



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Fall 2010

**Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)
Europe, Middle East and Central Asia Regional Office, Budapest, Hungary**

WELCOME TO THE EMCA REGIONAL OFFICE (EMCARO)

Greetings from USAID/OFDA's newest regional field office, covering Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia (EMCA). We hope you find this first newsletter interesting and useful. The EMCARO was in existence for many years, based out of USAID/OFDA Washington, and established a field presence in Budapest in early 2009. The office covers 70+ countries and territories including all of Europe, the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Central Asian republics, and Afghanistan. The staff consists of one Principal Regional Advisor who oversees the office in Budapest with the help of an Office Manager; a Regional Advisor (RA) for Central Asia and the Caucasus, based in Almaty; an RA for the Middle East, based in Cairo; one Senior Humanitarian Advisor in Afghanistan and one in Iraq, who is also assisted by a Program Officer (PO).



The vast EMCA region faces varying risks of both man-made and natural disasters, including conflict, floods, earthquakes, fires, epidemics and droughts. Currently, the office is managing responses to conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan and Yemen. In 2010, extensive flooding in Europe has resulted in disaster declarations in six countries so far. An earthquake hit northern Afghanistan in April and affected more than 250,000 people. A minor earthquake also struck in Albania earlier in the year. At the end of the dry season in 2009, forest fires and wildfires afflicted several countries in southeast Europe.

The EMCARO serves as the eyes and ears of USAID/OFDA Washington, as well as the first responder in the event of a new disaster. The office also plans, monitors and evaluates existing programs. The total amount of USAID/OFDA funding provided to the region in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 was \$127 million, in response to nine disaster declarations. FY 2010 figures are on track to surpass FY 2009 amounts. Aside from managing new and ongoing humanitarian responses, the office regularly monitors political, meteorological, tectonic, and other events that could cause disasters; maintains a high level of preparedness through managing relationships with humanitarian actors, including governments, aid agencies and U.S. Government (USG) colleagues, including the military; and liaises with colleagues in Rome, Geneva and Brussels.

[Continued on page 2]

DISASTER RESPONSE

IRAQ

Since January 2003, USAID/OFDA has led the USG's humanitarian assistance efforts in Iraq. Working with U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), USAID/OFDA supports a countrywide, multi-sector program to aid conflict-affected communities. USAID/OFDA has obligated close to \$400 million for Iraq since 2003.

The program has focused on Iraq's 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 1.6 million of whom fled their homes following the February 2006 bombing of the Al-Askari mosque in Samarra and ensuing sectarian violence. The balance was displaced due to violence and persecution going back to the 1980s. In the last few years, drought has also led to significant population movements.

In Iraq, emergency assistance is provided primarily in response to small-scale, conflict-related population movements. However, many IDPs continue to cite insecurity, lack of jobs and insufficient basic services as factors limiting durable solutions to displacement. Decades of violence, instability and economic uncertainty have produced other large vulnerable groups, including female and elderly heads of household, orphans, the disabled and widows.

USAID/OFDA Iraq's current program aims to meet the needs of the country's most vulnerable populations, while the number and scope of early recovery initiatives increase and populations in need of USAID/OFDA support decrease. Core sectors include income generation, protection, shelter, and water and sanitation. Partners also implement health, emergency relief, and information and coordination projects.

[Continued on page 2]

DISASTER RESPONSE: KYRGYZSTAN

From June 10 to 12, 2010, a round of vicious ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz affected up to 1 million people, according to the U.N., including 75,000 who fled to neighboring Uzbekistan and another 300,000 who became internally displaced in Kyrgyzstan. The official death toll is about 400, although unofficial estimates put it over 2,000. Approximately 2,000 homes and many businesses were destroyed during the violence, mostly belonging to Uzbeks.

USAID/OFDA responded by dispatching the PRA and Central Asia RA to Bishkek, where they joined USAID/Kyrgyzstan and embassy colleagues to monitor and respond to the situation. They were later joined by an information officer, a field officer, a protection advisor, a shelter specialist, and a civil-military advisor. USAID/OFDA put in place an initial \$3.2 million humanitarian response through NGOs Save the Children and ACTED, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The response focused on the immediate hygiene, health and non-food item needs, as well as coordination, and complemented efforts by USAID/Kyrgyzstan and the U.S. Department of State (both providing support in the health sector).

As of mid-July, most IDPs and all refugees had returned home, and the U.N. reported a caseload of about 75,000 people of particular concern whose homes were destroyed or who are still too afraid to return. The focus of the humanitarian community in Kyrgyzstan has now turned to shelter, psychosocial and other protection concerns for the survivors, reconciliation, and the re-establishment of livelihoods. USAID/OFDA obligated \$10 million for Kyrgyzstan in FY 2010.

[Welcome continued]

The EMCARO is planning on developing and implementing a disaster risk reduction program in central and southeast Europe in the course of FY 2011. This effort will complement efforts by other donors and actors in the sector and likely focus on community-level preparedness and planning, although the strategy is still being developed based on needs, capacities and gap analyses.

[Iraq continued]

USAID/OFDA Iraq provides funding to seven NGOs and four international organizations working in all 18 provinces of Iraq.

The FY 2010 \$45 million budget for Iraq represents a decrease of \$38 million from FY 2009 (\$83.4 million). The notional budget for FY 2011 is \$30 million and will fund USAID/OFDA's final year of programming in Iraq unless a new disaster requires a continued presence. As USAID/OFDA in Iraq downsizes, efforts are ongoing to ensure the appropriate transitioning of projects to other humanitarian or development actors.

OTHER RESPONSES

The EMCARO is involved in several other responses which will be detailed in future versions of this newsletter. They include Afghanistan and Yemen complex emergencies and floods in Europe.

In Afghanistan, USAID/OFDA has been active since 2002 providing assistance to victims of both natural disasters (mostly floods and droughts) and conflict. In FY 2010, USAID/OFDA provided \$30 million in funding to humanitarian organizations nationwide. Particular challenges to the humanitarian community working in Afghanistan include combat, unpredictable insecurity risks, the need to coordinate with the NATO military operation, and working in areas controlled by insurgents.

Since September 2009, USAID/OFDA has been responding to the needs of people in Yemen displaced or affected by an off-again, on-again civil conflict between the government and Shi'ite rebels in the north (referred to as the Al-Houthis). The conflict has been going on for several years, but the most recent, sixth round of fighting, which ended in a ceasefire in February, 2010, caused over 300,000 people to become displaced. Since the ceasefire, a small number of IDPs have returned, but most appear to be waiting to see if the ceasefire holds. USAID/OFDA provided about \$11 million in FY 2010 to U.N. agencies and NGOs providing assistance to IDPs, most of whom are living amongst host populations in an impoverished country with existing major challenges in food security, water availability and livelihoods.

During the spring flooding season in Europe between May and June, USAID/OFDA responded to declared flood disasters in Moldova, Romania, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, and Poland.

MEET THE EMCARO

Principal Regional Advisor: Jack Myer
Budapest Office Manager: Andrea Meiszterics
Regional Advisor for Central Asia and the Caucasus: Marci Michaud
Regional Advisor for the Middle East: Vacant
Senior Humanitarian Advisor - Afghanistan: Stefanie Sobol
Senior Humanitarian Advisor - Iraq: Andy Barash
Program Officer - Iraq: Vacant

Please direct any comments or questions about this product to Jack Myer at jmyer@usaid.gov. (Thanks to Liza Mantilla of USAID/OFDA Bangkok for assistance.)

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
Regional Office for Europe, Middle East and Central Asia
Budapest, Hungary
Tel: +36 1 475 4314
Internet: www.usaid.gov

