the design and publication of the book, with which it will be possible to show that, although complex, disaster risk reduction can be achieved successfully through educational management.