USAID/OFDA PROGRAM SUMMARY

FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA, REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS, AND PALAU

CONTEXT

In November 2008, USAID assumed responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), reflecting the transition of FSM and RMI from U.S.-administered trust territories to independent countries. USAID and FEMA developed an Operational Blueprint to provide a framework for U.S. Government (USG) disaster response and reconstruction in the two nations, under which USAID maintains FEMA's previous commitment to supplementing host government efforts as necessary to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of significant disasters. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) collaborates closely with FEMA, as well as with USAID/Philippines and USAID's Asia Bureau, to implement programs in FSM and RMI. In Palau, USAID/OFDA responds to disasters through its normal disaster response mechanisms.

An important pillar of USAID's disaster mitigation, relief, and reconstruction program in FSM and RMI is a cooperative agreement between USAID and its primary relief and reconstruction partner in the two countries, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which maintains offices in Pohnpei and Yap states, FSM, and Majuro, RMI. USAID also maintains a full-time presence in FSM and RMI through a Disaster Assistance Coordinator (DAC). Located in Majuro and working as a member of the U.S. Embassy country teams in FSM and RMI, the DAC serves as a liaison with host governments and coordinates USG relief activities in FSM and RMI. USAID recently established a position for a Reconstruction Assistance Coordinator based in USAID/Philippines, who helps USAID fulfill the reconstruction component of its mandate as specified in the Operational Blueprint.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

- **Immediate Drought Response in RMI**: In March 2013, USAID/OFDA provided funding for seven reverse osmosis machines to enhance drought response capability in RMI. The machines, which are part of ongoing support to mitigate drought conditions in RMI, can produce approximately 500 gallons of safe drinking water per day. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, USAID/OFDA donated five reverse osmosis machines with the capacity to produce more than 1,250 gallons of safe drinking water per day. Currently, all the machines are in active operation in the outer islands of Wotho Atoll, Lae Atoll, Namu Atoll, Mejit Island, and Lib Island.

- **Typhoon Bopha Response in FSM and Palau**: After developing southeast of FSM as a tropical depression, Typhoon Bopha tracked south of Palau in early December 2012, bringing typhoon-strength winds, downing trees and other vegetation, and damaging basic infrastructure. In outlying island areas of Palau, Typhoon Bopha caused a storm surge bringing ocean waters several hundred feet inland, damaging roads and dispersing debris. USAID/OFDA deployed several staff members to Palau and Guam to coordinate assistance efforts and conduct assessments in affected areas. On December 5, 2012, the U.S. Embassy in Koror, Palau, declared a disaster due to the effects of Typhoon Bopha. In response, USAID/OFDA provided $100,000 to the Palau Red Cross for emergency support for typhoon-affected populations. During the course of the disaster response, USAID/OFDA coordinated with FEMA, the U.S. Department of Defense, and other federal partners, as well as IOM, on potential response options in FSM and Palau.

- **Federal Partners Meeting in Washington, D.C.:** In late November 2012, representatives from USAID/OFDA, FEMA, USAID/Philippines, and 14 other federal agencies participated in a conference to discuss and review disaster response and reconstruction assistance mechanisms in FSM and RMI. To clarify the disaster response process, USAID and FEMA created a scenario exercise in which the island of Pohnpei experienced a devastating typhoon. Working in small breakout groups with multi-agency representation, USAID/OFDA, USAID/Philippines, and FEMA solicited the actions of each participating federal agency for the

pre-event, emergency relief, and reconstruction phases during the hypothetical response. The exercise provided participants the opportunity to discuss a range of issues, including how disaster information would be shared among interagency partners, the status of interagency agreements and benefits of using pre-arranged or pre-scripted versions, the agencies' interaction with national and state government bodies, possible working conditions during a disaster, and the structure of the USAID/OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART).

- **Operational Blueprint Review:** In November 2012, staff from USAID/OFDA and FEMA met to discuss the revision of the Operational Blueprint document that guides the hybrid USAID–FEMA agreement for assistance in FSM and RMI. The Operational Blueprint mandates a revision every five years. Participants discussed the progress and status of the IOM agreement and plans for future programming. USAID and FEMA also mapped the disaster response and reconstruction process, outlining national government, USAID, and FEMA actions for each stage of a likely disaster in FSM and RMI.

ONGOING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR) PROGRAMS

- **Capacity Building for Disaster Response:** Since FY 2010, USAID/OFDA has funded IOM through USAID/Philippines to pre-position emergency relief supplies—including hygiene kits, plastic sheeting, and medical supplies—in three strategic locations in FSM and RMI and establish standby agreements with island-based organizations for logistical support during an emergency response, if necessary.
- USAID/OFDA also supports disaster preparedness in FSM and RMI through capacity building activities for local and national government officials by way of The Asia Foundation's (TAF) Pacific Islands Disaster Risk Management Program 2. In total, USAID/OFDA has awarded more than $2.2 million since 2010 to TAF's three-year program for national and regional disaster management trainings in FSM and RMI, as well as DRR training programs in eight other Pacific Island nations. The program includes initiatives to tailor training materials to regional needs to promote greater adoption of disaster management techniques among national governments. In the first two years of the program, TAF has provided the following training courses in FSM or RMI: Introduction to Disaster Management, Initial Damage Assessment, Emergency Operations Centers, Exercise Management, Training for Instructors, and DRR.

- **Landslide Hazard Prevention in FSM:** As typhoons and other weather events that can trigger landslides often affect FSM, USAID/OFDA provided more than $102,000 in FY 2012 to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to assess landslide hazards in the nation and create maps depicting areas most at risk. Such maps allow authorities to assist people evacuating from landslide-prone areas as storms approach, allowing ample time for vulnerable populations to pack belongings and relocate before the storm and associated landslides strike. In August 2012, USGS completed an initial assessment of the landslide mapping and planning program and subsequently shared data with the FSM Department of Resources and Development, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Hawaii Geographic Information Coordinating Council for use in map making and further dissemination of geographic information system data.

- **Weather Alerts for Remote Communities:** While some communities in the remote outer islands of FSM and RMI have the means of receiving warnings for typhoons and other extreme weather events, limited electricity often thwarts their ability to use primary communications systems 24 hours a day. Many other communities lack access to sophisticated communications devices and remain unaware as storms approach. To address this critical early warning gap, USAID/OFDA provided $100,000 in FY 2012 assistance to NOAA for an alert system to send weather notifications to remote locations in FSM and RMI. Developed by the USAID/OFDA-funded Radio and Internet for the Dissemination of Hydrometeorological Information project, this messaging system connects meteorological warning authorities with emergency managers when a storm is imminent and evacuations may be necessary. The system can operate in remote and harsh environments and does not require a consistent energy source to function.

- **Climate Change and Disaster Awareness in FSM:** In FSM, USAID/OFDA has launched the Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Education (CADRE) Pilot Project to raise awareness of climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness in both schools and communities on Pohnpei Island through $60,000 to IOM. To date, the CADRE Project has partnered with the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program to access nearly 400 eighth grade students at six elementary schools on the island.