



OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

USAID/OFDA Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP) Aids Monitoring of Mt. Merapi Volcano

CURRENT SITUATION

The Mt. Merapi volcano is a “high-risk” volcano located in central Java, Indonesia and has a history of deadly eruptions. Due to an increase in activity at Mt. Merapi volcano, on April 12, the Indonesian Center of Volcanology and Geological Hazard Mitigation (CVGHM) raised the alert level at the volcano to level three on a scale of one to four. Level three indicates an increase in volcanic activity and an eruption may be imminent, but does not constitute a need for a full-scale evacuation. Triggers that would raise the warning level from level three to level four include pyroclastic flows (ground-hugging avalanches of hot volcanic material and gas), luminescent rocks traveling two km from the summit, and a significant increase in seismic activity. If the alert level is raised to level four, Indonesian authorities will conduct an evacuation of all citizens identified as located in at-risk areas.

A four-member USAID/OFDA-funded VDAP team from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has been at Mt. Merapi assisting Indonesian authorities, including the Indonesian Volcano Technology Development and Research Agency (BPPTK), monitor the volcano. As of May 10, one team member—a USGS volcanologist who is one of the world's leading experts on Mt. Merapi— remains at the volcano to monitor the situation. As part of the collaboration, the team provided BPPTK with technologically upgraded instrumentation for monitoring seismic activity at Mt. Merapi. According to the team, the current lava dome on Mt. Merapi continues to expand rapidly, and at this current rate of growth, the dome will likely collapse, causing pyroclastic flows down the south-southeast and southwest flanks of Mt. Merapi, possibly in the next several days. The most vulnerable districts are Sleman and Klaten to the south-southeast and/or Magelang to the southwest. Approximately 55,000 people are located in the immediate danger zone adjacent to the slopes of Mt. Merapi, and at least 100,000 people could be impacted by a large eruption.

USAID/OFDA ASSESSMENT

From May 8 to 9, USAID/Indonesia representatives and a USAID/OFDA regional advisor traveled to Yogyakarta, Indonesia to assess the potential for an eruption of the Mt. Merapi volcano and the related preparedness of local authorities. The team visited USAID/OFDA implementing partner Indonesian Red Cross' (PMI) district-level offices and three evacuation centers in the Mt. Merapi vicinity to assess the current level of local preparedness and the status of evacuation centers. The team reported that PMI is working in close coordination with local authorities, evacuation centers are organized, early warning systems are in place, and local citizens have been briefed on the hazards of an eruption at Mt. Merapi. USAID/OFDA partner PMI currently manages evacuation centers in four at-risk districts, including Boyolali, Klaten, Magelang, and Sleman. As of May 9, 4,656 citizens have been evacuated. The majority of individuals evacuated were the elderly, pregnant and lactating women, and children.

CURRENT USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE

On April 20, to support emergency preparedness activities due to increased activity at Mt. Merapi volcano, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000, through USAID/Indonesia. These funds were provided to PMI for the procurement of emergency commodities including shelter materials, blankets, and water containers. USAID/OFDA, in collaboration with USAID/Indonesia, will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide further assistance as needed.