

# DASP Digest



US Forest Service International Programs  
Disaster Assistance Support Program

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## Highlights

DASP supports OFDA response to high seas in Micronesia and the Marshall Islands. *Page 1*

DASP builds capacity of the detainer cadre. *Page 5*

## Contents

Donations Blog	2
FOG Distribution	2
Detailer Updates	3
Burma After Action	3
Systems Highlights	4
Detailer Capacity Building	5
Mission Preparedness	6
Training	7
Welcome to Zimmerman	10

*A joint USAID/OFDA and U.S. Forest Service assessment team traveled to Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.*

*DASP Digest is a quarterly report produced by the Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP), a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service International Programs and USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). For more information please visit our website at [www.fs.fed.us/global/](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/).*

## Making Waves in Oceania



The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) have Compacts of Free Association with the United States Government (USG) to continue to provide certain domestic programs after the two countries moved out of Trust Territory status. Under the first Compacts the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provided disaster response and recovery assistance. The current Compacts direct USAID and FEMA to collaborate in providing disaster response and recovery assistance.

Since October 2008, DASP detailers Gary Barrett and

John Quidachay have been working to develop an integrated disaster response operational plan for FSM/RMI, in close coordination with OFDA's Regional Team for Asia, USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia in Bangkok, USAID's Disaster Mitigation Coordinator for FSM/RMI in Majuro, and FEMA. Last December's high wave inundation provided the first opportunity to implement the new system.

High sea levels beginning on December 8, 2008, caused flooding in several coastal communities in the FSM and RMI. The tidal surges and prolonged heavy rain were brought by a tropical depression. In Micronesia, President Mori declared a state of emergency on December 29<sup>th</sup>; in the Marshall Islands, President Tomeing declared a state of emergency on December 24<sup>th</sup>. Both countries requested USG assistance, initiating a joint USAID/FEMA preliminary disaster assessment (PDA). The team joined representatives of the State and National governments on January 1, 2009, to conduct agricultural assessments in the States of Yap, Chuuk and

Pohnpei's outer islands. DASP detailer John Quidachay served as an agricultural specialist on the team, leading efforts in Chuuk and Kosrae.

In Chuuk, where the principal crop was taro, John found that crop failures were primarily due to farming techniques and location of farms too close to the coastal plain, which exposes plants to high tide and surge events. He concluded that any food shortages could be addressed by extended families working in the cash economy and farms on neighboring islands, with food supplies available in local markets.

In Korsae, John conducted a cursory inspection of agricultural crops in the areas known as Tufunsak and Walung. Corn samples taken from these areas revealed little or no affect to crops. Small upland farms did not experience negative affects from the tidal event.

At the conclusion of the PDA, John returned to the U.S. and continued work on the operational plan, which DASP will inherit as part of its core systems & methodologies portfolio in the third quarter.





*The winner of a Public Service Announcement contest on CIDI's website explains why cash is best.*

## Video Blog Promotes "Cash is Best"

OFDA's contractor, the Center for International Disaster Information (CIDI) promotes information and guidance in support of appropriate international disaster relief. A large part of CIDI's work focuses on discouraging unsolicited donations of items such as used clothing, canned goods, bottled water, medications and other items that clog relief supply lines and are inappropriate for the climate or culture of the affected country. As an

alternative to these collections, while still encouraging public engagement, CIDI encourages cash donations to established, recognized relief agencies with operations on the ground as part of a "Cash is Best" message.

In order to have greater impact and credibility with visitors to the CIDI web site, CIDI invited two DASP team members to submit 30-90 second video clips as part of a

video blog capturing real-life experiences with disaster relief donations. These clips help convince viewers that problems caused by inappropriate donations are very real, and that cash is a better alternative. Please visit the website at: <http://www.psaaid.org> to see Stephanie Savolaine and Giselle Zimmerman's clips, along with clips from over a dozen other OFDA staff and partners.

## DOD Remains Lead Consumer of FOG

DASP works in conjunction with the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, ID, and the Quincy Street warehouse in Arlington, VA to maintain and distribute Field Operations Guides (FOGs). A FOG distribution policy helps DASP to efficiently manage requests and dispense FOGs appropriately. DASP continued to receive a variety of requests for the FOG from staff and partners in the United States and overseas.

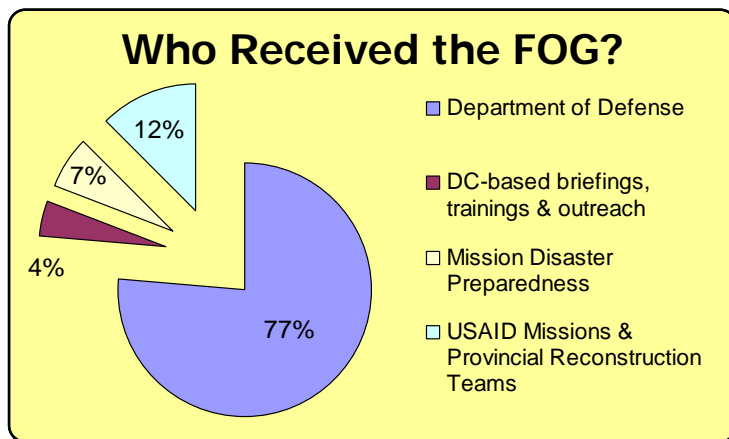
with a management-level course on international disaster response.

DASP also dispatched about 12% of FOGs to USAID Missions and Provincial Reconstruction Teams, with about 120 books sent to Afghanistan alone. Over 10% of FOGs were distributed at Mission Disaster Preparedness consultations in Kazakhstan and Hungary, and as part of DC-based briefings, trainings

and outreach initiatives.

As the remaining supply of FOG version 4.0 dwindles, DASP began working with the Forest Service Office of Communications and the Government Printing Office to initiate a second printing of this edition. Approximately 3,500 new books are scheduled for printing and delivery to NIFC during August 2009.

In the first half of FY 2009, the Department of Defense was the lead consumer of the FOG, with over 1,000 books distributed primarily in conjunction with the OFDA-run Joint Humanitarian Operations Course (JHOC) which took place in locations as diverse as Okinawa, Japan; Vicenza, Italy; and Newport, Rhode Island. Other DOD recipients included the Army War College in association



## Detailers Contribute to Systems & Programs

*This summary includes all assignments that took place in the first and second quarters of FY2009. When assignments started before or continued after this reporting period, the full dates are listed.*

### Core DASP

Mark Rooney completed four assignments (10/22-10/31, 11/17-12/1, 2/23-3/20, 5/19-5/22), providing coverage for the Detailer Program Coordinator (DPC), updating OFDA's *Duty Officer Handbook*, and helping to coordinate the *Orientation to DASP* course in Boise, ID.

Gus Malon (12/5-1/6) filled the DPC position over the Christmas and New Year Holidays.

### Operations Division

John Quidachay (10/15-6/15) and Gary Barrett (10/15-6/15) developed a Concept of Operations for emergency response in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). John was also part of an agriculture assessment team to FSM/RMI (1/1-1/20).

### Disaster Resources Unit

George Farra (3/9-4/9) completed an assignment in OFDA's Operations Division, Disaster Resources Unit (DRU), where he helped to roll out OFDA's new DART Alert procedures and enroll

interested staff in the new system.

### Disaster Response & Mitigation

Justin Jager (2/2-3/6) and Doug Elliot (3/9-6/10) worked as a Disaster Operations Specialists on OFDA's East and Central Africa Regional Team. Doug also completed a four-month assignment which started in FY 2008 (6/2-10/2), as the Program Officer on the Horn of Africa Augmented Regional Team.

### Logistics

Gary Morrison (10/1-12/15) completed an assignment in OFDA's Logistics Office.



*"The facilitators' ability to change course on the agenda paid big dividends, with excellent recommendations coming as a result."*  
~ Cyclone Nargis After Action participant, October 2008

## Cyclone Nargis Yields Lessons for Future

On May 2 2008, Cyclone Nargis struck the Ayeyarwady Delta area of southwestern Burma killing more than 200,000 people. Between May 12 and June 22, the U.S. Government air bridge, utilizing DOD aircraft, completed 185 airlifts and delivered more than \$4 million in USAID/OFDA emergency relief supplies, as well as DOD, U.N., NGO, and Government of Thailand commodities. By early July, emergency relief commodities had been distributed by USAID/OFDA partner organizations to more than 445,000 beneficiaries.

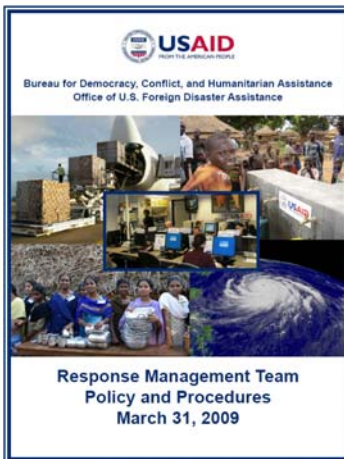
On October 18, 2008, DASP conducted an After-Action Review Workshop to review the effectiveness of OFDA's systems, policies, and procedures during

the response. Workshop participants included the majority of the USAID and partner staff who had served on the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and the Response Management Team (RMT).

Prior to the workshop the DASP developed and distributed an anonymous, on-line survey to DART and RMT Burma participants as well as representatives of other USG agencies. The survey results were subsequently shared with workshop participants and used as the starting point for discussions. Integrating some mid-course adjustments to the agenda, work group topics included information

management, staffing of RMTs and DARTs, planning processes and products, and working with the Department or Defense and interagency.

Participants developed 22 recommendations ranging from procedural refinements, to the need for a comprehensive outreach strategy to the interagency community. Participants described the day as "*excellent, well facilitated and substantive.*" A final report and recommendations matrix were completed in the second quarter, and are now with OFDA's Senior Management Team for consideration. Once approved, the final report will be posted in eRooms.



## RMT Updates Integrate New DART Alert

In 2001, OFDA developed a Washington-based response management system to complement and support OFDA's existing DART structure. The *RMT Policy and Procedures* guides RMT operations and provides standard operating procedures for each RMT function/position.

In March 2009, DASP received final clearance on the most

recent revision of the *RMT Policy and Procedures*, and distributed updated binders to OFDA staff in Washington, DC and all Operations Center work stations.

The revision includes new DART staffing procedures, including a DART Alert system based on models developed by the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team. Other

updates include a standardized call to Post when a DART is activated, and updates to positional roles, responsibilities, training and experience requirements.

The amended RMT annexes incorporate recent changes in security, travel, staffing, information management and other procedures, and provide expanded checklists and templates for team members.

## Systems & Strategy Highlights

### Interagency Coordination

During OFDA's 2008 Annual Program Review, a workgroup was established to focus on enhancing OFDA's Role as the USG's Coordinator of International Disaster Assistance. The workgroup identified the need for a clear definition of authorities, roles and responsibilities of the various USG agencies that are involved in international disaster response, as well as the establishment an interagency coordination mechanism.

To begin this process, OFDA hosted an interagency "Open House" in November 2009 to explain OFDA's systems for disaster response. Core DASP member Laura Chapman developed and participated in the Open House presentation, and also developed a disaster response framework template to help guide subsequent interagency discussions on respective mandates, roles and responsibilities.

Through this process, OFDA established a Disaster Coordination Committee that has been meeting on a periodic basis to enhance interagency coordination during the response to international disasters.

### Int'l Assistance System

DASP completed the most recent update of the International Assistance System Concept of Operations (IAS CONOPs) in March 2009. The document is "Sensitive but Unclassified". DASP also drafted an external version of the document that is suitable for release to the public.

The internal version of the document was submitted for interagency clearance to the Homeland Security Council (HSC) Domestic Readiness Group in July 2009. Once the HSC cleared the internal document, the Department of State will finalize the external version of the document.

### After Actions

OFDA activated DARTs and RMTs in response to multiple disasters in late 2008 and throughout 2009, including:

- Georgia Complex Emergency
- Haiti Storms
- Haiti School Collapse
- Horn of Africa Complex Emergency/Drought
- Zimbabwe Cholera
- Democratic Republic of Congo Complex Emergency

For each of these disasters, DASP conducted a Hotwash with the DART and RMT, conducted interviews with key staff, and developed on-line surveys to get feedback on OFDA systems and procedures. DASP is synthesizing this input into a thematic After Action Report, highlighting key issues and recommendations common across the various responses.

## Reaching & Motivating Quality Detailers

The DASP enhances and supports OFDA's capacity to respond to disasters by mobilizing a roster of up to 350 disaster management experts from the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. This is a key component of OFDA's surge staffing capacity. During the first half of FY 2009, DASP undertook multiple efforts to build depth and capacity within our detailer cadre to be able to better respond to OFDA's surge staffing needs.

On December 4 – 5, 2008, Stephanie Savolaine, Chris Knobel and Mark Rooney conducted a two-day orientation at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, ID. The training briefed 34 prospective detailers on the DASP detailer program, how it supports the global disaster response work of OFDA, how to get involved, and what to expect.

Participants represented eight Forest Service regions (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10), the Washington Office, and a broad experience base within the organization ranging from

Forest Supervisor to Administrative Officer, from Smokejumper to Fisheries Biologist. This array of backgrounds, technical specialties and leadership experiences enriches the overall detailer pool, expanding the depth and responsiveness of our program.

The orientation was very well received by participants, with a special emphasis on the diversity of training methodologies and the value of cross-cultural sessions. As one participant summarized, *"the cultural awareness exercises were very beneficial."* One participant raved, *"Excellent training! I think the new format is useful and does a good job of setting reasonable expectations,"* while another trainee noted, *"I can't wait to start working with you!"*

Following the orientation course in Boise, DASP hosted eight detailers in Washington, DC, during October 2008 and February 2009 for *DART/RMT Essentials* training and a hands-on orientation to DASP

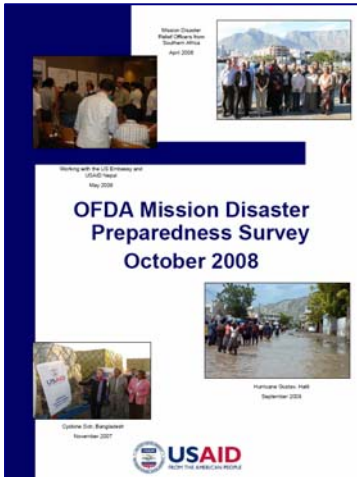


*The Detailer Operational orientation covers practical topics such as key work sites for a Washington, DC assignment, including the Ronald Reagan Building.*

and OFDA. These detailers participated in extensive walking tours of common detailer work sites, including the Ronald Reagan Building (RRB) and Franklin Court; had a lengthy discussion with senior representatives of OFDA's Operations Division; and received a warm welcome from the Chief of the Forest Service. Trainees completed a security briefing and obtained building passes to the RRB before departure. Upon completion, detailers are ready for an OFDA assignment with no administrative or security-related processing delays.

Detailers who experience this orientation are generally much more engaged and motivated to participate in the program in the short term. One detailer from the October session was quickly scheduled for an assignment with OFDA's Disaster Resources Unit, while a detailer from the February session was scheduled for an assignment with the DASP. Both of these assignments will take place in the third quarter.

October 2008 Detailer Orientation	
Barbara Garcia	R3/Coconino
Christy Makuck	R9/Ottowa
Buck Seals	R3/Gila
Susan Ford	R2/Regional Office
John Gough	R8/Francis Marion & Sumter
February 2009 Detailer Orientation	
Thierry Curtis	WO/Office of Communications
George Farra	R5/Angeles
Ron Hudson	R4/Humboldt-Toiyabe



## APRs Highlight Mission Preparedness

In preparation for OFDA's 2008 Annual Program Review (APR) in October 2008, DASP distributed an anonymous, on-line survey to all OFDA staff in September 2008 concerning Embassy and USAID mission disaster preparedness. Topics included general knowledge about current efforts and priorities for the future. The results of the survey framed the discussion for a twenty-one member work group which DASP facilitated during the APRs. Several themes emerged from discussions:

- OFDA is doing a good job of working with Mission Disaster Relief Officers (MDROs), Alternates, and working-level USAID Mission staff. OFDA needs to do a better job of educating decision makers about OFDA's role and mandate, including Chiefs of Mission, USAID Mission Directors, and high-level Department of Defense.

*Per recommendation 10, DASP piloted a training module on humanitarian principles in Afghanistan in November.*



- Outreach and training efforts can be trumped by personality conflicts.
- The MDRO job description is clear. However, OFDA does not have standard operating procedures on how to interact with MDROs.
- The process for selecting MDROs and Alternates differs from post to post. OFDA's ability to influence the process varies.

The work group made ten recommendations to OFDA's Senior Management Team (SMT). These were verbally accepted by SMT during the closing session of the APRs and formally tasked to OFDA divisions for action in a January 2009 memo signed by the OFDA Director. The first two recommendations relate to initiatives that OFDA is currently implementing and eight were new initiatives.

1. Conduct regional mission disaster preparedness consultations.
2. Conduct one-on-one consultations for Mission staff (1 to 3 countries per year per region).
3. Institutionalize an introductory call to post from the Response Director and DART Leader at the onset of a disaster.
4. Develop a short, focused video to be viewed with an

OFDA staff person as a platform for dialogue with decision makers. Content would include: OFDA basics, disaster myths and realities, predictable issues, Ambassador testimonials, and the role of the MDRO.

5. Develop a set of DART Leader talking points for an introductory meeting when the DART arrives.
6. Develop a module at the Foreign Service Institute on OFDA for Ambassadors and Mission Directors.
7. DART Leaders should develop a list of Ambassadors and Mission Directors that they have successfully worked with, as personal references.
8. Develop an evaluation form for Regional Advisors to give to Chiefs of Mission after a disaster response.
9. Make presentations on OFDA at Regional Mission Directors' & Ambassadors' Conferences. The OFDA Director/ Senior Regional Advisor should attend.
10. Educate OFDA staff on humanitarian principles.

Along with other units in OFDA, DASP has been working to move these initiatives forward. See page 8 and 9 for additional details.

## DART/RMT Course Enhanced by Videos

During the reporting period, DASP conducted two four-day *Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) and Response Management Team (RMT) Essentials* courses (October 21 – 24, 2008 and February 3 - 6, 2009).

A total of 40 participants completed the training, representing a variety of organizations including OFDA, State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and

Migration; the Department of Defense; Los Angeles County Fire and Rescue; Fairfax County Fire and Rescue; and the U.S. Forest Service.

Both courses featured a series of new video shorts depicting interviews with staff members who had previously worked on an RMT. These videos helped to reinforce the RMT functions in a peer teaching session on the second day of the course. They received high marks

from participants. As one participant stated, "*doing the group exercise in cooperation with the videos was really effective.*"

Other key updates included a renewed list of useful websites in the participant handbook, and numerous updates to integrate new information from the latest *RMT Policy and Procedures* released in February 2009.



*Participants describe the team-taught session on RMT functions as "a great group exercise to get everyone working together", while video shorts help to reinforce learning points.*

## RMT Refresher Series Hits the Road

As part of its *Response Management Team Refresher* training series, the DASP facilitated a one-day course on October 1, 2008 at OFDA's Quincy Street facility. As in the past the purpose of this course was to provide participants with an orientation to OFDA's revised RMT systems and procedures, as well as opportunities for practice and discussion.

The course's eleven participants represented all three divisions based in OFDA/Washington,

including Operations, Program Support, and Disaster Response and Mitigation.

Once again the participant evaluations indicated that the course was very well received. Two sessions, *Introduction to the RMT Policy and Procedures* and *The Planning Process*, received particularly high marks. One participant commented that "*the course was a great exercise and very*

*valuable for RMT preparation*" while another intoned "*that was some real first class training, thanks a million!*"

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009, DASP planned and facilitated a modified version of the *RMT Refresher* course for OFDA Regional Advisors (RAs) in San Jose, Costa Rica, as part of the annual OFDA Regional Advisors' conference. Ten RAs from OFDA's field offices in Asia, Latin America/Caribbean, and Africa participated in the one-day training. Materials were adapted to address field concerns, including a special emphasis on management principles and the planning process. After the training, RAs claimed to have a "*much better understanding of RMT functions and what is supposed to happen in Washington.*"

These courses conclude the *RMT Refresher* series.

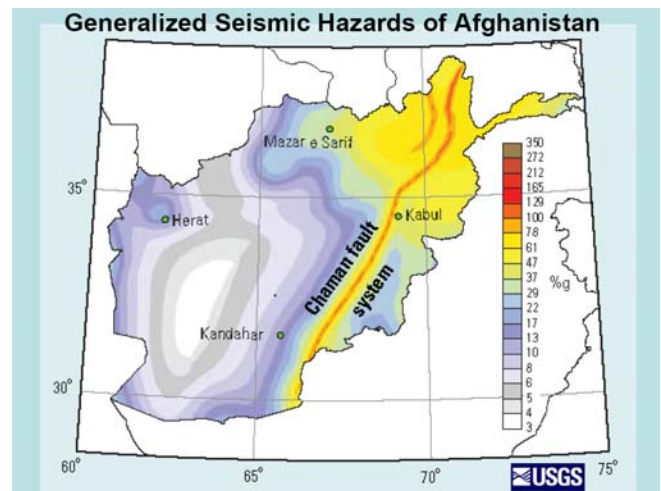


## Preparing Missions in the EMCA Region

The DASP was busy during the reporting period with multiple events promoting mission disaster preparedness in the Europe, Middle East and Central Asia (EMCA) region.

In November, DASP conducted a mission disaster preparedness consultation for the US Mission in Afghanistan. While most people are familiar with the ongoing complex emergency, the USAID Mission Director requested that OFDA put together a program to highlight natural hazards, particularly seismic hazards. Given the frequent staff turnover in Afghanistan, the Mission Director wanted to be sure that U.S. Government (USG) staff were familiar with OFDA's mandate and response options.

DASP conducted a full day workshop for fifteen key USG staff which covered basic



*Right: Warm colors show higher hazard, and cool colors show lower hazard. The strongest expected shaking is concentrated on major active faults in eastern and northeastern Afghanistan. Map courtesy of USGS.*

*Below: Mission Disaster Relief Officers from Central Asia.*

information on OFDA, the hazard profile in Afghanistan, response options, special capabilities, systems, programming, and humanitarian principles.

DASP also conducted a half-day, high level briefing for 21 people to discuss much-needed coordination mechanisms with external partners. The USAID Mission

Director and the head of each USAID office attended, along with the Deputy Chief of Mission, representatives from the US Department of Defense, and key partners from the United Nations, the European Community Humanitarian Office, the Canadian Embassy, and the Afghan government.

A regional mission disaster preparedness consultation was also held in Almaty, Kazakhstan in March for twelve MDROs and Alternates from five Central Asian countries. The consultation provided a platform for members of OFDA's Europe, Middle East, and Central Asia team to discuss its strategy for the region and future staffing plan. Many attendees were grateful for the opportunity to interact with OFDA staff in the region.



## New Mission Preparedness Initiatives

At the direction of OFDA's Operations Division Director, DASP made progress related to several recommendations from the APR mission preparedness work group (see page 6).

In January 2009, DASP developed a presentation for high-level audiences outlining interagency coordination in disaster response; OFDA's capabilities, authorities, and response system; and humanitarian principles. It can be found in the Mission Disaster Preparedness e-room. The presentation can be tailored to meet region-specific needs, and served as a starting point for presentations at two subsequent Mission Directors' conferences. DASP worked with OFDA's Asia

team to incorporate slides on "field realities", highlighting common disaster myths.

DASP also developed an agenda for an introductory call from the Response Director and DART Leader to the Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, and/or USAID Mission Director. The agenda:

- Reviews DART activation processes and introduces the DART Leader;
- Outlines the DART mission, capabilities, roles, responsibilities, and reporting structure;
- Discusses the relationship with the Department of

Defense

- Discusses the DART deployment schedule and contacts for further details

Finally, DASP piloted a training module on humanitarian principles during the mission disaster preparedness consultation in Afghanistan and refined it during a subsequent consultation in Kazakhstan. The 90 minute session previews a video on the NGO code of conduct and includes a lively discussion on the humanitarian principles. It also incorporates examples from recent responses and concludes with case studies.



*ASEAN Workshop participants learned how to use a GPS device during the regional training. (Photo: ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility)*

## DASP Brings OFDA Expertise to ASEAN

The devastation caused by recent disasters in Southeast Asia, such as Cyclone Nargis in Burma and the Indian Ocean Tsunami, has highlighted the critical need for Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) Member Countries to rapidly and accurately assess the damage caused by a disaster, as well as identify the immediate needs for assistance in relief and reconstruction. ASEAN is instituting Emergency Response and Assessment Teams (ERAT) to strengthen regional response capacity, and is also developing team procedures, trainings, and tools.

In October, 2008, more than 50 representatives from ASEAN

Member States' disaster response agencies attended a week-long Damage and Needs Assessment Training in Manila, Philippines.

The training was organized by the ASEAN-US Technical Assistance and Training Facility and the Pacific Disaster Center, with funding from OFDA, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Pacific Disaster Center. ASEAN's draft *Damage and Needs Assessment* manual formed the basis of the training, and topics included policy guidelines governing mobilization of damage assessment teams and disaster response coordination; and

essential elements of and techniques for performing damage assessment and needs analysis. The DASP gave a presentation on OFDA's response systems, including training and mobilizing DARTs and RMTs, team resources such as the FOG and RMT Policy and Procedures, and the use of the after action process to capture lessons learned.

The training was well received by the participants, and their feedback is being used to finalize the Damage and Needs Assessment manual and refine future trainings for ERAT members.

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## DASP Welcomes Giselle Zimmerman



On January 21, Giselle Zimmerman joined the DASP as a Mission Disaster Preparedness Coordinator working with Chris Leonardo on the mission preparedness portfolio.

Giselle comes to the DASP from Chemonics International where

she worked on the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) project for the last five years. At FEWS NET, she provided field support for technical activities and operations to more than 20 field offices located worldwide.

Prior to joining FEWS NET, Giselle worked for OFDA from 1999-2004, first in the Information Support Unit and then as the Acting Regional Coordinator/Disaster Operations Specialist for the Latin America & Caribbean regional team.

During her time at OFDA, Giselle was activated on numerous DARTs and RMTs. For example,

she served as the RMT Deputy Manager for Response during the complex emergency in Iraq in 2003.

As one of her first initiatives with the DASP, Giselle will be working on a video and resource kit for OFDA Regional Advisors to use with Mission Directors and other senior executives in disaster affected countries. On this and other issues, Giselle can be reached at [gzimmerman@usaid.gov](mailto:gzimmerman@usaid.gov) or +1 (202) 712-0042.

DASP is delighted to welcome Giselle to the team!

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