

Regional Snapshot

EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND CENTRAL ASIA | FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2014



REGIONAL SUMMARY¹

Complex emergencies and limited government capacity, as well as natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, wildfires, and droughts present significant challenges to vulnerable and conflict-affected populations throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia (EMCA).² In addition to staff in Washington D.C., USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) maintains a permanent regional office in Budapest, Hungary. To further support response programming and monitoring in the Middle East, USAID/OFDA has maintained a field team in Jordan and Turkey since March 2012 and stood up a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in January 2013 to continually track and respond to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Furthermore, in 2014, USAID/OFDA deployed a DART to Iraq to address urgent humanitarian needs of populations fleeing the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); assessment teams to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Serbia to support flood response efforts; staff to Israel to coordinate humanitarian assistance in Gaza; a team to Ukraine to support relief efforts for populations displaced in and from eastern areas of the country; and staff to Yemen to work with humanitarian partners to respond to the ongoing complex emergency.

RECENT HUMANITARIAN EVENTS IN THE REGION

- During FY 2014, USAID/OFDA responded to a variety of complex emergencies and natural disasters in the EMCA region, including an ice storm in Slovenia, and floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. USAID/OFDA also addressed needs arising from the complex emergencies in Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, Gaza, and Yemen.
- Humanitarian conditions in Syria continue to deteriorate as prolonged conflict, insecurity, and population displacement increased acute humanitarian needs in FY 2014. As of mid-September, approximately 6.4 million people remained displaced in Syria and an estimated 10.8 million were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. In addition, more than 3 million people have fled to neighboring countries since the start of the conflict, resulting in a regional refugee crisis.
- Although the situation within Iraq was relatively stable in recent years, ISIL began seizing control of parts of northern and central parts of the country in 2014. Significant population displacement ensued as civilians fled to areas of relative safety to escape fighting. Between January and early September, violence displaced an estimated 1.7 million individuals.
- Violence between pro-Russia separatist militias and Government of Ukraine forces escalated in eastern Ukraine's Donbas Region following the May 25, 2014, election of President Petro Poroshenko. Further, thousands of others were displaced by Russia's annexation of Crimea in March. Approximately 260,000 people were registered as internally displaced countrywide as of early September, including IDPs from Crimea and eastern Ukraine, while informal estimates of those displaced had reached 1 million. The U.N. estimates that approximately 5.1 million people were affected by the conflict as of late September.
- Insecurity, weak governance, and economic instability continued to result in humanitarian needs in Yemen during FY 2014. A dismantling of fuel subsidies causing prices of petroleum products to double between July and August led to widespread unrest, and the unexpected return of large numbers of Yemeni migrant workers from Saudi Arabia due to a change in labor laws further

¹ For additional information on the humanitarian situation in EMCA, please see USAID/OFDA fact sheets, available at <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>

² The EMCA region includes Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen.

strained resources during the year. An estimated 14.7 million—out of 26 million people nationwide—continued to require humanitarian assistance as of mid-FY 2014.

- Following escalating violence between Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Hamas—heightened by a large-scale IDF military operation in the Gaza Strip launched in early July—humanitarian agencies identified the need for urgent medical care to treat conflict-related injuries, along with food, safe drinking water, and shelter. As of September, the situation had calmed but remained tense following a ceasefire agreement.
- Weather emergencies in Southeastern Europe, including a severe ice storm in Slovenia and heavy rains that triggered severe flooding in BiH and Serbia damaged road, electrical, water, and building infrastructure in FY 2014. National governments and partners responded to humanitarian needs, and initiated early recovery activities within weeks of the initial weather event.

USAID/OFDA PRIORITIES FOR 2015

- Continue to respond to the needs of internally displaced, conflict-affected, and other vulnerable populations in Yemen, prioritizing livelihoods support and health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions.
- Continue to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable conflict-affected populations in Syria by prioritizing health interventions, emergency relief supply distributions, and the WASH needs of displaced populations and host communities. USAID/OFDA will also continue to support basic shelter repair, winterization assistance, psychosocial support programs, information management, logistics and coordination activities in Syria.
- Continue to work through U.N. agencies and international non-governmental organizations to provide assistance to vulnerable households in all of Syria's 14 governorates, including through aid deliveries across borders.
- Maintain flexibility to address emerging humanitarian needs in Iraq, in coordination with other donors, U.N. agencies, and relief organizations. USAID/OFDA will likely continue to support shelter, WASH, protection, and health needs of internally displaced and other vulnerable populations throughout conflict-affected areas in the country, as well as winterization activities and broader coordination and information management across the international humanitarian community.
- Provide winterization and shelter assistance to conflict-affected populations in Ukraine, targeting the most vulnerable households.
- As needed, continue to provide emergency assistance region-wide in response to sudden-onset natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, wildfires, and seismic events.
- In Southeastern Europe and Central Asia, focus on strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR) through capacity-building for DRR implementation measures in high-risk communities.

CHALLENGES

- The large size, diverse needs, varying degrees of capacity, and high strategic interest of the EMCA region pose a challenge to disaster response efforts.
- Decreasing humanitarian access and increasing insecurity, as well as the proliferation of armed extremist groups, will continue to complicate humanitarian response efforts across Syria and Iraq.
- Deteriorating security in Yemen limits USAID/OFDA partner capacity to ensure assistance is reaching the most vulnerable populations.
- Numerous large-scale emergencies in EMCA and worldwide are stretching staffing resources for the global humanitarian community.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED IN 2014

- It is critical to remain flexible and determine alternative means of providing humanitarian assistance in challenging and fluid humanitarian environments.
- The role of non-traditional donors—governments, multilateral organizations, and the private sector not previously engaged in humanitarian assistance—is growing, and the humanitarian community must engage these entities in coordination efforts.
- USAID/OFDA should engage more permanent staff in the field and in Washington, D.C., to address longer-term crises.