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**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands

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KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- From October 18 to 22, staff from USAID/OFDA and USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID/RDMA) attended Operational Blueprint tabletop exercises in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)—the first annual pre-typhoon season planning meetings in the two countries. The primary goal of the sessions was to enable participants to develop a common understanding of the Operational Blueprint—the framework that guides U.S. Government (USG) disaster response in FSM and RMI—and to develop response preparedness by simulating disaster scenarios. U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Administrator Nancy Ward visited FSM and RMI from September 27 to 29 to meet with government officials in both nations in preparation for the tabletop exercises.
- Disaster response in FSM and RMI represents a unique interagency collaboration between USAID and FEMA, as well as other USG agencies. As such, on August 11, USAID convened a meeting with representatives from 14 federal agencies in Washington, D.C., to discuss USAID plans for working with other USG agencies during disaster responses in FSM and RMI. The October Operational Blueprint tabletop exercise built on that planning foundation.
- In recent weeks, a Government of FSM team assessed drought conditions in the remote outer island of Kapingamarangi caused by decreased surface water evaporation associated with the La Niña weather phenomenon. A USAID-funded observer from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) joined the team, which reported decreased crop production and a need for increased groundwater conservation. The drought has not exceeded local government capacity to respond; however, USAID personnel continue to monitor the situation.
- On November 25 and 26, IOM hosted a reconstruction workshop in Yap State, FSM, to convene local authorities and a USAID representative to discuss property assessment, community engagement process, and housing design options for use during future post-disaster reconstruction efforts. Participants also considered solutions to challenges posed by construction in the distant outer islands.
- In FY 2010, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$938,000 through USAID/RDMA to IOM to preposition emergency relief supplies in three strategic locations in FSM and RMI, as outlined in the Blueprint. IOM is USAID's primary relief and reconstruction partner in FSM and RMI.

CONTEXT

- In November 2008, USAID assumed responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction in FSM and RMI from FEMA, reflecting the transition of FSM and RMI from U.S.-administered trust territories to independent countries. USAID and FEMA developed the Operational Blueprint to provide a framework for USG disaster response and reconstruction in the two nations, under which USAID maintains FEMA's previous commitment to supplementing host government efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of significant disasters in the two nations.
- Under the Blueprint, USAID maintains a full-time presence in FSM and RMI through the USAID Disaster Assistance Coordinator (DAC). Located in Majuro, RMI, and working as a part of the Embassy country teams in both FSM and RMI, the DAC serves as a liaison with host governments and coordinates USG relief and reconstruction activities in FSM and RMI. USAID coordinates both relief and reconstruction in the two countries, with USAID/OFDA taking the lead on humanitarian assistance and USAID/RDMA heading recovery efforts.
- The central pillar of USAID's disaster mitigation, relief, and reconstruction program—a newly developed framework that mirrors FEMA's former guidelines—is a cooperative agreement between USAID and IOM, which maintains offices in Pohnpei and Yap states, FSM, and Majuro, RMI.

Logistics and Relief Commodities

- With USAID/OFDA funding, IOM prepositioned emergency relief supplies in three of the most historically vulnerable locations throughout FSM and RMI in anticipation of the current December-to-April typhoon season. Commodities include communications equipment, water purification technologies, water storage solutions, tarpaulins, health kits, medical supplies for field hospitals, and generators.
- IOM also has established service agreements with local and regional logistics, medical, and construction agencies to provide emergency assistance if a disaster occurs. In addition, IOM has coordinated with U.N. agencies, Red Cross

societies, and local civil society organizations to optimize humanitarian relief efforts and, as a result, has developed mechanisms for the rapid delivery of emergency relief and reconstruction supplies to islands throughout the region.

Disaster Preparedness

- As part of a contingency planning process, IOM is conducting multi-sectoral assessments of the potentially difficult-to-reach outer islands of both FSM and RMI to collect baseline data. IOM is also conducting hazard, vulnerability, and capacity mapping in coordination with several outer island communities and the Government of FSM.
- In addition to stockpiling USAID/OFDA-funded emergency shelter materials, IOM has consulted with local and national governments in the two nations regarding regionally appropriate post-disaster shelter designs.
- USAID/OFDA also supports disaster preparedness in FSM and RMI through capacity building activities for local and national government officials by way of The Asia Foundation's (TAF) Pacific Islands Disaster Risk Management Program 2. In FY 2010, USAID/OFDA awarded \$750,000 to TAF's three-year program for national and regional disaster management trainings in FSM and RMI, as well as 12 other South Pacific nations. The program also includes initiatives to develop and adapt training materials relevant to the region for use by national governments.

Operational Blueprint Tabletop Exercise

- Approximately 165 participants attended the October 18 to 22 tabletop exercises in both countries, including representatives from the governments of FSM and RMI, more than five USG agencies, IOM, the U.N., and non-governmental organizations. Through a grant from U.S. Pacific Command, local government officials from all four FSM states, as well as from Ebeye Island and Aur Atoll in RMI, were able to attend.
- The tabletop exercises provided participants with an opportunity to plan and coordinate response efforts, assess disaster assistance capabilities, and gain a better understanding of the Operational Blueprint, particularly the steps required to request USG resources in response to a disaster.
- Participants noted that the tabletop exercise was successful in increasing knowledge of the Operational Blueprint, convening key stakeholders in both countries, and creating interest in future collaborative efforts between the USG and the governments of FSM and RMI. In addition, the exercise spurred participants to evaluate current emergency plans, identify organizations with disaster response capacity in the two countries, and build relationships with peers in other agencies.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. Information on organizations responding to the humanitarian situation in FSM and RMI may be available at www.reliefweb.int.
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID: www.usaid.gov – Keyword: Donations
 - The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or (703) 276-1914
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.int