

USAID/OFDA PROTECTION SECTOR UPDATE – OCTOBER 2012

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Disaster-affected populations face risk of harm, exploitation, and abuse that material assistance alone cannot address. Threats, such as sexual violence, theft, exploitative labor, and exclusion from assistance, are often exacerbated by natural disasters and conflicts. In response, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) funds protection activities to minimize and respond to these risks while also requiring partners to mainstream protection in all humanitarian assistance programs.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$25.5 million for stand-alone protection activities, including nearly \$6.2 million to seven U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for protection initiatives worldwide and nearly \$19.4 million to 21 U.N. agencies and NGOs for protection sector activities in 16 countries. These programs include child protection, prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV), psychosocial support, and protection coordination and advocacy activities.

PROTECTING CHILDREN IN EMERGENCIES

Children's vulnerability to harm, exploitation, and abuse increases during disasters. For example, in conflict-affected southeastern Central African Republic (CAR), the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has abducted children, forcing them to serve as porters, fighters, and sexual slaves. In response, USAID/OFDA, through Mercy Corps and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), is implementing child protection and psychosocial support activities targeting communities that have experienced violence and displacement as a result of the LRA, including communities from which the LRA has abducted children. USAID/OFDA is also supporting community-level child protection committees that monitor and assist vulnerable children, school enrollment programs for displaced children, and psychosocial support activities. In addition, around CAR's Rafai town in Mbomou Prefecture, Mercy Corps has trained community volunteers to facilitate sports and learning activities for children that provide a safe and fun place to interact with peers and learn life skills.



Mercy Corps' child protection team in Rafai, CAR, is trained on facilitating sports programming for children. (Photo by Anita Malley/USAID)

USAID/OFDA is also supporting UNICEF and wider interagency efforts to strengthen child protection response efforts in humanitarian settings through the use of technology and innovation. USAID/OFDA funding is facilitating the transition of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) to a web-based platform, enabling interaction between the CPIMS and GBV information management systems, as well as the development of secure rapid family tracing and reunification software for hand-held devices. USAID/OFDA assistance is also improving relief agencies' capacity to document and respond to violations against children through development of a standard software platform and data management protocols for the UNICEF-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

EXPLORING GBV PREVENTION MEASURES IN EMERGENCIES

Cases of GBV typically increase in emergency settings. While humanitarian actors seek to both prevent GBV and provide services to survivors, little is known about the effectiveness of prevention measures in disaster situations. To address this knowledge gap, USAID/OFDA supports several programs that explore the effectiveness of GBV prevention measures.

In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM) funded the U.N. World Food Program to distribute fuel-efficient stoves to displaced women and girls, who face risk of sexual violence when collecting firewood. The program studies whether the stoves decrease the women's exposure to risk by reducing time spent collecting firewood. USAID/OFDA began working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on a similar study to assess whether providing solar-powered flashlights to women and girls during emergencies increases their sense of safety.

In addition, with support from USAID/OFDA, UNICEF is developing and piloting a tool kit designed to change social norms regarding sexual violence in conflict settings. UNICEF plans to finalize and disseminate the tool kit for use by the wider humanitarian community based on the pilot's success. Additionally, recognizing that survivors of sexual violence often face difficulties in accessing health care, UNICEF is implementing a pilot program for community-based care for survivors of sexual violence with funding from USAID/OFDA. UNICEF and its partners plan to train community health workers to provide immediate psychosocial support to survivors of sexual violence, as well as post-exposure prophylaxis in situations where clinical care is not accessible.

INVESTING IN GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE PROTECTION

During FY 2012, USAID/OFDA continued to support global research, advocacy, and training initiatives related to the protection of disaster-affected populations, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA continued to be one of the primary donors to the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, which maintains a global database of statistics on internal displacement, provides analysis on the protection needs of IDPs and protection assistance provided by the humanitarian community, and partners with governments and aid agencies to advocate for the improved protection of IDPs, including through trainings on protection principles and practices.

USAID/OFDA also continued to support the work of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs through the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement.¹ The project conducts research and develops guidance to promote the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and trains local government officials and civil society actors on incorporating human rights into disaster response.

USAID/OFDA funded the Protection Capacity Standby Project (ProCap), which seeks to enhance the U.N.'s protection response capability, as well as contribute to the global and field-based protection capacity of other humanitarian actors, through the deployment of personnel with proven, broad protection expertise. ProCap reinforces both the strategic and operational importance of protection responses for IDPs and other vulnerable groups in emergencies and protracted complex crises.

With support from USAID/OFDA, the InterAction² Protection Working Group continued to highlight the protection needs of disaster-affected populations and to promote good protection programming, including protection mainstreaming, with InterAction members and the wider humanitarian community.

Lastly, USAID/OFDA supported the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights' engagement in humanitarian action through support for Protection Cluster leadership in Haiti.

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¹ The Brookings-LSE Project is a cooperative project of the Brookings Institution and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

² InterAction is the largest coalition of U.S.-based international NGOs.