



Regional Snapshot

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Fiscal Year (FY) 2016

Earthquakes, floods, forest and peat fires, storms, and other natural disasters, as well as limited government response capacity in some countries, present significant challenges to vulnerable populations in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region.¹ In addition to staff in Washington, D.C., USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) maintains a regional office for EAP in Bangkok, Thailand, and sub-regional offices in Jakarta, Indonesia; Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI); and Manila, Philippines.

Recent Humanitarian Events in the Region

- In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA responded to multiple disasters in EAP, including the ongoing complex emergency in Burma, an earthquake in Taiwan, a winter emergency in Mongolia, Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji, flooding in Papua New Guinea, and droughts in Indonesia, Palau, RMI, and Vietnam.
- As of August, an estimated 220,000 people remained displaced in Burma's Kachin, Rakhine, and Shan states due to clashes between government forces and armed groups throughout FY 2016. Additionally, August flooding exacerbated humanitarian needs among vulnerable populations and affected an estimated 477,400 people across the country.
- On February 5, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck southern Taiwan, resulting in at least 110 deaths, an estimated 550 injured persons, and significant structural damage.
- During the 2015/2016 winter season, Mongolia experienced extreme temperatures and heavy snowfall—known as a *dzud*—that caused an estimated 1.1 million livestock deaths from exposure or starvation, leaving vulnerable herder families in need of support to access food and other basic necessities. The Government of Mongolia declared *dzud* or near-*dzud* conditions in 20 of Mongolia's 21 provinces in February.
- Tropical Cyclone Winston passed over Fiji in late February, causing flash floods that displaced an estimated 50,000 people and damaged schools and communications, electricity, and water service systems.
- El Niño conditions in FY 2016 resulted in above-average temperatures and below-average rainfall across the EAP region. In Indonesia, an estimated 425,000 people developed acute respiratory tract infections due to haze and smoke pollution caused by forest fires exacerbated by drought. In Palau, local authorities reported significant water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs due to extreme drought conditions. Similarly, drought conditions and resulting water scarcity affected at least 21,000 people in RMI, while approximately 2 million drought-affected people in Vietnam required safe drinking water and other WASH assistance. Floods and landslides in Papua New Guinea exacerbated the significant needs of drought-affected populations already made vulnerable by severely diminished food production and limited access to safe drinking water.

¹ 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 2017

- USAID/OFDA will continue to monitor and respond to sudden-onset events while leading efforts to build resilience through disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities.
- Building on pilot DRR programs from previous years, USAID/OFDA plans to replicate successful initiatives in FY 2017 to increase disaster readiness and reduce vulnerabilities. DRR programming in EAP will focus on two core areas; the first is prioritizing and strengthening early warning, preparedness, and mitigation activities; the second is continuing to integrate DRR programming with response, early recovery, and transition initiatives.
- USAID/OFDA will continue to engage with and provide support to host governments, particularly focusing on building capacity of national disaster management organizations.
- In the Philippines, USAID/OFDA—through its newly established sub-regional office in Manila—will expand DRR programs and build on USAID/OFDA-supported response and recovery programs by helping vulnerable communities prepare for future disasters.
- USAID/OFDA will maintain its sub-regional office in Jakarta, enabling close coordination with host country organizations and rapid responses to disaster events. 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 support DRR efforts in recognition of Burma's vulnerability to disasters and the potential for hazards to exacerbate existing humanitarian needs among vulnerable populations.
- In the Pacific Islands, including in RMI and the Federated States of Micronesia, USAID/OFDA will continue to build regional and national disaster management capacity to respond to and mitigate the impact of storms and flooding, as well as other extreme weather events related to climate change.

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 EAP region and increased the human and economic impact of disasters.
- In Burma, insecurity impedes humanitarian access to some displacement sites in Rakhine. In addition, relief actors have limited access to internally displaced populations residing in areas of Kachin outside Government of Burma control.
- Long travel distances within and between countries in the EAP region limit response capabilities and often stress local or regional responses.

Key Lessons Learned in 2016

- While many countries in the EAP region 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. Leveraging existing partnerships and DRR programs mitigated the effects of drought in at-risk countries, particularly in the Pacific region.
- Maintaining a robust USAID/OFDA presence in the region is critical to facilitating rapid responses. In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA established a sub-regional office in Manila to maintain relationships with Government of Philippines authorities and partner organizations, aiming to bolster DRR efforts and facilitate disaster responses. USAID/OFDA also continues to strengthen relationships with local authorities and partner organizations through sub-regional offices in Jakarta and Majuro.
- International donors, including regional bodies such as the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), are increasingly engaging in disaster response in Asia. USAID/OFDA can support these organizations better to engage with UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other humanitarian actors during disaster responses.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION on the humanitarian situation in EAP, 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>.