GARI MAYBERRY/USAID, USGS

VOLCANO DISASTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF SAVING LIVES

BRIEF HISTORY

There are approximately 1,500 potentially active volcanoes around the world and only one international volcano response team that can deploy to help prevent eruptions from becoming disasters: the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), now celebrating 30 years of providing technical assistance worldwide. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and the U.S. Geological Survey established VDAP in 1986 in response to the tragic eruption of Nevado del Ruiz Volcano in Colombia, which killed more than 23,000 people from volcanic mudflows.

With more than $33 million of USAID/OFDA support, VDAP scientific teams have deployed in response to 30 major crises, assisted counterparts with hundreds of additional volcanic events, and strengthened response capacity in 12 countries since the program began. At the request of affected governments, VDAP helps fellow scientists monitor volcanic activity, assess hazards, generate eruption forecasts, and develop early warning capabilities to get people out of harm's way. To mark this milestone anniversary, we're highlighting some of the major responses that demonstrate how VDAP has helped save tens of thousands of lives over the past 30 years.

Contact us at: ofdainquiries@ofda.gov

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USGS science for a changing world

EXPLOSIVE ERUPTION

1991

MT. PINATUBO, PHILIPPINES

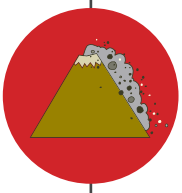
In the spring of 1991, VDAP assistance was requested to monitor Mt. Pinatubo, which had not erupted in 500 years. VDAP worked with scientists from the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology to install volcano monitoring equipment and analyze data to forecast eruptions. Due to this work, Philippine officials evacuated more than 75,000 people before Mt. Pinatubo had a massive explosive eruption on June 15, 1991. The timely evacuations saved thousands of lives, and this response validated VDAP as a critical hazard-reduction initiative.

VOLCANIC MUDFLOW

2007-2008

NEVADO DEL HUILA, COLOMBIA

After being dormant for hundreds of years, Nevado del Huila erupted in 2007 and 2008. VDAP assisted the Servicio Geológico Colombiano by providing volcano monitoring training and developing protocols for forecasting eruptions and evacuation plans. VDAP's assistance helped Colombian officials decide to evacuate thousands of people before the volcano erupted in April 2007 and again in November 2008, inundating nearby areas with volcanic mudflows.



PYROCLASTIC FLOW

2010

MT. MERAPI, INDONESIA

Mt. Merapi is one of the world's most hazardous volcanoes, threatening more than a million people who live nearby. Due to an increase in activity at the volcano in 2010, VDAP worked with the Indonesian Center for Volcanology and Geologic Hazard Mitigation to analyze activity at the volcano, including using satellite data at unprecedented levels that helped Indonesian officials decide to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people. In the fall of 2010, Mt. Merapi had its largest eruption in more than 100 years, causing pyroclastic flows—fast-moving currents of hot rocks, ash, and volcanic gas—to rush down the mountain. Thousands of lives were saved thanks to preemptive evacuations.

CITY AT RISK

2015-PRESENT

COTOPAXI, ECUADOR

Cotopaxi is one of South America's most dangerous volcanoes due to its location near Ecuador's densely populated capital city of Quito. When Cotopaxi showed increased activity in April 2015, the Ecuadorian government asked VDAP to work with local scientists at the Instituto Geofísico (IG). VDAP provided the IG with volcano monitoring equipment, data analysis, and a volcanic mudflow detection system. As of June 2016, VDAP continued to remotely analyze eruption data and remained ready to respond should Cotopaxi's activity increase.