



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

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Supporting Disaster Preparedness in Asia

On March 11, the world watched as massive tsunami waves tore through villages along the northeastern coast of Japan, killing thousands of people, destroying houses, and displacing hundreds of thousands of people in what is now considered the worst natural disaster in the country's history. Against this backdrop, leaders from Asian nations and global donors came together on April 15 in Washington, D.C., to advance disaster preparedness and risk reduction across Asia. Co-sponsored by USAID, the Government of Nepal (GoN), the World Bank, the U.N., the U.S. Department of State, and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, the one-day conference helped to strengthen awareness of the importance of disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies in Asia and provided donors and government officials with an opportunity to discuss ways to mainstream DRR into longer-term policy and planning.



Conference participants discuss the importance of DRR mainstreaming throughout Asia. (Photo by Liza Mantilla, USAID/OFDA)

"We are making an effort to shift the paradigm from reaction to prevention," stated U.S. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero. Participants noted that investments in DRR can have immeasurable benefits following a disaster, highlighting Japan as a recent example. While the tsunami caused significant damage to coastal villages, little damage or deaths were caused by the magnitude 9.0 earthquake—a testament to Japan's long-standing commitment to using seismically sound building codes, which perhaps saved thousands of lives. The conference also recognized recent efforts taken by the GoN to prepare for disasters, including a potential large-scale earthquake, and reduce its exposure to risks.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Staff Visit Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Activities in Nepal

In April, a USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor (RA) for South Asia traveled to Nepal to attend the first Community Action for Disaster Response (CADRE) training in the country and a seismic vulnerability workshop, as well as to monitor USAID/OFDA assistance provided in response to fires at two refugee camps. The RA also met with U.S. Embassy officials to prepare for an upcoming DRR assessment in Nepal that will include agencies from across the U.S. Government (USG).

CADRE Rolls Out in Nepal

From April 6 to 19, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center administered the first CADRE course in Nepal, engaging 25 Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) personnel from 13 of the country's 75 districts. CADRE is the newest component of the USAID/OFDA-supported Program for the Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) and teaches simple but effective strategies for communities to manage the immediate aftermath of a disaster. During the

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DISASTER RESPONSE

Evaluating Markets in Northern Sri Lanka

For nearly 30 years, conflict in northern Sri Lanka disrupted hundreds of thousands of individuals' livelihoods—crops went unplanted or unharvested, stores were damaged or closed, and families fled to camps in other parts of the country where there was little opportunity to engage in farming or other income-generating activities. With the end of the conflict in May 2009, the majority of displaced individuals have returned to their home areas, but many families continue to face challenges in restarting their livelihoods. Two



A woman pounds paddy in Mannar District. (Photo by Laura Meissner, USAID/OFDA)

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USAID/OFDA Staff Visit Programs in Nepal (Continued from Page 1)

training. NRCS staff learned a variety of skills, such as medical first response, light collapsed structure search and rescue, water rescue, and firefighting. NRCS personnel reported plans to pass on information learned in the course to people in their home communities to enhance local preparedness and response.

Responding to Fire-Affected Refugees in Nepal

On March 22, two separate fires broke out at the Goldhap and Sanischare refugee camps in Nepal. While not resulting in any casualties, the fires destroyed 700 houses in the two camps.



Families use USAID/OFDA-funded plastic sheeting for shelter. (Photo by Rob Friedman, USAID/OFDA)

Due to the extent of the damage, the U.N. requested assistance from the USG to respond to the situation. Lacking the necessary supplies, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration sought assistance from USAID/OFDA, which responded to the situation within two days by releasing plastic sheeting maintained through a USAID/OFDA-funded Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US) disaster preparedness and mitigation program. During a visit to the site, the USAID/OFDA RA noted the importance of the sheeting, which was sufficient to provide 600 fire-affected families with temporary shelter.

Seismic Vulnerability Workshop

On April 18, instructors from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and officials from the U.S. Federal Aviation and Highway Administrations kicked off a two-week seismic vulnerability workshop in Kathmandu to assess Nepal's bridge, road, and airport infrastructure.



Photo by Rob Friedman, USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA worked with the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Pacific Command to develop and structure the workshop. Participants included 60 engineers, educators, and representatives from universities, GoN ministries, the National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), the Nepal Police, and the Nepalese Army. The participants received hands on practical experience by visiting several bridges and the international airport to identify and analyze vulnerabilities, as well as theoretical classroom instruction. According to the RA, the discussions and ideas generated between the instructors and the participants during the workshop are already forming the basis for future cooperation.

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waves of heavy rains in early 2011 posed a further challenge, as the water inundated several fields in northern Sri Lanka, some of which were the first crops families had planted since the end of the conflict.

To gain a more comprehensive picture of the effects of the conflict and floods on livelihoods—particularly the production of rice paddy—the USAID/OFDA Economic Recovery and Market Systems Technical Advisor and USAID/Sri Lanka staff traveled to northern Sri Lanka in March to conduct an Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA). EMMA is a USAID/OFDA-supported toolkit used to conduct rapid market analysis in post-crisis environments.

During the trip, the USAID/OFDA Technical Advisor met with relief agencies, rice paddy farmers, day laborers, relief project beneficiaries, retailers, wholesalers, millers, and traders to find out what constraints to food security conflict-affected populations face in northern Sri Lanka and how interventions can best support the rice-related livelihood strategies of poor and vulner-



Farmers in a village in Mannar District sell their paddy to a trader. (Photo by Laura Meissner, USAID/OFDA)

able conflict-affected populations in these areas.

The rice paddy market was important to analyze because a large percentage of conflict- and flood-affected populations rely on rice as their main source of income—either through farming or day labor—and rice is a staple food in the area. The resulting EMMA report, which is scheduled for release shortly, includes recommendations to help support paddy growers, laborers, and other individuals involved in the rice market to make rice production a more viable and sustainable livelihood strategy.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Scales Up DRR in Nepal

USAID/OFDA is providing nearly \$842,000 in additional support for DRR activities in Nepal through NSET and SC/US. The programs build on previous USAID/OFDA-supported NSET and SC/US activities to reduce Nepal's vulnerability to natural disasters and enhance domestic response capacity.

The NSET program aims to improve earthquake resilience through awareness-raising, capacity building, and preparedness and mitigation activities, such as provision of technical training for masons, contractors, and engineers on earthquake-resistant construction and technical assistance to municipal authorities on building code implementation, as well as retrofitting of schools. The SC/US program will focus on increasing the protection of vulnerable groups during disasters, developing community response capacities, providing non-food item packages to disaster-affected individuals, and repair and rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities.

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