

# Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning Update

OCTOBER 2013

## SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) integrates monitoring, evaluation, and learning (ME&L) activities into emergency response and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs worldwide to enhance accountability and ensure that assistance is effective, appropriate, and impactful. This critical component of program improvement and reporting helps USAID/OFDA and its partners learn from recent and current experiences so that future programs are better positioned to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the social and economic impacts of humanitarian emergencies. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$900,000 in direct support for ME&L activities, including nearly \$500,000 toward ME&L-focused humanitarian studies, analysis, or applications, as well as more than \$400,000 for USAID/OFDA-initiated program evaluations. This stand-alone ME&L support complements and builds upon ME&L work conducted by USAID/OFDA partners in their existing humanitarian programs.

---

---

## ENHANCING ME&L CAPACITY

In FY 2013, USAID/OFDA took several steps to strengthen and promote ME&L activities at the office's headquarters in Washington, D.C., and in program locations worldwide, including the development of an FY 2014–2015 ME&L Strategy to strengthen existing M&E practices and to promote new learning opportunities through which M&E findings are applied to programmatic decisions. In addition, USAID/OFDA's M&E advisors launched a systematic monitoring review—examining current USAID/OFDA monitoring standards and processes, as well as the manner in which these practices are reflected in partner programming—to identify practical measures to strengthen program oversight. USAID/OFDA M&E advisors also worked with program teams to design innovative ME&L activities and events, including a comprehensive third-party monitoring partnership to track USAID/OFDA-supported programs in insecure areas of Yemen, M&E plans for disaster preparedness in Nepal and for the Syria humanitarian response, and a four-day learning exercise examining USAID/OFDA relief actions from 2009–2011 in the Sahel Region following the global food price crisis.

USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$400,000 in FY 2013 to support the Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD) Humanitarian Evaluation and Learning Project (HELP) between June 2013 and November 2014. Groupe URD field offices in Haiti and West Africa will provide field monitoring tools and M&E technical guidance and training to government authorities and international and national relief agencies. With USAID/OFDA support, the HELP initiative will also coordinate evaluation processes and disseminate evaluation findings to humanitarian actors in Haiti, Mali, and surrounding Sahelian countries to promote collective field-level learning before, during, and after disaster response.



---

---

## BUILDING AN EVALUATION PORTFOLIO

The M&E team continues to build USAID/OFDA's evaluation portfolio, conducting four internal performance evaluations in FY 2013 and designing an additional six evaluations planned for FY 2014, including for a community-based DRR program in the Philippines, a water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) response in Zimbabwe, a post-disaster market assessment tool, and grazing management and conservation agriculture programs in Southern Africa. To expand evaluation capacity, the M&E team identified new funding mechanisms—USAID's M&E Indefinite Quantity Contract and the Blanket Purchasing

Agreement—to procure the services of outside firms and specialists to support USAID/OFDA program evaluations. While evaluations conducted by internal staff may be advantageous for programs requiring strong awareness of USAID/OFDA’s history, policies, and priorities, external firms and specialists may be better positioned to manage evaluations necessitating large-scale surveys or other quantitative components, as well as those possessing large geographical scopes.

---

---

## **EXAMINING DRR INITIATIVES IN LATIN AMERICA, EAST AFRICA, & ASIA**

The M&E team prioritized internal evaluations of several long-standing USAID/OFDA-supported DRR programs during FY 2013. These evaluations explored these programs’ effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability, with the aim of providing concrete and actionable recommendations for program design, management, and implementation.

*Regional Disaster Assistance Program (RDAP):* Between October and November 2012, a three-person evaluation team, including USAID/OFDA staff and an external M&E specialist, traveled to the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region to conduct a performance evaluation of RDAP, which has received more than \$29.5 million in USAID/OFDA support during its current phase from 2009–2014. The RDAP evaluation team collected existing secondary data and conducted key stakeholder interviews, direct observation, and focus group work during a four-week field mission in Belize, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and St. Lucia. RDAP is the cornerstone of USAID/OFDA’s training and technical assistance program in LAC, which has trained more than 75,700 participants and certified approximately 6,800 instructors in 31 countries since its inception in 1989.

*Kenya Rock Catchment Systems:* A USAID/OFDA evaluation team, including two WASH technical advisors and one M&E specialist, conducted an internal evaluation of a long-standing WASH DRR program in Kenya in June 2013, with a particular focus on the status of USAID/OFDA-supported rock catchment systems designed to collect and store rainwater to help communities cope with drought. The team held key stakeholder interviews and trained local enumerators to assist with quantitative household surveys, focus groups, and an engineering assessment in catchment areas. This mixed-methods evaluation—informed by triangulated quantitative and qualitative information from the WASH partner and its beneficiaries—explored the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of these systems to inform future programming decisions worldwide.

*Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER):* In September 2013, a five-person USAID/OFDA team conducted an internal review of PEER, a long-standing Asia regional disaster preparedness program that aims to assist local, regional, and national disaster management agencies in organizing standardized emergency first response trainings across 10 countries. To achieve sustainability, PEER also works to develop national and regional cadres of professional emergency response instructors. The evaluation team traveled to four PEER countries—Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, and Thailand—at various stages of involvement in PEER to conduct interviews and focus group discussions over a two-week period with more than 50 key stakeholders, including training instructors and graduates, regional and national implementing partners, government first response and disaster management authorities, and USAID/OFDA regional staff.

---

---

## **WORKSHOPS AND OUTREACH**

In October 2012, a USAID/OFDA M&E team member attended the Second Annual Evidence Aid Conference, entitled “*Prioritizing Evidence in Disaster Aid*” and hosted by the Belgian Red Cross Society in Brussels, Belgium. Evidence Aid is an international initiative aiming to improve access to available evidence-based research examining the effects of relief interventions before, during, and after humanitarian emergencies on health-related outcomes, such as mortality and morbidity.

A USAID/OFDA M&E technical advisor attended the 28th Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C, in March 2013. ALNAP’s Annual Meeting provided a key forum for humanitarian actors to share experiences and learning around emerging issues relevant to international humanitarian action. In FY 2013, USAID/OFDA provided \$100,000 in continued institutional support for ALNAP.

### **USAID/OFDA CONTACT**

Caroline Andresen, *Evaluation and Reporting Coordinator*, [candresen@usaid.gov](mailto:candresen@usaid.gov)