



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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**USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)  
East Asia and Pacific Region, Regional Office for Asia-Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand**

**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**USAID/OFDA-Supported Search and Rescue Team Receives Earthquake Award**



*Christchurch Mayor Bob Parker presents USAID/OFDA with an award for the 2011 earthquake response. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Wellington)*

On February 22, USAID/OFDA Principal Regional Advisor (PRA) for East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) Al Dwyer traveled to Christchurch, New Zealand, to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the devastating 2011 earthquake. Dwyer, who also led the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team in New Zealand, received an award on behalf of the 74-person urban search-and-rescue (USAR) team from the Los Angeles County Fire Department for their search-and-rescue operations in Christchurch following the earthquake.

The USAID/OFDA-supported USAR team was one of approximately 70 international and local teams that assisted with search-and-rescue efforts following the earthquake.

**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**Responding to Floods and Landslides in Papua New Guinea**

On January 25, a massive landslide swept through two villages in Papua New Guinea's Southern Highlands Province, killing an estimated 25 people. Yet, the landslide was just one in a series of weather-related disasters that have affected tens of thousands of people throughout Papua New Guinea since late last year.

In response, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Port Moresby to the Papua New Guinea Red Cross Society (PNGRCS) to support relief efforts in flood- and landslide-affected areas throughout the country. From January 29 to February 8, a USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor (RA) also traveled to Papua New Guinea to assess the impact of heavy rainfall and meet with affected communities, relief agencies, and government officials.

In several of the areas visited, floods had not only damaged crops and houses, they also washed away kitchen utensils, water containers, blankets, and other household items, leaving many families with nothing. The USAID/OFDA contribution to PNGRCS will replace some of these key household items and help families withstand the impact of additional rains during the remainder of the storm season—typically lasting from November to May.



*Community members walk through a flooded area in Morobe Province. Several locations in Morobe were under 1 to 2 meters of water for several weeks. (Photo by Ben Hemingway, USAID/OFDA)*

**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**Strengthening Flood Preparedness in Thailand**

Following the historic 2011 floods in Thailand, USAID/OFDA is providing nearly \$1 million in support for new programs to help Thai authorities and first responders better prepare for and manage future emergencies.

On February 27, the acting USAID/OFDA Disaster Response and Mitigation Division Chief for Asia, Latin America, and Europe and the Middle East joined USAID/OFDA staff from the regional office in Bangkok on a visit to Ayutthaya Province—one of the areas most-affected by the floods—to discuss disaster risk reduction efforts through the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC). With USAID/OFDA funding, ADPC is providing first responders and medical staff in Thailand with training to improve response capacity, reduce mortality, and increase the survival rate of victims following disasters. By the end of the trainings, participants will be

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## Preparing Microfinance Institutions for Disasters in Indonesia

When disasters strike, they not only affect people, they affect entire communities, including businesses and financial institutions. Following a disaster, microfinance institutions (MFIs) can serve as a critical and immediate vehicle to provide resources to affected communities—families can withdraw savings or take out new loans to repair damage to houses and businesses and restart their livelihoods. However, MFIs are often affected by the same disasters that increase the vulnerability of their clients and may be unable to continue providing services as they struggle to cope with the impact of the disaster. Noting this trend, USAID/OFDA is providing training and technical support to prepare MFIs for future emergencies in three disaster-prone locations in Indonesia as a part of the Indonesia Liquidity Facility After Disasters (ILFAD) program.

Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, experiencing earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, volcanic eruptions, floods, and drought on a regular basis. In 2010,



**USAID/OFDA staff discuss the ILFAD program with an MFI in Central Java Province. (Photo by Erin Magee, USAID/OFDA)**

and cash crops destroyed and most of their livestock dead or missing. With their largest sources of income gone, many families faced the prospect of being unable to repair their houses and purchase seeds and other materials to begin the process of replanting, prolonging families' vulnerability and delaying their recovery to pre-disaster conditions.

Through the ILFAD program, USAID/OFDA partner Mercy Corps is working to provide knowledge and skills to 36 MFIs, including financial institutions in Yogyakarta and Central Java, Jakarta, and West Sumatra, to prepare themselves and their clients for the next disaster. In many areas, poorer and more vulnerable families receive their financial services from MFIs. By providing training on how to properly back up data and developing new loan products for recovery, the ILFAD program will help MFIs keep their doors open following disasters and offer a reliable source of cash and finance for vulnerable populations when they need it most.

## EAP WELCOMES NEW REGIONAL ADVISOR

USAID/OFDA welcomes Harlan Hale to the EAP team as an RA based in Jakarta, Indonesia. Hale joins the EAP team with 25 years of humanitarian response and risk reduction experience in Africa, Europe, and Asia, including 11 years with USAID/OFDA and 14 years with a non-governmental organization. Most recently, Hale managed USAID/OFDA's Southern Africa Regional Office in Pretoria. Hale has a background in food security and drought mitigation programming and speaks French, Portuguese, and basic Bahasa Indonesia.

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### USAID/OFDA Supports Disaster Preparedness in Laos

On February 16 and 17, U.S. Ambassador to Laos Karen B. Stewart traveled to Attapeu Province—one of the areas most-affected by the 2009 Typhoon Ketsana in Laos—to distribute materials to help mitigate the effects of natural disasters. While the kits were tailored to the needs of each community, they all contained items useful for alerting and safeguarding communities in the event of an emergency, such as boat motors and propellers, life jackets, life buoys, megaphones, and generators.

The materials are one component of a larger USAID/OFDA-supported U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) community-based disaster preparedness and hygiene education project. With USAID/OFDA support, UNICEF and its partner agencies are working to build the capacity of 65 villages in Attapeu Province to reduce and mitigate the effects of natural disasters.

### Strengthening Flood Preparedness in Thailand (Continued from Page 1)

able to assess hazards, manage mass casualties, conduct water



**USAID/OFDA staff discuss the impact of the 2011 floods with ADPC (Photo by AI**

through the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). ICS is a management framework designed to integrate personnel, equipment, procedures, facilities, and communications during complex events. When fully incorporated, ICS practices ensure a unified effort among all levels of the public and private sectors, enabling more effective and efficient response operations. The training, which lasted from January 30 to February 9, included 29 participants from Thai government agencies.

To address the specific threat that floods pose to communities in Thailand, USAID/OFDA is also supporting ADPC to strengthen community, local, and national capacity to reduce risks in 19 highly flood-prone provinces. Working with Thai government agencies, communities, and local government officials, the USAID/OFDA assistance will provide a national course on flood management and improve flood and disaster planning.

rescues and light search and rescue from collapsed structures, among other activities.

Based on lessons learned from the 2011 floods response, USAID/OFDA also launched an expanded incident command systems (ICS) training in Chiang Rai on January 30

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