



Regional Snapshot

SOUTH ASIA

Fiscal Year (FY) 2016

Sustained conflict, frequent earthquakes, and seasonal droughts and floods, coupled with limited government response capacity, present significant challenges to vulnerable populations throughout the South Asia region.¹ In addition to staff based in Washington, D.C., USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) maintains a permanent South Asia regional office in Bangkok, Thailand. A USAID senior humanitarian advisor based in Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul also monitors humanitarian developments and oversees response activities in the country, and a USAID program management specialist monitors USAID/OFDA's Pakistan programs from the capital city of Islamabad.

Recent Humanitarian Events in the Region

- In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA responded to four disasters in South Asia: complex emergencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan, continued needs related to the April 2015 Nepal earthquake, and storm-induced flooding and landslides in Sri Lanka.
- Natural disasters and regional insecurity continue to generate humanitarian needs in Afghanistan. Multiple earthquakes and seasonal flooding from October 2015 to July 2016 affected more than 200,000 people, resulting in at least 300 deaths and damaging or destroying more than 28,000 houses. Between January and September 2016, conflict between pro-government forces and armed opposition groups had internally displaced more than 265,000 people from 31 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, with approximately 21 percent of the displaced population residing in areas inaccessible to relief agencies. In addition, rapidly increasing numbers of Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan—from approximately 1,300 returnees during June 2016 to approximately 56,000 returnees during August 2016—marked a significant increase in need. Many displaced households lacked sources of food and income, and deteriorating security conditions further constrained access to disaster-affected populations. Meanwhile, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported increased attacks targeting health personnel and facilities, further eroding response capacity.
- Government of Pakistan (GoP) security operations in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)—which remain ongoing in some districts—have resulted in episodic internal displacements of millions of Pakistanis since 2008. As of late July 2016, the GoP had assisted more than 174,200 displaced households to return to their areas of origin; however, an estimated 131,800 households remain displaced elsewhere in Pakistan.
- In mid-May 2016, heavy rainfall caused severe flooding and landslides throughout Sri Lanka, resulting in at least 100 deaths and affecting an estimated 300,000 people in 22 of the country's 25 districts. Floods and landslides damaged or destroyed more than 5,400 houses, particularly in Colombo and Gampaha districts, as well as in Kegalle District's Aranayaka Division, where a landslide devastated three villages and resulted in 14 of the total deaths.
- An estimated 81,000 Nepali households—approximately 400,000 people—affected by the April 2015 earthquake required humanitarian assistance, including emergency relief supplies and shelter support, during the November 2015–February 2016 winter season.

¹ The South Asia region includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

USAID/OFDA Priorities for 2017

- USAID/OFDA will continue to respond to humanitarian needs caused by complex emergencies and natural disasters in South Asia. Where feasible and appropriate, USAID/OFDA will continue to employ disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies to strengthen household- and community-level resilience to shocks while improving disaster response capacities of national, regional, and local government agencies.
- In Afghanistan, USAID/OFDA will continue to assist populations affected by conflict and natural disasters by pre-positioning relief supplies and maintaining flexible response mechanisms to respond to a variety of needs.
- In Pakistan, USAID/OFDA will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced populations and host communities in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and support DRR activities in coordination with USAID/Pakistan, as well as provide humanitarian assistance to populations affected by natural disasters, as needs arise.
- USAID/OFDA will continue to strengthen national and regional response capacities, particularly early warning systems and psychosocial support activities across the region.

Challenges

- The volatile security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan limits humanitarian access and directly threatens the lives of aid workers and local populations.
- Accommodating local government agency regulations requires USAID/OFDA programs to remain flexible.

Key Lessons Learned in 2016

- USAID/OFDA supported partners in Afghanistan to develop creative solutions—involving alternative routes, partnership with local communities, and pre-positioning relief supplies—to overcome access challenges in difficult-to-reach areas, delivering life-saving assistance that included medical care, shelter support, and water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions. Moreover, improved tools for tracking weather patterns, population movements, and resource availability increased humanitarian actors' ability to anticipate needs and prepare for responses.
- Flexible design of programs in Pakistan can facilitate a timely, locally-appropriate, and cost-effective response to humanitarian needs when and where they arise.
- Consistent, regular communication with host governments, disaster-affected populations, and humanitarian actors continues to be crucial for responding to urgent humanitarian needs in the region.