

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

**SUCCESS STORY:
EMERGENCY RELIEF IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Women, men, and children waded through shoulder-deep water. Families moved onto the roofs of their homes with the few household items they were able to salvage. Others were displaced into overcrowded public school buildings, churches, basketball courts, and recreation centers. The three tropical storms which struck the Philippines in rapid succession over the course of September and October 2009 took an enormous toll on the population. Massive amounts of rain poured down on Luzon island, causing widespread flooding and landslides that destroyed roads, swept away houses, provoked extensive power shortages, and rendered many areas of the country inaccessible. An estimated 10 million people were affected, including hundreds of thousands of families displaced from their homes.

In the immediate aftermath of the storms, affected populations required significant assistance. Hundreds of thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed. With rice fields completely inundated, thousands lost their livelihoods and had no means to replace essential household items that were lost during the floods. The

Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) immediately began providing assistance, but it soon became apparent that help from the international community was needed as well. As part of the overall response effort, USAID/OFDA provided funding to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) for the distribution of emergency relief supplies to the most vulnerable people affected by the storms. ADRA implemented the project based on identified humanitarian needs and in close coordination with the GRP and other U.S. Government response programs.



A child helps her mother carry USAID/OFDA-funded relief supplies in Laguna Province, Region IV-A (Amber Callaway, USAID).

MEETING PRIORITY NEEDS

During the days and weeks following the storms, ADRA staff traveled throughout the countryside with members of the government and the humanitarian community to determine priority humanitarian needs in the affected areas. ADRA staff reported that many families lost everything in the floods, including personal hygiene items, and people were suffering from skin rashes and fungal infections. The team reported that families living in evacuation centers were receiving some assistance, both from the GRP and other humanitarian organizations. However, the majority of the people that remained in the flooded areas were not easily accessible and remained in urgent need of emergency relief supplies.

ADRA worked with local government officials to identify the most affected and vulnerable populations around Lake Laguna. With USAID/OFDA funding, ADRA provided cooking sets, hygiene kits, kitchen supplies, water containers, and bedding items to an estimated 50,500 beneficiaries. Pots, pans, food

storage containers, a water basin, and serving utensils were included in the kitchen sets. The hygiene kits, which included soap, toothbrush, diapers, and feminine hygiene items, helped individuals restore personal hygiene care. Water containers provided families with a way to carry safe drinking water back to their homes, reducing their vulnerability to diseases that are caused by drinking contaminated water.

During one distribution conducted in early November, ADRA provided relief supplies to more than 500 families that the organization's staff and government officials had previously identified and registered during a boat assessment.

Community members and local leaders showed up by the dozens to help ADRA staff distribute the supplies. As the ADRA volunteers explained the contents of each kit, families began expressing their appreciation. While exiting the distribution site, one elderly woman held up her relief supplies and stated, "If it weren't for these things, I wouldn't have anything at all." During a briefing with staff members and volunteers following the distribution, the ADRA Director emphasized the need to provide people with more than just relief supplies. He noted, "Anyone can stand here and hand out supplies. At ADRA, we should always strive to pass along a hand shake and a smile as well."



A man exits an ADRA distribution site in the Philippines carrying USAID/OFDA-funded relief supplies (Amber Callaway, USAID).



Husband and wife transport USAID/OFDA relief items from an ADRA distribution site to their house in Laguna Province (Amber Callaway, USAID).

HELPING PEOPLE RECOVER

More than one month after the third tropical storm hit the Philippines, many neighborhoods and towns remain under water. Some areas in the Philippines are expected to remain flooded for the next three to six months. As a result, families are still living in evacuation centers with little or no access to safe drinking water or sanitation and hygiene facilities. Others continue to live on rooftops and wade through standing floodwater on a daily basis, leaving them particularly vulnerable to health problems. While some people have started to return home to rebuild their houses and livelihoods, others have nothing left. These factors have significantly affected the populations' ability to recover and have challenged response efforts.

However, ADRA will continue to work with the GRP to identify the most vulnerable populations on Luzon island and provide them with urgently needed relief supplies. The rapid response and continued provision of emergency relief items has helped minimize health risks and facilitate people's return home. By funding ADRA's relief distribution program, USAID/OFDA is providing much-needed humanitarian assistance, while also helping families recover from the storms' effects.