



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

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

U.S. Government Launches Disaster Preparedness Programs in Thailand



Ambassador Kenney, Governor Pewpong, and staff from USAID/OFDA and ADPC launch disaster preparedness programs with health staff from Ayutthaya Hospital (Courtesy of ADPC).

The tragedy of 800 deaths and more than 13 million people affected by the 2011 floods in Thailand would be compounded if those most affected did not use the experience as an opportunity to learn and prepare for the next time heavy rains persist beyond their usual accumulation.

Fortunately, with the help of USAID/OFDA, communities, hospitals, and government agencies will be doing just that, through two projects implemented by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and launched on April 27.

“We all remember the floods of last year,” U.S. Ambassador to Thailand Kristie A. Kenney said at the event. “We all remember the incredible suffering of people out of their homes ... I am proud that the U.S. Government provided immediate assistance then, and I’m also very proud that we’re still here working with the Thai people.”

(Continued on page 2)

DISASTER RESPONSE

Spurring Flood Recovery in Cambodia

Families that lost rice crop during Cambodia’s floods of September and October 2011 have planted new crops and sold them at the market. Those who lost access to safe drinking water now have raised and covered wells that are protected from seasonal flooding. These steps toward recovery came courtesy of a flood response program supported by USAID/OFDA and implemented by World Vision.



Children in Sandan District, Kampong Thom Province, escape the heat with clean water from a shared community well that received USAID/OFDA-supported upgrades, including the concrete cover and hand pump. Local residents helped elevate the well’s base and received needed short-term income through cash for work (Alison Lapp, USAID).

(Continued on page 2)

DISASTER RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA Responds to Floods in Fiji

Continuous heavy rains associated with a tropical depression that formed on March 30 caused widespread flooding in Fiji’s Western Division and prompted the Government of Fiji to declare a state of natural disaster on April 1. At the height of the flood, an estimated 15,000 people took shelter in evacuation centers, although most returned home after several days, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The flood resulted in four deaths and destroyed at least 96 houses, and almost 200 people remained in evacuation centers one month after the onset of the rains. The floods also damaged roads and bridges, limiting access to affected communities. The event came on the heels of floods and landslides in late January that killed six people, displaced 3,500 others, and destroyed crops and houses.

On April 1, U.S. Ambassador Frankie A. Reed declared a disaster due to the effects of the floods. In response, USAID/OFDA provided \$150,000 through the U.S. Embassy in Suva to the Fiji Red Cross Society and the Rotary Club of Suva to procure and distribute emergency relief supplies, including blankets, hygiene kits, and water purification tablets, to the most affected individuals.

Thailand Program Launch

(Continued from page 1)

In addition to Ambassador Kenney, Governor of Ayutthaya Province Dr. Withaya Pewpong and officials from relevant Thai ministries attended the launch, which took place at Ayutthaya Hospital—the site of inundation and effective evacuation of patients during the floods in October.

The newly launched Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) will help hospitals like the one in Ayutthaya by training health care providers to respond effectively during crises. With the expansion to Thailand, PEER is now active in 10 Asian countries. Also through PEER, community members learn first responder skills, including collapsed structure search and rescue and basic first aid.

To address specific flood risks, USAID/OFDA and ADPC also launched the Program for Reduction of Vulnerability to Floods in Thailand, designed to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Thailand Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation and related national and local institutions to develop and implement flood mitigation projects.

“People in flood-prone areas know exactly what they are facing, but they don’t know when or how bad the floods are going to be,” said ADPC Special Advisor Dr. Bhichit Rat-takul. “The way to address these unknowns is to prepare. With these two programs, in the years to come, we will make our society a safer place to live.”

DISASTER RESPONSE

Flood Recovery in Cambodia

(Continued from page 1)

During the week of April 22, staff from USAID/OFDA and USAID/Cambodia visited the severely affected Kampong Thom Province to monitor World Vision activities. The non-governmental organization (NGO) also carried out activities in



A man upgrades his family latrine using USAID/OFDA-provided materials and training (Alison Lapp, USAID)

Kandal Province, and USAID/OFDA responded to similar flood needs in Kampong Cham and Prey Veng provinces through Save the Children, U.S.

The USAID team observed that, in the six months since the floods, World Vision had used USAID/OFDA funds to upgrade existing community wells and latrines to prevent contamination of drinking water during annual floods and had trained individuals in flood-prone areas on hand-washing techniques to reduce the risk of waterborne disease transmission. Nearly 4,500 poor households received cash crop seeds and had planted watermelon, corn, cucumbers, and morning glory, generating a profit equal to about two months of lost income. In addition, local residents participated in rehabilitating damaged infrastructure through cash-for-work projects to clean school grounds, improve wells, and repair key roads to markets and clinics—giving them a hand in restoring their communities.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Community Disaster Response in Vietnam

Residents of the affected community are often first on the scene to help friends and neighbors when disaster strikes—a fact that USAID and ADPC are building on through PEER trainings in Vietnam. In February and March, staff and volunteer teams from the Vietnam Red Cross Society (VRCS) received USAID/OFDA-funded Community Action for Disaster Response (CADRE) trainings managed by ADPC.



A PEER trainee learns fire response skills during a training in Hue, Vietnam (Courtesy of ADPC).

The trainings took place in the central Vietnamese city of Hue and covered the basics of disaster first response, so that participants are now able to help other community members in the event of a flood, landslide, building collapse, fire, mass-casualty event, or any other disaster occurring close to home.

Forty-seven participants completed the course and became CADRE instructors. The majority of new instructors are VRCS staff, who, through a USAID/OFDA-supported program with the American Red Cross, will pass the training on to more than 800 VNRC volunteers in 40 disaster-prone communes of central Vietnam. By teaching critical first response skills to residents of Vietnam’s urban districts and rural villages, USAID/OFDA is helping communities to turn the harrowing hours when people are at risk directly following a disaster into a critical window of opportunity for saving lives.

EAP Welcomes New Program Officer

USAID/OFDA welcomes Erin Magee to the EAP team as a program officer based in Bangkok, Thailand. Erin has worked with USAID/OFDA for four years, including two years as an information officer for the USAID/OFDA regional office in Bangkok, and has served on humanitarian responses in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Prior to joining USAID/OFDA, Erin worked with the U.S. Mission to the U.N., ReliefWeb, and an NGO assisting Darfuri refugees in the United States.

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