

Regional Snapshot

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC | FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2014



REGIONAL SUMMARY¹

Recurrent earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, seasonal floods, and typhoons, as well as limited government response capacity in some countries, present significant challenges to vulnerable populations in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP)² region. In addition to staff in Washington, D.C., USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) maintains a permanent regional office for EAP in Bangkok, Thailand. As of October 2014, USAID/OFDA also had a regional advisor based in Jakarta, Indonesia, and a disaster assistance coordinator covering the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

RECENT HUMANITARIAN EVENTS IN THE REGION

- In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA worked with host country governments, U.N. agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to respond to humanitarian needs resulting from sudden-onset disasters in the EAP region, including three separate disasters in the Philippines.
- An earthquake in the Philippines' Bohol Province on October 15, 2013, resulted in 223 deaths, injured 159 people, and affected approximately 1.3 million individuals.
- Typhoon Haiyan—known locally as Yolanda—made landfall in the central Philippines on November 8, 2013. The typhoon affected 16 million people in the country, resulted in an estimated 6,300 deaths, and displaced 4.1 million people. USAID activated a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team and deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team to the Philippines to assess humanitarian needs, coordinate the U.S. Government (USG) response, and support international disaster response efforts. The USG committed nearly \$91 million in FY 2014 assistance to provide emergency shelter and relief commodities; support protection and water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions (WASH); and strengthen livelihood opportunities for typhoon-affected populations.
- Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda also affected the Republic of Palau, displacing approximately 1,500 people.
- Tropical Cyclone Ian struck Tonga's Ha'apai island group on January 11, 2014. The storm—the strongest to hit Tonga in recorded history—resulted in one death and displaced approximately 2,000 people.
- Mt. Sinabung volcano in Indonesia's North Sumatra Province erupted in February, displacing more than 31,000 people and resulting in 16 deaths. The Government of Indonesia attributed an additional 14 deaths to health conditions exacerbated by the volcanic eruptions and consequent displacement.
- April floods in the Solomon Islands resulted in 16 deaths and affected up to 20,000 people—nearly 20 percent of the island's population.
- Typhoon Rammasun—locally known as Glenda—made landfall in the Philippines' Luzon Island on July 15 and 16, resulting in at least 40 deaths and damaging or destroying more than 26,000 houses.
- In Burma, an estimated 236,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) continue to require humanitarian assistance—including food, shelter, and WASH support—in Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan states. Clashes between Government of Burma (GoB) forces and armed groups continued to result in displacement throughout FY 2014, while weather-related events, including heavy rain and floods, exacerbated humanitarian needs among vulnerable populations.

¹ For additional information on the humanitarian situation in East Asia and the Pacific, please see USAID/OFDA fact sheets, available at <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>

² The EAP region includes Australia, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Laos, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, North Korea, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

USAID/OFDA PRIORITIES FOR 2015

- USAID/OFDA's 2015 approach in EAP reflects the increased importance of Asia and the Pacific within the USG and the need to maintain and build relationships in key countries.
- USAID/OFDA will continue to monitor and respond to sudden-onset disaster events while leading efforts to build resilience to hazards through disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities.
- Building on pilot DRR programs from previous years, in FY 2015 USAID/OFDA will consolidate and replicate successful initiatives. DRR programming will focus on two core areas: prioritizing and strengthening early warning, preparedness, and mitigation; and integrating DRR with response, early recovery, and transition.
- USAID/OFDA will continue to engage with and provide support to host governments, particularly through direct support to national disaster management organizations.
- In the Philippines, USAID/OFDA will expand DRR programs into areas affected by Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda and build on OFDA-supported response and recovery programs by helping typhoon-affected communities prepare for future storm events.
- USAID/OFDA will maintain its sub-regional office in Jakarta, Indonesia, enabling close coordination with host country organizations and rapid responses to disaster events. In Indonesia, USAID/OFDA will prioritize DRR interventions that build the capacity of Indonesia's National Disaster Management Agency, bolster early warning systems capabilities, and support community-based disaster risk management efforts.
- USAID/OFDA will continue to respond to immediate needs in conflict-affected areas of Burma. USAID/OFDA will also scale-up DRR efforts in recognition of Burma's vulnerability to disasters and the potential for hazards to exacerbate existing humanitarian needs among vulnerable populations.

CHALLENGES

- Rapid urbanization and population growth, combined with increased severity of storms and sea level rise linked to climate change, have exacerbated vulnerabilities in the region and increased the human and economic impact of disasters.
- Limited information and data sharing among institutions present challenges to disaster preparedness and mitigation.
- Community resistance and insecurity impedes humanitarian access to some IDP sites in Burma's Rakhine State. In addition, relief actors have limited access to IDP populations residing in areas of Kachin State outside of GoB control.
- Long travel distances within and between countries in the EAP region limit U.S.-based response capabilities and often stress local or regional responses.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED IN 2014

- While many countries in EAP have increased capacity and resources, national authorities continue to require and request technical assistance to help them better prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the risks of disasters.
- Maintaining a robust field presence in the region is critical to facilitating rapid responses. USAID/OFDA deployed a regional advisor based in Bangkok, Thailand, to the Philippines immediately prior to Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan's landfall, with additional Bangkok-based staff deployed in the critical first days after the disaster, helping to ensure the success of the response.
- International donors, including regional bodies such as the Association for Southeast Asian Nations, are increasingly engaging in disaster response in Asia. USAID/OFDA can support these donors to better engage with U.N. agencies, NGOs, and other humanitarian actors during disaster responses.