



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

**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**Assessing Progress and Remaining Humanitarian Needs in Sri Lanka**

From May 7-11, USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor for South Asia Rob Friedman traveled with staff from USAID/Sri Lanka, the U.S. Embassy in Colombo, and U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration to Sri Lanka's conflict-affected Northern Province. Since the conflict's end in 2009, USAID/Sri Lanka and USAID/OFDA have partnered closely to ensure a unity of effort in providing humanitarian assistance and undertaking development programs benefiting Northern Province's internally displaced persons (IDPs). The inter-agency team visited all five of Northern Province's districts and met with a wide



**A Tamil family returns to Northern Province. (Photo by Rob Friedman, USAID/OFDA)**

variety of stakeholders, including U.N. representatives, USAID non-governmental organization (NGO) partner staff, and members of the Sri Lankan Army, who play a role in the resettlement of IDPs.

The visit provided an opportunity for the team to assess the overall humanitarian situation in Northern Province and identify remaining humanitarian needs that exist among IDPs and former IDPs who have resettled in the province. The visit also enabled the team to evaluate the transition from emergency relief to development that has been occurring in Northern Province in recent years. The visit included a trip to hard hit Maritimpattu, site of the conflict's end in 2009, where the

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**DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

**Preparing for a Future Earthquake Response in Nepal**

Following the completion of a whole-of-U.S. Government disaster risk reduction assessment in Nepal in 2011, USAID/OFDA initiated discussions to define how it would respond to a catastrophic earthquake in Nepal. As a product of those discussions, USAID/OFDA formed the Nepal Contingency Working Group (NCWG) to develop a USAID/OFDA earthquake response contingency plan for Nepal. The NCWG comprises staff from various USAID/OFDA divisions who likely would be involved in an earthquake response in Nepal.

From June 17-23, approximately half of the NCWG members traveled to Nepal to gather information for the earthquake response contingency plan and initiate planning with USAID/Nepal and U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu counterparts. The team comprised staff possessing expertise in logistics, safety and security, communications,



**NCWG members tour Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu Valley. (Photo courtesy of NSET)**

and administration, as well as a military liaison officer and the lead drafter of the contingency plan. In addition to meeting with USAID and Department of State staff in Kathmandu, the team met with representatives from multiple NGOs, Government of Nepal officials, and members of the private sector. The visit enabled USAID/OFDA staff to directly observe the conditions that increase Nepal's vulnerability to a major earthquake

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**DISASTER RESPONSE**

**Assisting Flood-Affected Populations in Afghanistan**

The 2012 spring season has caused localized flooding throughout Afghanistan, particularly the country's northern provinces, affecting thousands of Afghans. USAID/OFDA partners and the greater humanitarian community are meeting flood-related humanitarian needs by rapidly delivering emergency relief supplies—including blankets, shelter materials, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) items—to affected populations, even in remote areas. Many of the relief supplies have been drawn from stockpiles that USAID/OFDA pre-positioned in strategic locations throughout the country prior to the spring season. The pre-positioning of emergency relief supplies for rapid distribution to affected populations in the event of a disaster is a key element of USAID/OFDA's disaster preparedness and response strategy in Afghanistan.

## Assessing Progress and Remaining Humanitarian Needs in Sri Lanka

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team observed that communities who had benefitted from USAID/OFDA shelter, livelihoods, and WASH programs were moving ahead steadily on the recovery process. With information gathered during the assessment, USAID/OFDA will be able to more precisely target assistance to address the remaining humanitarian needs in Northern Province.

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### Advancing Seismic Safety in Nepal

From June 24-28, USAID/OFDA Regional Advisor for South Asia Rob Friedman and Washington D.C.-based information officer John Arnold accompanied staff from USAID/Nepal and USAID/OFDA partner the National Society for Earthquake Technology–Nepal (NSET) to assess ongoing disaster risk reduction programs in eastern Nepal and evaluate opportunities for future programs. Municipalities in eastern Nepal have benefitted from USAID/OFDA earthquake risk reduction programs implemented by NSET for years, but the population's desire for additional programs increased following the 6.9 magnitude earthquake that struck the region on September 18, 2011. During the trip, the USAID and NSET team met with government officials in Dharan, Ilam, and Dhankuta municipalities, all of which have benefitted, to varying degrees, from USAID/OFDA earthquake risk reduction programs implemented by NSET.



**USAID/OFDA and NSET staff tour the grounds on which a new school is being constructed using seismically safe building practices (Photo by John Arnold, USAID/OFDA).**

In Dharan, the team observed multiple public buildings and private residences that were being constructed in a seismically safe manner under the guidance of engineers and masons trained by NSET. From the meetings in Ilam and Dhankuta, the team obtained an understanding of how the municipalities were moving toward implementing Nepal's building codes.

## SOUTH ASIA WELCOMES NEW REGIONAL ADVISOR

USAID/OFDA welcomes Michael Ernst to the South Asia team as a regional advisor based in Bangkok, Thailand. Michael has been working on development and disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and risk reduction issues in Asia for the past 16 years. He most recently served as Regional Disaster Reduction Advisor for the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) Asia-Pacific Regional Center in Bangkok and has worked in various capacities for UNDP and other U.N. agencies since 2005. Michael previously served with USAID/OFDA as an American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow and with USAID/Bangladesh.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

### Providing Emergency Assistance to IDPs in Pakistan

Government of Pakistan security operations against armed groups in Khyber Agency, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, have resulted in a new wave of displacement in recent months. According to the U.N., approximately 47,000 families had registered as displaced from Khyber Agency from early March through the end of June. Most newly arriving IDPs from Khyber Agency are opting to reside within host communities, as opposed to IDP camps, placing a burden on the already overstretched resources of both IDPs and host communities. Many of the communities currently hosting IDPs from Khyber Agency have hosted several waves of IDPs since 2009.

To meet the humanitarian needs of the newly displaced, USAID/OFDA is working with vetted local partners that have access to affected communities and understand local needs. USAID/OFDA priorities include preventing the spread of, and reducing the health risks from, water- and vector-borne diseases, particularly in host communities where there are limited resources and poor water quality. USAID/OFDA is also supporting the installation and repair of hand pumps, promotion of hygiene awareness, installation of latrines, and distribution of hygiene kits.



**Children in Peshtakara Payen Union Council, Peshawar, wait to receive safe drinking water provided by a USAID/OFDA implementing partner (Courtesy of a USAID/OFDA implementing partner).**

In addition, USAID/OFDA is supporting the distribution of cash grants to help household heads meet the immediate shelter, food, and health care needs of their families. Finally, USAID/OFDA partners are assisting IDPs with registration,

which enables them to receive humanitarian assistance provided exclusively to registered IDPs by U.N. organizations.

### Preparing for a Future Earthquake Response in Nepal (Continued from page 1)

and challenged them to critically examine how USAID/OFDA would lead a future earthquake response in the landlocked country. The second group of NCWG members is scheduled to travel to Nepal in September. The contingency plan is expected to be finalized by the end of 2012.

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