



WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY

AID WORKER SAFETY ▼

Every day, aid workers stand on the front lines of disasters, facing tremendous dangers and putting their lives on the line to help people who need it most. 2015 was a dangerous year for humanitarian staff, especially those working in the world's worst conflict zones. During the year, 287 aid workers were killed, injured or kidnapped in 25 countries. Ninety percent of these victims were local humanitarian staff, who often take the greatest risks to deliver assistance to their neighbors and communities.

The safety of aid workers is paramount. USAID works to improve safety and security within the humanitarian community, especially since our disaster experts and partners frequently operate in some of the most insecure countries around the world. We support established networks of humanitarian security personnel, improve security mechanisms and capacity at the global and country levels, and strengthen policies that affect safety and security.

Each year on August 19, we pay tribute to aid workers who risk their lives helping millions of people affected by crises around the world. The United Nations designated this as World Humanitarian Day in memory of the 22 UN and relief agency staff who lost their lives in a Baghdad bombing on this day 13 years ago. It is an opportunity to pause to honor the brave men and women who have died serving others, while celebrating the humanitarian spirit that mobilizes help for those who are suffering.

Saving lives is getting harder to do as crises and conflicts grow in complexity, strain scarce resources, and often put aid workers in grave danger. The numbers tell a grim story: a record 130.5 million people are in need across 40 countries; more than 65 million people have been forcibly displaced by conflict and violence by the end of 2015—the highest figure ever recorded. Violence and insecurity in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, and Yemen are still driving massive internal and cross-border displacement.

This past May, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened the first World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, bringing together 9,000 participants from 180 member states, non-governmental organizations, the UN, and private sector companies, to reaffirm a global commitment to address the world's suffering and to make long overdue changes to how the international community provides aid.

To better serve those affected by crises, the United States made concrete commitments to improve the way we design, fund, and evaluate humanitarian assistance. These commitments build on the life-saving work that USAID's elite disaster experts are currently carrying out around the world. USAID has Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs) deployed to lead the U.S. government's response to four major crises. In Ethiopia, the DART is responding to one of the country's worst droughts in 50 years. In South Sudan, where recent fighting has caused tens of thousands to flee their homes, the DART is assisting people displaced by the violence. For the crises in Syria and Iraq, DART members are working with dedicated humanitarian partners to overcome significant obstacles and navigate fluid frontlines to deliver much-needed food, safe drinking water, medical care, and critical relief supplies.

The United States has a long and distinguished history of helping people in need. This World Humanitarian Day, join us and our partners by standing in solidarity with everyone affected by crises.

