



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

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID Responds to Floods in Sri Lanka



USAID/OFDA grantee Save the Children distributes a hygiene kit to a flood-affected woman in Batticaloa District. (Photo by Brian Heidel, USAID/OFDA)

Families looked on as heavy rains and rising flood waters tore through their carefully planted fields, submerged roads, inundated wells, and caused entire villages to empty as hundreds of thousands of people sought refuge in nearby evacuation sites. As multiple waves of floods washed through villages in Sri Lanka, some families lost everything. Others returned home to find that the rice and other crops they had planted—most only weeks away from harvest—had been completely destroyed. In many areas, these crops not only provided families with a source of food, but also gave them income to purchase essential household items.

According to the Government of Sri Lanka, two waves of floods in January and February affected an estimated 1.2 million individuals and damaged or destroyed up to 95 percent of rice paddy crops in some locations in Eastern Province. With rains easing and flood waters receding, nearly all displaced individuals have returned to their houses; however, individuals continue to experience challenges due to damage to crops, wells, and other infrastructure, as well as loss of basic household goods.

“The waters rose quickly in our village and we had to run. We couldn’t take our things with us. When we went back to our home (five days later), our things were gone,” noted one flood-affected woman.

To help replace some of the

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Earthquake Preparedness in Nepal

Situated on two converging tectonic plates, Kathmandu tops the list of major cities vulnerable to a catastrophic earthquake. One year after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the U.S. Government (USG), Government of Nepal (GoN), and international community are working to use the lessons learned from this and other disasters to better prepare for and mitigate the impact of a large-scale earthquake in Nepal.

From February 14 to 15, USAID/OFDA staff joined more than 400 policymakers and practitioners from Nepal and the region, as well as across the USG and international community, at a high-level symposium on DRR in Kathmandu. The event aimed to raise awareness of Nepal’s vulnerability to earthquakes, demonstrate participants’ commitment to disaster risk reduction (DRR), and incorporate lessons learned from recent disasters into policy and planning in Nepal. During the symposium, participants highlighted the importance of DRR and pledged to take immediate action to reduce vulnerabilities in Nepal.

“Ultimately this work will be measured in great, but humble successes: Buildings that still stand; lives not lost; and a country better prepared to absorb and respond to mother nature’s greatest shock. We cannot avoid the disaster, but we can help minimize the devastation that will inevitably follow,” U.S. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero noted in her closing remarks. USAID/OFDA contributed \$30,000 for the event, which

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DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

USAID/OFDA Supports ICS Training in Nepal

USAID/OFDA has approved \$200,000 through an interagency agreement with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to conduct Incident Command System (ICS) training in Nepal. ICS is a framework designed to improve coordination among agencies, such as police, firefighters, and medical staff, during emergency responses.

In Nepal, the ICS training will help government and non-government disaster managers develop a coordinated response plan for disasters, such as earthquakes. With USAID/OFDA funding, USFS plans to conduct two training workshops on basic/intermediate ICS and integrated planning in Nepal.

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items lost during the floods, USAID/OFDA and USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives provided support for the distribution of key emergency relief supplies, such as soap, tarpaulins, mats, buckets, and mosquito nets, as well as shelter material kits, to more than 28,000 flood-affected families.

To provide affected individuals with access to food and help families restart agricultural production, USAID agencies are also supporting a number of short- and medium-term activities in flood-affected areas. As of February 2011, USAID's Office of Food for Peace had provided more than \$416,000 in emergency food assistance to the U.N. World



Individuals pass through a washed out road in Eastern Province in mid-January. (Photo by Brian Heidel, USAID/OFDA)

Food Program for distribution in flood-affected districts.

USAID/OFDA is also providing nearly \$1.4 million for distribution of seeds and tools to farmers and support for cash-for-work (CFW) opportunities to help families meet medium- and longer-term food needs and restore lost income. USAID/OFDA-supported agriculture initiatives seek to provide flood-affected farmers with seeds to cultivate rice and vegetables during the upcoming yala season, as well as inputs to immediately replant home gardens—a vital source of food among many families. While supplying families with the resources to buy the goods they need most, CFW activities also have the secondary benefit of assisting in the repair of essential infrastructure for agricultural production, such as irrigation canals and water reservoirs.

As a component of the overall response, USAID/OFDA is also working to prevent increases in diseases by restoring families' access to safe drinking water through well cleaning and rehabilitation and distribution of mosquito nets in targeted communities.

As of late February 2011, the USG had provided nearly \$3 million in response to the floods.

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USAID/OFDA Supports DRR in Nepal (Continued from Page 1)

was co-funded by USAID and the U.N.

The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu has made DRR a top priority and has established an office to coordinate DRR efforts across the USG. This holistic approach involves mainstreaming DRR into development programs and coordinating response plans and preparedness measures with the U.S. Military. USAID/OFDA continues to provide critical technical assistance to this endeavor.

DISASTER RESPONSE

Sowing the Seeds of Recovery in Flood-Affected Pakistan



Courtesy of CRS

Twenty-seven year old Arz Muhammad (left) shakes his head, "I don't know (what I would have done), there was nothing else." Muhammad is describing the support he received through a USAID/OFDA-funded Catholic Relief Services (CRS) program that provided 9,750 families with vouchers to purchase agricultural inputs after widespread floods in 2010 washed away crops, already harvested grains, and seeds from the previous harvest. Through the program, beneficiaries were able to redeem vouchers for wheat, vegetable, and other crop seeds, as well as fertilizer for fields, at local seed vendors. Working in partnership with a local organization, Goth Seengar Foundation, CRS then reimbursed vendors who accepted the vouchers.

The voucher system not only provided inputs to impoverished farmers who lost their seed stores in the floods and lacked the resources to buy new ones, it also supported the local economy by providing a much-needed cash injection to seed vendors who were also affected by the floods.

"I asked my wife which seeds to get because she works in the fields and cooks," Muhammad added. While traditionally only men go to the markets, men were encouraged to consult with their wives about which vegetables to grow. In a community where women often have little input in decision-making, this collaboration was a unique opportunity for empowerment and participation.

In the small farming community of Hadi Bux Khosa in Pakistan's Sindh Province, women are now growing tomatoes, potatoes, green chilies, cucumbers, and spinach in their vegetable gardens and wheat in their fields with their USAID/OFDA-funded inputs.

"We can eat now," says Zulekha Khoso, a mother of four, "I am very happy."



Women in Hadi Bux Khosa tend to their crops. (Photo courtesy of CRS)