

Disaster Management in China

With its vast territory and diverse climatic and geological conditions, China is subject to a wide range of natural and man-made disasters. Responding to these challenges, The Asia Foundation partners with national and local government agencies, education and training institutes, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance government coordination of disaster management, to increase the involvement of the private and burgeoning philanthropic sectors in disaster preparedness and mitigation, and to help communities in China strengthen their resilience to disasters.



FOSTERING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Floods, droughts, earthquakes, and typhoons continue to pose serious threats to life and property across China. The 2008 earthquake that struck Sichuan province, for example, killed at least 69,000 people, injured hundreds of thousands, and left 15 million homeless. Official statistics show that in 2012 alone natural disasters killed 1,338 people, displaced over 11 million citizens, damaged over 5 million homes, and caused economic damage valued at over US\$66 billion.

While the risks posed by natural disasters cannot be entirely eliminated, preparation and risk management are key to minimizing immediate and long-term damage. From 2006 to 2011, The Asia Foundation worked with the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MOCA), local Departments of Civil Affairs, Chinese and American business associations, and Chinese charity organizations to improve disaster management through increased public-private partnerships. Working in six provinces, the program mobilized private sector contributions and involved stakeholders from across sectors in training courses, drills, and awareness campaigns to strengthen disaster management at the community level. Recognizing the success of the project and the potential of its approach, the Chinese government subsequently

named several of the project's pilot communities as models for the development of a nationwide system of community-based disaster reduction. By the end of 2012, there were over 1,200 such communities around China, and the central government aims to develop a total of 5,000 by the end of 2015. In the wake of this project, MOCA also issued Regulations on the Relief of Natural Disasters, which encourages village committees, community centers, businesses, NGOs, and the public to assist in natural disaster relief efforts.

In Sichuan and Gansu provinces, site of the devastating earthquake of May 2008, the Foundation has both assisted in recovery efforts and helped prepare communities for possible future disasters. In collaboration with MOCA, the Sichuan University College of Environment and Architecture, Build Change, and the Chengdu Education Foundation, The Asia Foundation trained residents in techniques for safely rebuilding shelters damaged during the earthquake, focusing on the most affected and disadvantaged households and villages, and trained local government officials on managing earthquake recovery processes in rural areas. The project helped schools and their communities in earthquake-affected areas to develop better disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies, as well. Handbooks on disaster preparedness were devel-

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

The Asia Foundation supports programs in China related to law and governance, the environment, empowerment of women and disadvantaged groups, disaster management, and constructive U.S.-China relations.

In the provinces of Jiangxi, Sichuan, and Zhejiang, the Foundation and its partners are testing and replicating models of community-based disaster risk reduction to reduce risk, build resilience, and increase the effectiveness of disaster response.



Safe Rebuilding Manual

oped for teachers and students and distributed to more than 1,000 elementary and middle schools with a total student population of over 1.5 million.

Working with MOCA and other partners, The Asia Foundation is now refining and replicating community-based disaster management practices across China, particularly in rural communities. Several activities continue to focus on schools, where improvements can have a significant impact both by increasing the immediate safety of students and staff and by serving as a catalyst for similar efforts in the school's wider community.

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN DISASTER ZONES

Women in China are responsible for generating income as well as caring for children and elderly relatives. As a result, they often suffer disproportionately from natural disasters and carry larger responsibilities for recovery and rebuilding. The Asia Foundation works with local partners to meet the immediate needs of rural women following natural disasters—from psychosocial counseling to housing repair—and to provide longer-term assistance that improves their livelihoods and ensures that their voices are heard throughout the recovery and rebuilding process.

STRENGTHENING DISASTER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS

The Wenchuan earthquake and other natural disasters have prompted China to improve aspects of its disaster management system, particularly inter-agency coordination. To this end, the State Council recently established the National Institute of Emergency Management (NIEM), housed within the Chinese Academy of Governance. NIEM is tasked with becoming the country's leading organization for disaster man-

agement training, policy research, and advisory support. To help NIEM fulfill this important mandate, The Asia Foundation is conducting a multi-year program to build NIEM's capacity through curriculum development and faculty training. The project also facilitates exchanges and sharing of experience and practices among government officials, practitioners, trainers, and researchers in China, the U.S., and Southeast Asia through observation programs and training workshops.

SUPPORTING CHINA'S ROLE IN REGIONAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE

As China develops the capacity of its disaster management system at home, it is also assisting other countries to do the same. China's experience responding to a wide range of severe natural disasters provides valuable insights for planning, response and mitigation strategies across the region. The Asia Foundation has supported the participation of Chinese foreign aid experts in a multi-year dialogue series on Asian Approaches to Development Cooperation. Through a partnership with the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, a think tank under the Ministry of Commerce, the Foundation is also supporting Chinese efforts to examine the country's approach to foreign disaster assistance in particular—introducing Chinese policymakers to international disaster assistance models, and exploring mechanisms for coordination and increased communication between China and other donor countries. Building on this work, the Foundation is now working with NIEM to enhance China's engagement on disaster management in the ASEAN region. The new program facilitates triangular cooperation between U.S., Thai, and Chinese experts on training programs for officials and practitioners, and increased networking of disaster management experts and training institutes across ASEAN countries.

The Asia Foundation's disaster management programs in China are funded by a range of public and private donors, including the United States Agency for International Development, the Australian Agency for International Development, Give2Asia, and The Kylin TV Foundation, Inc.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 17 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.



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