



**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 Responds to Disasters in Japan**



**A U.S. urban search and rescue team from Los Angeles County surveys tsunami destruction in northeastern Japan. (Photo courtesy of the L.A. County Fire Department)**

In March, Japan was hit with the worst natural disaster in the country's history when a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck off the eastern coast of the island of Honshu, triggering tsunami waves that reached as high as 78 feet in some areas. The tsunami caused widespread damage, destroying entire villages, killing approximately 14,600 people, leaving more than 11,000 others missing, and displacing hundreds of thousands of individuals. Compounding the situation, the tsunami disrupted the power supply to the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, leading to a serious nuclear incident.

As information trickled in on the full extent of the damages, USAID was already in the process of deploying a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and activating two urban search and rescue (USAR) teams to Japan—two of the first international USAR teams to arrive in the country. In anticipation of critical needs stemming from the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, the DART included nuclear experts from the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE) and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). USAID also activated a Washington, D.C.,-based Response Management Team to support the team in Japan.

Recognizing the strong capacity of the Government of Japan (GoJ) and relief agencies to meet humanitarian needs on the ground, the DART focused its activities on supporting the USAR teams, facilitating nuclear coordination with the GoJ, and creating strategic linkages between the various agencies working on the ground, including the U.S. Military, relief agencies, the GoJ,

**(Continued on page 2)**

**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**Assisting Flood-Affected Families in Thailand**

Unseasonable rains in late March swept through 11 southern provinces in Thailand, resulting in what some agencies called the worst flooding in the area in nearly 20 years. Although southern Thailand experiences floods annually, many affected individuals were caught unprepared for the extreme levels of water experienced in late March, as floods typically affect the area in October in November.

**(Continued on page 2)**



**Thai Red Cross Society staff distribute relief supplies to families through a network of river boats. (Photo by Al Dwyer, USAID/OFDA)**

**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**Early Recovery Efforts Start to Take Shape in Indonesia**

In late April, USAID/OFDA and USAID/Indonesia staff visited districts near the Merapi volcano in Indonesia to monitor USAID/OFDA-funded early recovery activities. With USAID/OFDA assistance, International Relief and Development and Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US) are providing families that have returned to areas near the volcano with cash grants and cash-for-work opportunities, livelihoods support, and improved access to water through water source rehabilitation. Australian Agency for International Development staff joined USAID on the monitoring visit of common partner SC/US.

Although the programs remain in their initial stages, nearly 2,000 families have already received materials begin short-cycle crop cultivation and nearly 2,000 others have received cash grants. According to SC/US staff, distribution of the cash grants coincided with families' purchase of farming equipment, enabling the grants to offset some of the expenses and facilitate planting.

## USAID/OFDA Responds to Disasters in Japan (Continued from Page 1)



**USAR teams search through the rubble assisted by canines. (Photo courtesy of the L.A. County Fire Department)**

and the private sector, to ensure that resources available in-country reached affected individuals.

“We’re working closely with the GoJ on all aspects of the response,” said DART leader and USAID/OFDA South Asia Principal Regional Advisor Bill Berger. “We’re using resources from across the U.S. Government (USG) to meet needs as they evolve,” Berger added.

In the critical days after the earthquake and tsunami struck, the two U.S. USAR teams, including 144 personnel and 12 canines, scoured two hard-hit coastal communities for potential survivors. After completing the search and rescue assignments, the USAR teams transferred equipment valued at nearly \$145,000, including zodiac boat kits, fuel tanks, kerosene heaters, cots, and sleeping bags, to the Ofunato City Fire Department to augment Japanese rescue capacity and replace items lost during the tsunami.

DART nuclear experts from the NRC and DoE have met regularly with and provided technical advice to Japanese officials on the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant. As the situation evolved, DoE and NRC experts provided equipment and training to Japanese counterparts, and the DART worked with the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo to establish a system for vetting requests for U.S. assistance. Through the DART, USAID/OFDA provided 10,000 sets of personal protective equipment to the GoJ to help protect personnel working near the nuclear exclusion zone.

With the outpouring of assistance following the disasters, the DART quickly recognized a need for transportation and coordination of humanitarian supplies provided by various agencies, such as private companies and relief organizations, rather than funding for additional materials. Working with the GoJ and the U.S. Military, the DART helped to ensure that the supplies offered by agencies were appropriate and reached the areas in need of assistance. To date, the USG has contributed more than \$95 million in response to the disasters in Japan.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

### USAID/OFDA Staff Attend the 2011 Disaster Relief Exercise

From March 14 to 18, a USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor traveled to Manado, Indonesia, to attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) Disaster Relief Exercise (DiREx). The bi-annual exercise focuses on improving coordination between civilian and military agencies during major, multilateral relief efforts in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as enhancing coordination between countries affected by disasters and donor nations. The 2011 DiREx was led by Indonesia and Japan and marked the culmination of two years of planning. The exercise brought together both civilian and military response agencies from countries throughout the broader Pacific basin.

While overall participation was reduced due to the disasters in Japan, which occurred while most participants were en route to Manado, more than 4,200 individuals representing 40 response agencies and 24 countries participated in the event. During the exercise, Indonesia, Australia, the European Union, China, India, and Singapore demonstrated how to conduct integrated sea, air, and land-based search and rescue, medical response, and relief commodity distributions in sites in Manado and surrounding islands.

The DiREx provided USAID/OFDA staff with an opportunity to engage other ARF dialogue partners in an exchange of best practices and experiences and create a community of practice that will expedite and improve the conduct of multilateral relief efforts in Asia in the future.

The U.S. delegation at the exercise was represented by U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Scot A. Marciel and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (State/EAP) Joseph Yun and included participation from State/EAP, USAID/OFDA, and the U.S. Pacific Command.

### Assisting Flood-Affected Families in Thailand (Continued from Page 1)

From April 4 to 5, two USAID/OFDA staff members traveled to Surat Thani, one of the most-affected provinces, to assess conditions and meet with the Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) and local officials. USAID/OFDA staff observed a robust national humanitarian response in flood-affected areas, but noted a need for additional support for distribution of water and non-food items. In response, USAID/OFDA has provided \$75,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok to TRCS for the procurement and distribution of safe drinking water and relief supplies.



“These funds will help support ongoing response efforts by TRCS and will help ensure that flood-affected families receive the support they need,” USAID/OFDA Principal Regional Advisor for East Asia and the Pacific Al Dwyer noted.

**USAID/OFDA and TRCS staff assess flood-affected areas in Thailand by boat. (Photo by Al Dwyer, USAID/OFDA)**

#### Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance Regional Office for Asia-Pacific

USAID’s Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA)  
Bangkok, Thailand  
Tel: +66-2-257-3000  
Internet: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

