



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

## DISASTER RESPONSE



**Families in Kabul informal settlements receive USAID/OFDA-funded hygiene kits containing soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and other items. (Photo courtesy of Save the Children/U.S.)**

families with hygiene kits and hygiene promotion activities to help mitigate the spread of disease. By February 20, USAID/OFDA partners had already reached more than 93 percent of people staying in Kabul informal settlements, as well as nearly 6,100 families across eight additional Afghan provinces, helping families survive the harsh winter conditions.

### **Responding to Severe Cold in Afghanistan**

In response to the most severe winter in 15 years, USAID/OFDA is distributing cold weather-related emergency relief supplies to the most vulnerable families in Afghanistan.

In Kabul, the effects of the winter have been particularly severe on families staying in informal settlements. Comprising internally displaced persons—including economic migrants and former refugees—the estimated 30,000 people residing in informal settlements throughout Kabul already had limited access to basic services before severe weather conditions began.

To help families cope with cold temperatures, USAID/OFDA, through partners Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US) and the International Organization for Migration, distributed emergency relief supplies—including blankets, winter clothing, and tarpaulins—already stockpiled in-country to protect families from the harsh weather conditions and provided

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### **Enhancing Disaster Response Capacity in Bangladesh**

With USAID/OFDA support, the National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal (NSET) and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) are building the capacity of first responders, medical staff, and community members in Bangladesh through the Program for the Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER).

In January and February, 50 community members from Narinda District in Old Dhaka and Paikpara—a rural area outside Dhaka—participated in PEER trainings, focused on increasing the cadre of qualified instructors to conduct disaster preparedness trainings in the country. Among the topics covered in the trainings, local red crescent volunteers and community members received instruction and participated in simulations on how to assess hazards, rescue people trapped under collapsed buildings, and conduct water rescues in the event of a flood. In a country as vulnerable to disasters as Bangladesh, the skills learned in these trainings are not only useful, but they also help save lives.

(Continued on page 2)



**Communities learn about collapsed structure search and rescue (SAR) during a PEER training. (Photo courtesy of ADPC)**

## Enhancing Response Capacity in Bangladesh (Continued from Page 1)



**The Community Action for Disaster Response (CADRE) training focuses on extending the reach of PEER trainings down to the local level. (Photo courtesy of ADPC)**

Started in Bangladesh in 2003, PEER has helped train hundreds of first responders in Bangladesh, and PEER-trained personnel have responded to at least five events in the country, saving dozens of lives in the process. In 2005, a nine-story factory outside of Dhaka collapsed, trapping 200 people beneath tons of rubble. Immediately following the event, the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense (FSCD)—a PEER partner—dispatched personnel to conduct rescue operations, saving 34 people in coordination with other agencies. The PEER-trained FSCD personnel noted that the skills learned in the PEER medical first response and collapsed structure search-and-rescue trainings enhanced their abilities as rescue personnel, enabling a more effective response.



**Rescuers tunnel through stories of a collapsed building to reach trapped individuals during the 2005 response. (Photo courtesy of NSET)**

Building on this knowledge, FSCD staff have adapted training materials and components of PEER courses into their own training curriculum for new recruits. Furthermore, imparting these skills is at the center of FSCD's program to recruit and train 60,000 volunteer fire fighters to enhance response capacity across the country's 252 fire stations. In the coming months, NSET plans to conduct further PEER trainings to enhance disaster response capacity in Bangladesh, including the first instructors training courses conducted in Bengali. During the program's pilot phase, completed in 2011, 1,200 volunteers received training.

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## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### ICS Training in Bhutan

From December 5 to 8, 2011, USAID/OFDA partner the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) conducted incident command system (ICS) training for disaster management personnel in Bhutan. ICS is a standardized, all-hazards incident management approach that allows the integration of personnel, facilities, equipment, procedures, and communications within a common organizational structure, thereby enhancing coordination and the effectiveness of disaster response operations. Since the mid-1980s, USAID/OFDA has utilized technical experience from USFS to institutionalize the system and implement disaster management capacity building programs throughout the world. In response to a request from the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) Department of Disaster Management (DDM), USFS provided the ICS training to 45 participants, including disaster management focal points from Bhutan's 20 districts, DDM staff, and members of the new RGoB interagency SAR team.



**RGoB personnel participate in exercises during the ICS training. (Photo courtesy of USFS)**

## DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

### Engaging the Private Sector in Earthquake Preparedness in Nepal

On December 21, 2011, NSET, the Nepal-USA Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and USAID organized the first in a series of consultative meetings with the private sector in Nepal as a part of the USAID/OFDA-funded Public-Private Partnership for Earthquake Risk Management (3PERM) program. At the meeting, 186 participants, including the heads of several banks and insurance companies in Nepal, initiated a dialogue to enhance earthquake awareness and engage private sector organizations in risk reduction activities.

The 3PERM program seeks to demonstrate the economic, social, and corporate feasibility of public-private partnerships in disaster risk reduction (DRR), with an aim of convincing the private sector that risk reduction is a sound investment. During the meeting, participants agreed on the importance of DRR and highlighted that disaster risks must be met by joint engagement between the public and private sectors. Stakeholders in the banking and insurance sectors also indicated a willingness to initiate disaster mitigation programs, where possible.