

# POUNDS OF PREVENTION

- A Disaster Risk Reduction Story -

*“Pounds of Prevention” is a series of short articles that illustrate how disaster risk reduction works and why it is important. Take a behind-the-scenes look at aid work in action, long before the disaster occurs. How is that possible? Read on!*

## FOCUS: SOUTH AFRICA

USAID’s commitment to disaster risk reduction includes an extensive focus on building first responder capacity around the globe. Thirteen years ago, USAID took notice of a nascent first responder organization based in Johannesburg—Rescue South Africa.

Recognizing its humanitarian mandate within Rescue South Africa’s work, USAID began investing in developing urban search and rescue capacity throughout southern Africa. Together with its elite urban search and rescue partners from Los Angeles County and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, Virginia Task Force 1, USAID conducted an initial train-the-trainer course in South Africa in May 2000. Ever since, USAID has continued to advise, equip, and train the organization’s cadre of emergency response specialists. Most recently, USAID is supporting Rescue South Africa’s mission to build the emergency response capacity of first responders in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, and Zambia.

Rescue South Africa is now an internationally recognized rescue team. The group has integrated itself into the South African disaster management landscape, supporting local emergency response departments, including through training new urban search and rescue specialists.

Moreover, in November 2013, Rescue South Africa medical teams provided health, safety, and engineering services in the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Yolanda (also known as Typhoon Haiyan). Rescue South Africa also contributed to the earthquake response in Haiti in 2010 and the tsunami response in Japan in 2011. In addition, the group is a member of the U.N. International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, an important recognition of its professionalism and expertise.

USAID is proud to be a supporter and champion for Rescue South Africa. By making a relatively small investment in this dedicated group of individuals, USAID has helped bolster the quality and quantity of trained urban search and rescue technicians in Africa—a decision that will have lasting and life-saving impact.



*Members of Rescue South Africa prepare to deploy to the Philippines in response to Typhoon Yolanda/Haiyan (top), remove wreckage from a building (middle), and attend to the medical needs of an injured man in Abuyong (bottom). All photos courtesy of Rescue South Africa.*