



## SPOTLIGHT ON ORGANISATIONS: DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN LATIN AMERICAN CITIES

This Spotlight highlights some of the key organisations working on disaster risk management (DRM) in cities across Latin America. Together these organisations cover a wide range of themes, such as social development, urban risk and urbanisation, and earth sciences, and implement a variety of initiatives, from research and funding to policy and advocacy. It includes organisations based in and focused entirely on Latin America, as well as international organisations that have a significant presence in the region.

### ► Andean Research and Training Programme on Vulnerability and Risks in Urban Environments (*Programa Andino de Capacitación e Investigación sobre Vulnerabilidad y Riesgos en Medio Urbano - PACIVUR*)

Link: <http://www.ifeanet.org/pacivur/?idioma=ENG>

**Areas of Expertise:** Urbanisation and DRM, vulnerability of urban societies, urban risk reduction

**Key Activities:** Research, training, information dissemination, production of maps and statistics

PACIVUR is a regional programme that was launched in 2006 within the framework of a convention between [IRD \(Institute of Research and Development\)](#) and the [CAN \(Andean Community\)](#). The three main objectives of the programme are: i) to produce knowledge (particularly on vulnerability) for risk reduction and management; ii) to consolidate and disseminate information on research into urban vulnerability in the Andes; and iii) to drive research momentum and regional dialogue on vulnerability and risks in urban environments. The programme carries out research and training activities in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. PACIVUR has developed [GeoCatalogo](#), an online repository of maps, GIS data and satellite images available in English, Spanish and French.



## ► Coordinating Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (*Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central - CEPREDENAC*)

Link: [http://www.sica.int/index\\_en.aspx](http://www.sica.int/index_en.aspx)

**Areas of Expertise:** DRM, urban risk and vulnerability

**Key Activities:** Research, data collection, statistics policy briefs, activism, advocacy, sub-regional DRM policy design, capacity building and training, technical assistance, information dissemination, project implementation

Established in 1988 in Guatemala, CEPREDENAC is the specialised institution of the [Central American Integration System](#) (*Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana - SICA*) for natural disaster prevention, mitigation and response. Its two strategic objectives are: i) promoting the incorporation of disaster risk reduction in legislation, policies, plans and investment projects for sustainable development in the region; and ii) promoting the incorporation of disaster risk analysis in the design and implementation of prevention, mitigation, response, recovery and reconstruction in the countries of the region. CEPREDENAC runs a [regional information and communication platform for integrated disaster management](#). Links to key documentations, tools, and information about events and regional forums are provided on the website.

## ► *Desaprender*

Link: <http://www.desaprender.org/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Risk management, strengthening local capacity, risk prevention and mitigation, complex emergencies, technological tools, early warning systems, preparedness, advocacy

**Key Activities:** Exchange of experiences, knowledge sharing services, information dissemination

*Desaprender* (meaning 'un-learn' in English), is a virtual platform created to promote experience-based learning exchange on disaster risk reduction. It was created for use by practitioners at the local-level, such as community members, volunteers, government officials and NGOs. The *Desaprender* website hosts a wide selection of documents, such as manuals, methodological guides, emergency planning tools, simulations and drills and training packs, many available in English, covering a variety of areas related to disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

## ► Earthquake Megacities Initiative (EMI)

Link: <http://www.emi-megacities.org/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Risk-sensitive land use planning, disaster risk reduction in urban governance and development, risk assessment and risk indicators, shelter, livelihoods, disaster resilience of basic services, information technologies

**Key Activities:** Scientific and technical research, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in megacity development, capacity strengthening for city leaders and policymakers, awareness-raising campaigns, DRM tools, knowledge sharing

EMI is an international scientific initiative established in 1998 as a not-for-profit organisation. Its mission is to advance urban risk reduction policy, knowledge and practice in megacities and fast-growing metropolises worldwide. EMI works with complex cities in the Latin America region, such as Lima, Quito, Bogota and Mexico City, to support their efforts to mainstream DRR across core functions and operations, with an emphasis on land use planning and urban renewal, local-level disaster risk management and disaster resilience of basic services. EMI develops tools and [resources](#) to facilitate the delivery, sharing, and adaptation of scientific and technical knowledge on urban DRR. EMI also offers training programmes to enhance the competency of DRM practitioners worldwide.



## ► Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), Division for Sustainable Development and Human Settlements, Economic and Social Disaster Assessment Unit

Link: <http://www.cepal.org/desastres/default.asp?idioma=IN>

**Areas of Expertise:** Economic and social impact assessments of disasters

**Key Activities:** Funds and implements regional and sub-regional projects involving impact assessments, research, technical assistance, information and data dissemination, capacity building, production of statistics and publications

Headquartered in Santiago, Chile, ECLAC is one of the five Regional Commissions of the United Nations. It was founded with the purpose of contributing to the economic development of Latin America. Since the 1990s, the Economic and Social Disaster Assessment Unit has been developing methodologies to estimate the [socio-economic and environmental effects of disasters](#) before they occur and to evaluate socio-economic impacts post-disaster. The Unit's methodologies are being put to use across the region. The website provides access to handbooks, training documents and impact assessment reports in English, as well as information on past and current projects.

## ► Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

Link: <http://www.iadb.org/>

**Areas of Expertise:** DRM planning, risk assessment, financial risk management, prevention and mitigation, sustainable urban development

**Key Activities:** Knowledge generation and dissemination, development of approaches and methodologies, technical assistance, capacity building, project implementation, financing

The IDB is the main source of multilateral financing and expertise for sustainable economic, social and institutional development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Its work on the [Cities programme](#) helps member countries to build sustainable cities through urban planning and regulation, and housing and neighbourhood upgrading that improves infrastructure and urban services. The [Disaster programme](#) assists countries in designing and implementing integrated DRM plans, involving four principal lines of action: risk identification; prevention and mitigation; financial risk management; and institutional strengthening for preparedness, response and recovery.

## ► Network for Social Studies on Disaster Prevention in Latin America (*La Red de Estudios Sociales en Prevención de Desastres en América Latina*)

Link: <http://www.desenredando.org/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Disasters and urbanisation, national systems for DRM, instruments for disaster prevention, response and reconstruction

**Key Activities:** Scientific and technical research, technical assistance, information dissemination, capacity building and training, project implementation, data collection

*La Red* is a network that has worked collaboratively to document the scale and range of disasters in the region, including their impacts and underlying causes. Created in 1992, *La Red* has grown to include a membership spanning 15 Latin American nations, drawn from many different disciplines and including a mix of researchers and practitioners. Over time they have developed a focus on disaster prevention and in reducing the vulnerability of populations. The network has also pioneered a range of tools and methods, including participatory methodologies for working with low-income groups



and community organisations. *La Red* has produced an ample selection of publications available via their website and was responsible for developing [DesInventar](#), a regional information system that collects and disseminates information on disasters compiled from existing data, newspaper sources and institutional reports. It is available for the majority of South American countries, except Brazil, Suriname and Uruguay.

## ► The Southwestern Seismological Observatory (*Observatorio Sismológico del Suroccidente - OSSO*)

Link: <http://www.osso.org.co/>

**Areas of Expertise:** Earth sciences, urbanisation and territorial expansion, engineering and technology, disaster risk reduction

**Key Activities:** Scientific and technical research, technical assistance and training, knowledge production and dissemination, data collection, disaster impact assessments

The OSSO Corporation is a Colombian NGO created in 1996 to promote, support and conduct scientific research, disseminate knowledge and develop new methodologies and technologies in Colombia and throughout Latin America. OSSO designed, implemented and currently operates the Southwestern Regional Seismological Network and the [National System for Tsunami Detection and Alert \(SNDAT\)](#) in Colombia. OSSO has also developed methodologies and databases for evaluating risks associated with natural phenomena such as seismic activity, tsunamis, landslides and volcanic activity, as well as on climate change. The website provides access to the SNDAT as well as useful tools such as a [Dynamic Atlas of the Andean Territory: population and property at risk to natural hazards](#), hazard assessment and micro-zoning maps, and a wide range of knowledge materials such as publications (e.g. project reports and theses), videos, presentations and news articles. Although this information is only available in Spanish at present, it is nevertheless useful for English-speaking readers to familiarise themselves with the activities and outputs of the OSSO, which is playing a key role in the region, such as through its collaboration in *La Red*, its contributions to the design of the *Desinventar* information system and because it has provided technical assistance to the five-year regional disaster risk management programme [PREDECAN](#), run by the Andean Community.

## ► United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR), Regional Office for the Americas

Link: [http://www.eird.org/eng/acerca-eird/regional\\_unit\\_eng.htm](http://www.eird.org/eng/acerca-eird/regional_unit_eng.htm)

**Areas of Expertise:** Disaster risk management, resilient cities, disaster risk reduction policies and legislation, sustainable urban development

**Key Activities:** Scientific and technical research promotion, education and training, information network support, awareness-raising campaigns, technical assistance, information dissemination

Operating out of Panama, the UN/ISDR Regional Unit for the Americas is mandated to provide support to actors throughout North America, Latin America and the Caribbean in fostering a culture of disaster prevention and contributing to build disaster resilient nations and communities. The website hosts a wide range of materials in English including country profiles, education materials, *ISDR Informs* magazine, videos and multimedia materials.



## ► Urban Risk Thematic Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Latin America and the Caribbean

Link: [http://www.eird.org/wikien/index.php/Urban\\_risk\\_platform](http://www.eird.org/wikien/index.php/Urban_risk_platform)

**Areas of Expertise:** Urbanisation and DRM, disaster prevention, municipal information systems, the Hyogo Framework for Action and the UNISDR Making Cities Resilient campaign

**Key Activities:** Public awareness-raising, political lobbying, technical assistance and training, regional dialogue, facilitating South-South initiatives, city government capacity building

Supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) Regional Office for the Americas and the World Bank, the Urban Risk Platform supports and builds networks of local governments from throughout Latin America and the Caribbean interested in strengthening the integration of DRM within their cities' development processes. Through the analysis of common problems and exchange of experiences, the Urban Risk Platform brings together city officials and authorities looking to strengthen their own risk management processes through joint initiatives, such as the [UNISDR Making Cities Resilient campaign](#), for cooperation among cities as well as with other strategic actors. Their website hosts a collection of [documents related to urban risk](#) in the region.

### CONTACT THE AUTHOR

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### FIND OUT MORE FROM [ELLA](#)

To learn more about disaster risk management in Latin American cities, read the [ELLA Guide](#), which has a full list of the knowledge materials on this theme. To learn more about other ELLA development issues, browse other [ELLA Themes](#).



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