

USAID/OFDA PROTECTION SECTOR UPDATE – OCTOBER 2011

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Populations affected by disaster often face challenges that material assistance alone cannot adequately address. Conflicts and natural disasters often separate families, disrupting normal care-giving for children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The resulting displacement, loss of family members, or disruption of livelihoods may increase vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and abuse for men, women, and children. Conflict often increases exposure to threats such as attacks or landmines. Disaster-affected populations face protection challenges such as these in many countries around the world. In response, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) supports stand-alone protection activities aimed at minimizing risks and addressing the effects of harm, exploitation, and abuse, as well as by working with implementing partners to incorporate protection principles into all other relief activities through protection mainstreaming.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$19 million for protection programs, including more than \$3 million to six U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for protection initiatives worldwide and more than \$16 million to 22 U.N. agencies and NGOs for stand-alone protection activities in 15 countries and one region, including Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and the South Asia region. These programs include child protection, prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV), psychosocial support services, and protection coordination and advocacy activities.

IMPROVING RESPONSE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN DISASTERS

In FY 2011, USAID/OFDA improved humanitarian response to GBV in disaster situations through an International Rescue Committee (IRC) program—which aims to strengthen the capacity of local organizations to respond to GBV with appropriate medical care and psychosocial support—in the DRC and Haiti. Program activities include an evaluation—designed to document programmatic learning to be shared with the broader humanitarian community—of the effectiveness of training and support activities.

ADDRESSING PROTECTION NEEDS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Following violence and political instability in Côte d'Ivoire during the first half of 2011, USAID/OFDA assessed humanitarian conditions throughout the country and found evidence of protection concerns, including children separated from their families, women and girls who experienced GBV, and the need for psychosocial support among the affected population. In response, USAID/OFDA supported the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), the U.N. Population Fund, and IRC to implement protection programs to identify and reunify separated and unaccompanied children with their families, provide medical care and psychosocial support to GBV survivors, and offer psychosocial support services in areas of displacement, as well as in communities where internally displaced persons (IDPs) are returning.

PROTECTING POPULATIONS AFFECTED BY DROUGHT IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

In responding to the needs of drought-affected populations in the Horn of Africa, USAID/OFDA is ensuring that protection measures are incorporated into our partners' assistance activities. For example, organizations providing livelihoods and food security support are ensuring that women-headed households, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable community members are targeted for assistance. In addition, USAID/OFDA is addressing drought-related protection issues including GBV, children living outside of family care, and psychosocial support needs in Kenya and Somalia.

GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE PROTECTION

During FY 2011, USAID/OFDA continued to support global research, advocacy, and training initiatives related to the protection of disaster-affected populations, particularly IDPs. USAID/OFDA supported the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), which maintains a global database of statistics on conflict-induced displacement; provides analysis on the protection needs of IDPs and the types of protection assistance provided by the humanitarian community; and partners with governments and aid agencies to advocate for the improved protection of IDPs. IDMC also trains government, international, and local NGO representatives in protection principles and practices.

In addition, USAID/OFDA continued to support the work of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of IDPs through the Brookings-LSE Project on Internal Displacement¹ in FY 2011. This project conducts research and develops guidance to promote the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and trains local government authorities and civil society actors on incorporating human rights into natural disaster responses. USAID/OFDA also supported the Protection Capacity Standby Project (ProCap), which seeks to enhance the U.N.'s protection response, as well as contribute to global and field-based protection capacity, through the predictable and effective deployment of personnel with proven, broad protection expertise. ProCap reinforces both the strategic and operational protection responses for IDPs and other vulnerable groups in emergencies and protracted complex crises.

In FY 2011, USAID/OFDA provided funding to the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) for its protection initiative, focused on building the capacity of WFP staff to recognize and respond to protection issues. USAID/OFDA also continued to support the InterAction² Humanitarian Policy and Practice group—which helps to ensure that the material and protection needs of vulnerable disaster-affected populations are being met through improved coordination, professionalism, and global representation by the U.S. NGO community—in FY 2011.



IDP children in Cote d'Ivoire benefit from IRC's child protection activities (Photo by Melanie Thurber, USAID/FFP).

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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.