

USAID/OFDA Program Summary: Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of the Marshall Islands

CONTEXT

In November 2008, USAID assumed responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), reflecting the transition of FSM and RMI from U.S.-administered trust territories to independent countries. USAID and FEMA developed an Operational Blueprint to provide a framework for U.S. Government (USG) disaster response and reconstruction in the two nations, under which USAID maintains FEMA's previous commitment to supplementing host government efforts as necessary to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of significant disasters. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) collaborates closely with FEMA, as well as with USAID/Philippines and USAID's Asia Bureau, to implement programs in FSM and RMI.

An important pillar of USAID's disaster mitigation, relief, and reconstruction program is a cooperative agreement between USAID and its primary relief and reconstruction partner in the two countries, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which maintains offices in Pohnpei and Yap states, FSM, and Majuro, RMI. USAID also maintains a full-time presence in FSM and RMI through a Disaster Assistance Coordinator (DAC). Located in Majuro, RMI, and working as a part of the U.S. Embassy country teams in FSM and RMI, the DAC serves as a liaison with host governments and coordinates USG relief activities in FSM and RMI. USAID recently established a Reconstruction Assistance Coordinator position based out of USAID/Philippines, which will help USAID fulfill the reconstruction aspect of its mandate as specified in the Operational Blueprint.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

- **Field Assessments:** As part of response planning for future disasters, USAID/OFDA dispatched a team of health, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) technical advisors to FSM and RMI in February and March 2012 to conduct sector-specific assessments. The technical advisors assessed local disaster response capacity, evaluated USAID/OFDA-funded disaster preparedness interventions, identified gaps in disaster preparedness, and identified potential disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives. The health, shelter, and WASH assessments followed logistics and communications assessments completed in 2011.
- **Drought Mitigation:** In April 2012, the U.S. Embassy in Majuro delivered five portable reverse osmosis machines to the Government of RMI (GoRMI), which immediately deployed four of them to Wotho and Lae atolls to offset water shortages caused by an ongoing drought. USAID/OFDA procured the machines, which are capable of producing up to 300 gallons of safe drinking water per day, as part of a pilot project aimed at mitigating the impact of drought in RMI's remote islands. The machines' portable nature will help the GoRMI respond to water shortages in remote locations for years to come.
- **Disease Monitoring:** USAID/OFDA continues to monitor a dengue fever outbreak in FSM that began in September 2011, followed by another outbreak in RMI one month later. As of August 30, 2012, authorities had confirmed 194 cases of dengue fever in FSM, including 122 cases on Yap Island and 72 cases on outer islands of Yap State. Neither the Government of FSM nor the GoRMI have requested USAID/OFDA assistance to date; however, other USG entities, including the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have provided technical assistance to the governments. The GoRMI has also withdrawn funding from the joint USG-GoRMI Disaster Assistance Emergency Fund for the response.
- **Conference Participation:** In March 2012, USAID/OFDA health, shelter, and WASH technical advisors attended an interagency roundtable in Honolulu, Hawaii, sponsored by Pacific Risk Management 'Ohana—a

multi-organizational entity working on behalf of U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands to improve community resilience to natural hazards. The roundtable focused on strengthening and expanding regional dialogue on DRR in the Pacific among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

ONGOING DRR PROGRAMS

- **Capacity Building for Disaster Response:** Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, USAID/OFDA has supported IOM through USAID/Philippines to pre-position emergency relief supplies—including hygiene kits, plastic sheeting, and medical supplies—in three strategic locations in FSM and RMI and establish standby agreements with island-based organizations for logistical support during an emergency response, if necessary.

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 total, USAID/OFDA has awarded \$2.4 million 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 includes initiatives to tailor training materials to regional needs to promote greater adoption of disaster management techniques among national governments. In the first two years of the program, TAF has provided the following training courses in FSM or RMI: Introduction to Disaster Management, Initial Damage Assessment, Emergency Operations Centers, Exercise Management, Training for Instructors, and DRR.

- **Landslide Hazard Prevention in FSM:** As typhoons and other weather events that can trigger landslides often affect FSM, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$102,000 in FY 2012 to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to assess landslide hazards in the nation and create maps depicting areas most at risk. Such maps will allow authorities to assist people evacuating from landslide-prone areas as storms approach, allowing ample time for vulnerable populations to pack belongings and relocate before the storm and associated landslides strike. In August, USGS completed an initial assessment of the landslide mapping and planning program and subsequently shared data with the FSM Department of Resources and Development, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Hawaii Geographic Information Coordinating Council for use in map making and further dissemination of geographic information system data.
- **Weather Alerts for Remote Communities:** While some communities in the remote outer islands of FSM and RMI have the means of receiving warnings for typhoons and other extreme weather events, limited electricity often thwarts their ability to use primary communications systems 24 hours a day. Many other communities lack access to sophisticated communications devices and remain unaware as storms approach. To address this critical early warning gap, USAID/OFDA provided \$100,000 in FY 2012 assistance to NOAA to provide an alert system to send weather notifications to remote locations in FSM and RMI. Developed by the USAID/OFDA-funded Radio and Internet for the Dissemination of Hydrometeorological Information project, this messaging system connects meteorological warning authorities with emergency managers when a storm is imminent and evacuations may be necessary. The system can operate in remote and environmentally harsh environments and does not require a consistent energy source to function.
- **Climate Change and Disaster Awareness in FSM:** In FSM, USAID/OFDA has launched the Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Education (CADRE) Pilot Project to raise awareness of climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness in both schools and communities on Pohnpei Island, through \$60,000 to IOM. To date, the CADRE Project has partnered with the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program to access nearly 400 eighth grade students at six elementary schools on island.