



**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 Supports Volcano Monitoring in Indonesia

Following 400 years of dormancy, the Mt. Sinabung volcano erupted at least five times in August and September 2010, triggering the displacement of 30,000 individuals from the surrounding area. Local authorities noted that the initial eruption had come as somewhat of a surprise, as officials had not been actively monitoring the volcano and the nearest monitoring post was located in Mt. Merapi—240 miles away.



To strengthen monitoring of Mt. Sinabung, USAID/OFDA is providing technical assistance and equipment to the Indonesian Center of Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (CVGHM) in collaboration with USAID/Indonesia and the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta. The equipment, valued at approximately \$35,000 and contributed through the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), will create a seismic monitoring network near Mt. Sinabung, providing improved data on earthquakes that serve as precursors to eruptions

and enabling CVGHM to notify the community prior to future eruptions. USAID/OFDA has supported VDAP in Indonesia since 2004 through the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

“Having equipment like this in place is important so that people can be moved out of harm’s way before the next eruption,” explained USAID/OFDA Geoscience Advisor Gari Mayberry (Photo courtesy of USGS).

DISASTER RESPONSE AND RISK REDUCTION

USAID/OFDA Disaster Responses: One Year Later

In late September and early October 2009, a series of disasters, including earthquakes, a tsunami, and a typhoon—followed by two additional typhoons—struck countries in East Asia and the Pacific, killing more than 2,500 people and affecting nearly 11 million others, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). In response, USAID/OFDA provided millions of dollars in assistance to meet immediate and early recovery needs in the six most-affected countries, in addition to ongoing support for disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives in the region. Although challenges remain, below are some examples of how USAID/OFDA-funded activities have made a lasting impact on communities as they recover from the disasters and prepare for future shocks one year later.

Indonesia: Padang Earthquake

On September 30 and October 1, 2009, two earthquakes struck West Sumatra, Indonesia, killing more than 1,000 people and damaging 250,000 houses. While meeting emergency needs, USAID/OFDA-funded response activities in West Sumatra simultaneously included initiatives to mitigate the impact of future disasters.

Through the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) consortium of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), USAID/OFDA provided more than 21,000 households with emergency or transitional shelter assistance, including shelter and recovery kits, to enable families to demolish damaged houses, salvage materials, and begin the process of rebuilding. ECB members also provided cash grants for shelter reconstruction to severely affected households complemented by technical training on building back better techniques provided by NGO Build Change. The trainings reached more than 1,400 homeowners and 24 facilitators. According to an impact survey, more than 85 percent of homeowners interviewed stated that they would actively spread the knowledge received in the trainings, helping to expand awareness on improved building techniques within the community.



With USAID/OFDA-funded cash grants, Jawanis (above) purchased building materials and labor to rebuild her house. According to a Catholic Relief Services (CRS) survey, 87 percent of beneficiaries interviewed continued to make improvements on their houses after spending the cash grants (Photos courtesy of CRS).

The earthquake also highlighted the impact of USAID/OFDA-supported Mercy Corps DRR

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USAID/OFDA Staff Visit DRR Activities in China

From September 12 to 16, USAID/OFDA staff visited China to monitor ongoing DRR activities and meet with local officials. With USAID/OFDA funding, The Asia Foundation (TAF) is implementing three projects in China, including activities designed to promote safe rehabilitation of rural shelters and enhance disaster preparedness curriculum in schools.

During the visit, USAID/OFDA staff observed an interactive class on DRR in one of the counties affected by the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan Province. “The class, which included video, news clips, and students’ own observation and experiences with thunderstorms and lightning was a striking change from the type of safety announcements that teachers used to read to students,” TAF noted. The program has already trained more than 100 teachers on how to better disseminate DRR knowledge and skills, as well as developed teacher and student handbooks for distribution to more than 1,140 elementary and middle schools with a total student population of more than 1.5 million children.



A teacher in earthquake-affected Dayi County explains what to do in a thunderstorm using skills she learned in DRR teacher training organized through the USAID/OFDA-supported TAF program (Photo courtesy of TAF).

Using the skills outlined in the training, the principal of a school in a mountainous area of Dayi reported that teachers developed hazard maps for the school and neighboring area, identified risks along the students’ commute routes, and set up DRR communication channels with the surrounding nine villages. When a landslide occurred along a road near the school in April, the preparedness activities paid off—the school was able to promptly notify families and students.

USAID/OFDA staff also met with the Red Cross Society of China and the School of Architecture and Environmental Science of Sichuan University (SCAE). With assistance from USAID/OFDA and working with TAF and Build Change, SCAC has developed a safe rebuilding manual that serves as a step-by-step guide on how to build a low-cost, earthquake-resistant house. With support from the program, the Government of China Ministry of Civil Affairs plans to use the manual to train local government officials throughout China.

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Disaster Responses: One Year Later (Continued from Page 1)

activities in West Sumatra to prepare communities, local government officials, and private sector agencies for natural disasters. The head of the Disaster Preparedness Committee in Pilabung village, Padang, noted, “When Mercy Corps and (partner) Kogami started their work a year ago, at first we did not pay much attention. After a while, we began to join the trainings...and we became more interested. Then the earthquake happened. Those who joined the trainings remained calm and did not panic. Thus, there were no casualties in our village.”

Philippines: Typhoons

In late September, Typhoon Ketsana hit the Philippines, killing more than 1,000 people and damaging or destroying 300,000 houses, according to IFRC. Weeks later, two additional typhoons hit the Philippines, causing further destruction and damage. USAID/OFDA response activities included initiatives to meet immediate life-saving needs, as well as support to help families recover livelihoods, restore assets, and improve water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions.

Typhoon response activities also reinforced USAID/OFDA-supported DRR programs in the Philippines, such as the Program for Hydrometeorological Disaster Mitigation in Secondary Cities in Asia (PROMISE). Implemented by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), PROMISE has worked to strengthen institutions, build capacity on disaster risk management, and develop DRR mechanisms, such as early warning systems (EWS), in high-risk areas of Dagupan city in the Philippines. The impact of these efforts was noticeable following the typhoons. When Typhoon Parma hit northern Luzon in October 2009, the storm inundated even low-risk areas, but did not result in any casualties in Dagupan. Due to the built-in disaster preparedness systems, officials in high-risk areas of the city were able to evacuate residents a day before the storm arrived using the EWS.

Following Typhoon Ketsana, Pasig—one of the hardest-hit cities in the Philippines—was also added to the PROMISE program. After working with ADPC over the past year, eight of the city’s most-affected villages have now drafted DRR plans and defined at-risk areas and local officials and volunteers have received training in disaster response and search and rescue, respectively.

IN BRIEF

USAID/OFDA Staff Visit South Korea

In September, USAID/OFDA staff visited Seoul, South Korea, to meet with Korean NGOs, government agencies, and students. During the trip, USAID/OFDA staff gave a lecture at Yongsei University and a presentation to Korean NGOs on how to more effectively engage in humanitarian responses.

USAID/OFDA Staff Attend Course in Vanuatu

In September, a USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor traveled to Vanuatu to attend the U.N. Civil-Military Coordination Course. Designed to bring together civilian and military practitioners, planners, and donors to share experiences and learn about civil-military coordination, the course focused on the unique structures, capacities, and challenges in the Pacific Islands.