

Protection Sector Update

OCTOBER 2015

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Natural disasters and conflict often exacerbate the vulnerability of individuals; people must cope with threats such as sexual violence, violence in the home, separation of families, exploitative labor, and exclusion from life-saving humanitarian assistance. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to protect conflict- and disaster-affected communities and mitigate these dangers. While working to minimize and respond to specific risks, USAID/OFDA requires partners to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the safety of those receiving emergency relief across all sectors of a response and in all humanitarian assistance programs.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$89.5 million to support protection programs, including nearly \$36.4 million to a total of 23 partners for global and regional protection initiatives and approximately \$53.1 million to 25 partners for protection activities in 20 countries. Worldwide, these programs have supported millions of people, providing services for child protection, psychosocial support, prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV), and coordination of and advocacy for protection activities.

SUPPORTING GBV SURVIVORS IN IRAQ

In January 2014, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) forces began seizing control of areas of northern and central Iraq, displacing nearly 3.2 million people within the country as of September 2015. USAID/OFDA partners report that the conflict has particularly affected displaced women and children—including female survivors of ISIL capture who have experienced sexual abuse. Most GBV survivors in Iraq are unable or unwilling to access services that could help alleviate their physical and psychological distress due to social stigma and perceptions. To assist GBV survivors and those at risk of GBV, USAID/OFDA supported the UN Population Fund's (UNFPA's) rapid response mechanism (RRM) during FY 2015 in Iraq, through which local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sent mobile teams of social workers to key displacement sites to determine needs among affected populations and provide basic GBV support and prevention services, including case management, safety planning, and counseling, to vulnerable women and young girls. Working through local NGOs, UNFPA established safe spaces for women and girls in camps and host communities to access psychosocial support and receive life skills training. UNFPA also organized groups of male peer educators to raise GBV awareness in communities through cultural and sporting events. The RRM ensures a timely and efficient response, as the network of local NGOs has the flexibility to quickly adapt their activities according to the needs of beneficiaries and fluid security situation, as well as negotiate access to areas inaccessible to international staff.



A woman sits with her child in an IDP camp in Iraq.
(Photo by Dilshad Abubakir, USAID)

SUPPORTING CHILD REUNIFICATION IN CAR

Violence and insecurity that began in December 2013 has prompted hundreds of thousands of people across the Central African Republic (CAR) to flee their homes. Children are among the most vulnerable due to continued exposure to violence and exploitation, including recruitment into armed groups. Many children were separated from their parents when fleeing fighting, or had parents killed in the conflict. In some cases, families can no longer afford to support their children financially and are forced to resort to negative coping strategies. In response, USAID/OFDA funded Plan International in FY 2015 to support the reunification and reintegration of unaccompanied and separated children in Lobaye and Ouham, two of the most affected prefectures in CAR. Applying a community-based approach to promote more child-friendly initiatives, and working in coordination with government authorities, Plan International is establishing community networks in areas of project implementation; providing protection-focused training and support for staff, NGO, and government partners to facilitate the tracing, reunification, and reintegration of children; identifying and supporting temporary host families to ensure interim care for targeted children while awaiting reunification; preparing separated children and caregivers before reunification through a sensitization and mediation process; and ensuring timely and periodic follow-up for children who have been reunited to determine the need for additional support.



Women and children affected by the violence in CAR receive emergency relief supplies. (Photo Courtesy of Catholic Relief Services)

PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN NIGERIA

Violence—including abductions and recruitment of children into armed conflict—by insurgents escalated in northeastern Nigeria in early 2013, displacing more than 1.4 million people as of mid-2015. The direct exposure to fighting, pervasive sexual violence, and family separation and displacement led to considerable psychosocial strain on communities, particularly affecting women and girls abducted by Boko Haram, or those who experienced ongoing sexual violence as a result of the conflict. This situation is further aggravated by the reduction in social, education, and health services, and compromised traditional support structures in FY 2015 as some communities were reluctant to welcome back those who have been released by Boko Haram due to distrust of their experiences with the armed group. In response, USAID/OFDA funded the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to provide psychosocial support for women, girls who are adolescents, and children, their families, and affected communities to support the reintegration process and prevent further marginalization of these survivors of abuse. Working in partnership with the Government of Nigeria, mobile teams, which included protection advisors, psychologists, social workers, and educators, assessed needs, provided direct psychosocial assistance, and trained family members, government counterparts, and non-governmental actors on basic, but life-saving psychological support for affected girls. IOM also trained local caseworkers on psychosocial support for families of those who were abducted to help with the reintegration process and support the recovery of those who survived the abuse.

GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR IMPROVED AND TIMELY GBV RESPONSE

USAID/OFDA is at the forefront of the *Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies*—a global initiative seeking to hold donors, UN agencies, and NGOs accountable for actively preventing and responding to GBV from the start of a crisis. To help realize the objectives of the *Call to Action*, USAID/OFDA is supporting the innovative Real-Time Accountability Partnership (RTAP)—the first GBV-specific partnership for accountability—to encourage donors, member states, and humanitarian organizations to fulfill their commitments to addressing GBV from the start of humanitarian emergencies. The RTAP aims to ensure that all humanitarian actors prioritize and integrate the prevention of, and response to, GBV across sectors, as well as coordinate GBV interventions across all humanitarian assistance and protection actions. FY 2015 funding from USAID/OFDA supported UNFPA and the International Rescue Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTAP framework, methodology, and tools.

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