

# ADRA Costa Rica

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## SAMUEL A. WILTSHIRE

Samuel A. Wiltshire Mc Elroy is a district pastor in North Mission of Costa Rica and director of ADRA Costa Rica. Wiltshire has served the church for ten years as field secretary, and as director of the Youth and Spirit of Prophecy departments. He is currently (2020) studying for a pastoral master's degree at the Adventist University of Central America in Costa Rica.

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ADRA in Costa Rica began as an association called "Philanthropic Adventist Welfare Work," recognized by the acronym "OFASA."<sup>1</sup> OFASA was founded on March 10, 1982, in the province of San José, district of Carmen. The founders were: David García Marengo, Tito Venegas Alvarado, Tadeo Calvo Valverde, José María Vallejos Cedeño, Pablo Perla Perla, Martha Iris Carvajal Vargas, Milton Castillo Gómez, Damaris Araya Jiménez, Ananías González Vargas, and Danny Jones Thompson. They established the association governed by the law of associations of the country and registered in San José. They established the following programs to fulfill the purposes of the association: nutrition and health, economic assistance, and help to the community in times of national disasters.<sup>2</sup>

In 1984 the board of directors of the association was elected, as follows:<sup>3</sup> Pablo Perla Perla (president), Milton Castillo Gómez (vice president), Martha Iris Carvajal Vargas (secretary), Danny Jones Thompson (treasurer), José María Vallejos Cedeño (public relations), and Tito Venegas Alvarado (money manager).

On March 5, 1986, the name of the association was changed to "Adventist Development and Relief Agency," with the acronym "ADRA." It was registered by the notary, Alejandro Madrigal Benavides, on July 14, 1986.<sup>4</sup>

## History

ADRA began by focusing on philanthropic work such as nutrition programs, health programs, economic assistance, and helping the community in times of national disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods.

From 1986 to 2012, ADRA in Costa Rica operated in the country as a department under the legal status of the Adventist mission of Costa Rica. In 2012, the North Mission and the Caribbean Mission of Costa Rica, together with the Central Conference, decided to unify the ADRA department, appointing Pastor Julio Alfaro as director at the national level. From that date he began operating ADRA as a non-governmental organization, registered with a legal status independent from that of the church. The Costa Rican ADRA office operated with the following people: Julio Alfaro (country director), Michael Gutiérrez (project manager), Glen Mora (financial director), Luis Zumbado (accountant), Odaly Mendoza (communication director), and Gerardo Artavia (director of health and emergency response).

Some projects that have been developed are: children helping children, young ambassadors, goodness day, medical brigades, and delivery of food and clothing to vulnerable communities.

Approximately 1,000 underprivileged children have been given school supplies, more than 5,000 families have been provided with clothing and food, and approximately 1,500 people have been assisted on medical tours<sup>5</sup>

ADRA has two collection centers in the country, one in the Caribbean region in the canton of Talamanca, and the other in Orotina Alajuela for the northern and southern region of the country.

## Role and Place in the Country

ADRA Costa Rica is part of the international network of ADRA, and at the national level it has been a member of the national planning system and the country humanitarian team. It has made agreements with several state and private organizations.<sup>6</sup>

In agreement with Raleigh Costa Rica, young people from the communities of Talamanca benefited from social welfare projects. AAGRUPERI, an association that helps young people with disabilities to win a project with Coopeande, was given assistance.

Lectures and workshops have been presented to chiefs and sub-chiefs of Region 1 of the Ministry of Public Security of San José. An agreement has been made with the Costa Rica Rescue Foundation to provide first aid courses to ADRA volunteers.

A recycling project was carried out with the municipality of San José in the Merced district.

ADRA responded with humanitarian assistance and counseling, with a national donation and a donation from ADRA International following Hurricane Otto in 2016 and following Tropical Storm Nate in 2017<sup>7</sup>

## Directors of ADRA Costa Rica

Julio Alfaro (2012-2015); Arturo Tucker (2015-2017); Samuel Wiltshire (2017-present).

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### SOURCES

"ADRA assists families after Tropical Storm Nate hit Costa Rica." *Adventist News Network*, November 15, 2017. Accessed March 22, 2020. <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2017-11-15/adra-assists-families-after-tropical-storm-nate-hit-costa-rica/>.

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Alfaro, Julio. Report, 2013. ADRA Costa Rica archives.

## NOTES

1. Eduardo Viales, interview by the author, Alajuela, Costa Rica, July 22, 2019.
2. ADRA Statute Costa Rica, 1982.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 1986.
5. ADRA Report Costa Rica, 2015-2018.
6. Julio Alfaro, Report, 2013, ADRA Costa Rica archives.
7. "ADRA assists families after Tropical Storm Nate hit Costa Rica," *Adventist News Network*, November 15, 2017, accessed March 22, 2020, <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2017-11-15/adra-assists-families-after-tropical-storm-nate-hit-costa-rica/>.

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