



Cities on Volcanoes 9
November 20-25, 2016
Puerto Varas, Chile

'Understanding volcanoes and society: the key for risk mitigation'



Lessons learned from risk management of Galeras volcano reactivation, Nariño, Colombia

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Key words: disaster situation, contingency, relocated, risk perception

Galeras volcano is located in the department of Nariño, about 9 km west of Pasto city, also is considered one of the most activity in Colombia. In the latter period of revival (2004 -2010) it has submitted 19 eruptions. 500.000 people inhabits directly in the active area of the influence of the volcano, of which 8000 are on the high hazard area, where there have been dangerous phenomena such as pyroclastic flows. The Contingency Plan which was developed to guide the development of preparedness and response actions that supported the institutions that participate in the National System for Disaster Risk Management, which aims to overcome efficiently and quickly an disaster situation or with minimal impact to the population. This plan has communications, alarm, built shelters for up to 6.000 people. On Novemeber 15th the National Government, on the basis of the Decreto 4106 of 2005, declared the existence of an disaster situation, it is the fist time in Colombia history, a disaster situation has been declare before it is happening. From the communities this declaration was made considering the serious alteration of the daily life style, to wich the population was exposed due to a probable volcanic eruption is out to come. However the motivation from the government was to prevent life losses and to implement the mechanism that was called "Proceso Galeras", this program is responsable to relocated comunities who lived in the high hazard area, one of the major difficulties are the communities and local autoridades because they do not agree with the program.