



**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

***Chile – Earthquake***

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2010

March 1, 2010

**BACKGROUND AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS**

- At 0334 hours local time on February 27, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake Chile struck near the coast of Maule Region in south-central Chile. According to the U.S. Geological Service, the earthquake’s epicenter was located offshore, 70 miles northeast of Concepción and approximately 200 miles southwest of Santiago, Chile’s capital. The initial earthquake was followed by nearly 100 aftershocks measuring magnitude 5.0 or greater and a tsunami.
- According to the Government of Chile (GoC), the earthquake has affected more than 1.5 million people, displaced thousands of individuals from damaged and destroyed houses, and resulted in more than 700 deaths, as of February 28. The earthquake also caused major damage to buildings and infrastructure near the epicenter and disrupted communications, electricity, water, and gas services in affected areas, particularly in most-affected Concepción city, parts of metropolitan Santiago, and Chillan and Talca cities. In addition, a tsunami—a 7.7 foot wave that struck the coastal town of Talcahuano and surrounding areas caused significant damage along parts of coastal Chile and the Juan Fernández Islands. Immediately following the earthquake and tsunami, the GoC declared six catastrophe zones, including Valparaíso, Metropolitana, Libertador, O’Higgins, Araucania, BíoBío, and Maule regions.
- On February 27, U.S. President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. Government (USG) stands prepared to assist with earthquake rescue and recovery efforts, pending a request from the GoC for assistance.
- On February 27, USAID/OFDA activated Washington D.C.-based Response Management Team to coordinate the USG response, support USAID/OFDA disaster experts in Chile and facilitate information sharing and provision of assistance to earthquake-affected individuals.
- On February 28, U.S. Ambassador Paul E. Simons issued a disaster declaration in response to effects of the earthquake. In response, USAID/OFDA provided an initial \$50,000 for the provision and transport of emergency relief commodities through the U.S. Embassy in Santiago.
- On March 2, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is scheduled to briefly visit Santiago, Chile, as part of a regional tour of five Latin American countries.
- USAID plans to provide further assistance in accordance with the findings of forthcoming GoC and humanitarian assessments in disaster zones, as access to affected populations is expected to increase in the coming days. In addition, USAID has placed urban search and rescue teams on standby for deployment to affected regions, if necessary.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE		SOURCE
Estimated Number of Deaths	711	GoC – February 28
Estimated Affected Population	Approximately 1.5 million people	International Media – March 1

**CURRENT SITUATION**

- According to U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), although electricity and telephone communications in Valparaíso and Concepción were initially interrupted, most have been restored. However, the telephone network in affected areas remains strained due to increased use.
- Although the Santiago airport runway remains intact, the GoC reported that the terminal sustained some damage. On March 1, airport officials indicated that international flights must pass through one of three smaller airports in Chile—Arica, Antofagasta and La Serena—to undergo customs procedures, as the Santiago airport is not yet fully functional.
- To date, local media have reported some localized incidents of looting of supermarkets, pharmacies, and other structures damaged during the earthquake, particularly in Concepción Province. To maintain order and work to reinstate basic services, GoC officials announced a curfew in Concepción Province, beginning at 2100 hours local time on February 28 and ending at 0600 hours on March 1.

*Health*

- Following the earthquake, the GoC Ministry of Health's Emergency Committee held a meeting to coordinate the medical response and identify operational health facilities in affected areas. In disaster zones, health officials have reported severe damage to six hospitals, including San Antonio de Putaendo, Curicó, Licantén, Hualañé, Talca, and Parral, resulting in relocation of patients and staff. Three additional disaster zone hospitals—Félix Bulnes, Barros Luco, and El Peral—sustained major damage to infrastructure but continue to operate.
- In Metropolitan Region, the vast majority of hospitals are functioning and in good condition, with many reporting that although the earthquake had visible effects, major structural damage did not occur. In some cases, health staff transferred patients to lesser damaged portions of the same medical facility.
- In Arica-Parinacota and Valparaíso regions, officials report that most hospitals did not experience severe structural damage and continue to function normally. To date, the most reported damage to medical infrastructure has occurred in O'Higgins Region in southern Chile.
- In coordination with the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) is supporting the GoC by working with member states to determine the availability of field hospitals and generators for deployment to earthquake-affected areas.
- On February 28, a PAHO/WHO disaster management expert arrived in Chile to support the country office and join a GoC Ministry of Health-led assessment to determine the status of health facilities in affected areas. PAHO reports that two additional disaster experts are on standby to deploy to Chile, if required.

*USAID Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness Activities*

- USAID/OFDA maintains a network of disaster assistance experts throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region, including Chile, who are available to deploy to disaster sites, perform damage assessments, and provide guidance on disaster preparedness and mitigation activities.
- Since 1999, USAID/OFDA has provided specialized training and technical assistance with accreditation processes to urban search and rescue teams throughout Latin America, in collaboration with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), a global network of more than 80 countries and disaster response organizations under the U.N. umbrella.
- Since 1998, USAID/OFDA has provided \$12.6 million to PAHO in support of efforts to promote improved disaster preparedness and response in the health sector in Latin America. With USAID/OFDA funding, PAHO has worked to on increase preparedness capacity in the health sector through advocacy and technical support to update or improve health policy and legislation, in addition to continuous training of partner organization staff and Ministry of Health personnel. PAHO also works with local and national government counterparts to ensure that health facilities throughout the region have the capacity to operate during and immediately after disasters.

**USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

- On February 27, USAID activated a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team to coordinate the USG response to the earthquake in Chile and facilitate information sharing and provision of assistance to earthquake-affected individuals.
- On February 28, U.S. Ambassador Paul E. Simons issued a disaster declaration in response to effects of the earthquake. In anticipation of the disaster declaration, USAID/OFDA provided an initial \$50,000 for the provision and transport of emergency relief commodities through the U.S. Embassy in Santiago.
- USAID/OFDA has deployed a regional advisor, senior communications specialist, and a field officer to Chile, in addition to activating three regionally-based disaster management experts to conduct assessments of affected areas, in coordination with U.S. Embassy personnel and GoC officials.
- The USAID/OFDA assessment team will also provide the GoC with 18 satellite telephones and related training to facilitate communications until telephone networks in affected areas are repaired.

**USG HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO CHILE FOR THE EARTHQUAKE**

<b>FY 2010</b>			
<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<b>USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE<sup>1</sup></b>			
TBD	Emergency Response Activities	Affected Areas	\$50,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/OFDA</b>			<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO CHILE</b>			<b>\$50,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> USAID/OFDA funding represents anticipated or actual obligated amounts as of March 1, 2010. USAID plans to provide further assistance in accordance with the findings of GoC and forthcoming humanitarian assessments in disaster zones.

## **PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION**

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. Information on organizations responding to the humanitarian situation in Chile may be available at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, warehouse space, etc); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov) – Keyword: Donations
  - The Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org) or (703) 276-1914
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)