



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance



Photo Credit: USAID

Fulfilling more than 50 years of its mandate to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of disasters, USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance responds to the needs of people affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies around the world. This includes the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the West Africa Ebola outbreak, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, as well as ongoing crises in countries such as Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, and Yemen.

### Responding in Times of Crisis

When a natural disaster or conflict destroys communities, or when hunger and disease threaten to spread, people caught in the midst of these crises are concerned with survival. Helping them is at the core of what USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) does every day, all over the world.

USAID/OFDA leads and coordinates the U.S. government's humanitarian assistance efforts overseas. The Office responds to an average of 65 disasters in more than 50 countries every year, ensuring that aid reaches people affected by natural disasters, including earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods, as well as slow-onset crises, such as droughts and conflicts.

USAID/OFDA has more than 520 staff worldwide, working from its Washington, D.C., headquarters and at six regional and more than 20 field offices. Its team of humanitarian professionals, policy advisors, and technical experts—including infectious disease specialists, nutritionists, logisticians, entomologists,

and hydrometeorological advisors—identify the most urgent humanitarian needs, working alongside local governments to assist tens of millions of people and save countless lives. USAID/OFDA's strategically located warehouses in Miami, Florida; Pisa, Italy; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; and Subang, Malaysia are stocked with essential relief supplies, such as emergency shelter materials, warm blankets, water treatment systems, and hygiene kits. These critical commodities can be transported rapidly to disaster-affected areas around the globe. USAID/OFDA also works with the international humanitarian community to give vulnerable people resources to get back on their feet and strengthen their own ability to respond to emergencies.

USAID/OFDA's speed and flexibility contribute to the effectiveness of its response to international crises and help the Office lead the U.S. government's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance—on behalf of the American people—in some of the world's most dangerous regions.

# USAID/OFDA's Major Disaster Responses

2008 – Present



## Disaster Response Teams

When the size or scope of a disaster requires it, USAID/OFDA sends a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to crisis-affected areas. Deployable within hours of an emergency, this team of humanitarian experts and technical advisors is on the ground to assess the situation firsthand, identify the most urgent needs, and pull in other federal agencies if needed—all to coordinate an effective U.S. government response. In addition, USAID/OFDA has partnerships with internationally certified urban search-and-rescue teams, allowing for their swift deployment anywhere in the world.

While the DART works overseas, a Response Management Team (RMT) is activated in Washington, D.C., to provide leadership and operational support. RMTs are the center of strategy and planning for a disaster response, liaising with other U.S. government agencies in the nation's capital so that the DART can focus on providing assistance in the field.



**50 COUNTRIES**

receive USAID/OFDA disaster support on average each year.



**65 DISASTERS**

require USAID/OFDA responses on average each year.



**COMPLEX EMERGENCIES**

are the most frequent USAID/OFDA response.

## Crisis Response and Technical Expertise

USAID/OFDA is staffed by crisis response experts with vast regional and technical knowledge who continually monitor global hazards, provide guidance, and prioritize programs for funding in the following sectors:



**Humanitarian Studies/Analysis**

Through data collection and analysis, USAID/OFDA can systematically identify program objectives, monitor their progress, and assess outcomes. This helps establish best practices for improved and successful humanitarian programming.



**Agriculture and Food Security**

USAID/OFDA supports the distribution of seeds and tools, agricultural training, implementation of pest control programs, provision of veterinary medicine for livestock, and partnerships with farmers to strengthen local agricultural infrastructure.



**Logistics**

USAID/OFDA responds quickly to disasters by coordinating the distribution of emergency relief supplies, including plastic sheeting for emergency shelters, family hygiene kits, blankets, kitchen sets, and water purification equipment and containers.



**Natural and Technological Hazards**

USAID/OFDA works closely with local communities to identify, manage, and reduce vulnerability to disasters by supporting programs such as disaster response training, hazard analysis, and early warning systems to move people out of harm's way.



**Nutrition**

USAID/OFDA is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to prevent and treat acute malnutrition, supporting infant and young child feeding programs, nutrition education, and research that builds local communities' capacity to treat malnutrition on their own.



**Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS)**

Economic recovery is vital to the longer-term rehabilitation of communities following a disaster: USAID/OFDA's ERMS programs restore livelihoods, provide grants to support small business development, and create short-term employment opportunities.



**Protection**

Disaster-affected populations face risk of harm, exploitation, and abuse. USAID/OFDA funds activities that minimize and respond to these risks, such as programs focused on child protection, psychosocial support, prevention of and response to gender-based violence, and advocacy activities.



**Health**

USAID/OFDA works to address the major causes of illness and death during disasters by supporting primary care and mobile health facilities, prevention and treatment of disease, mental health services, and immunizations for children.



**Shelter and Settlements**

USAID/OFDA supports programs that advance the construction of safer, disaster-resistant structures and settlements, utilize local building materials, re-use rubble and debris in the building process, and reduce risks to future disasters.



**Humanitarian Coordination/Information Management**

USAID/OFDA supports activities that enhance international and local coordination mechanisms and strengthen needs assessments and information management to ensure the timely and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance.

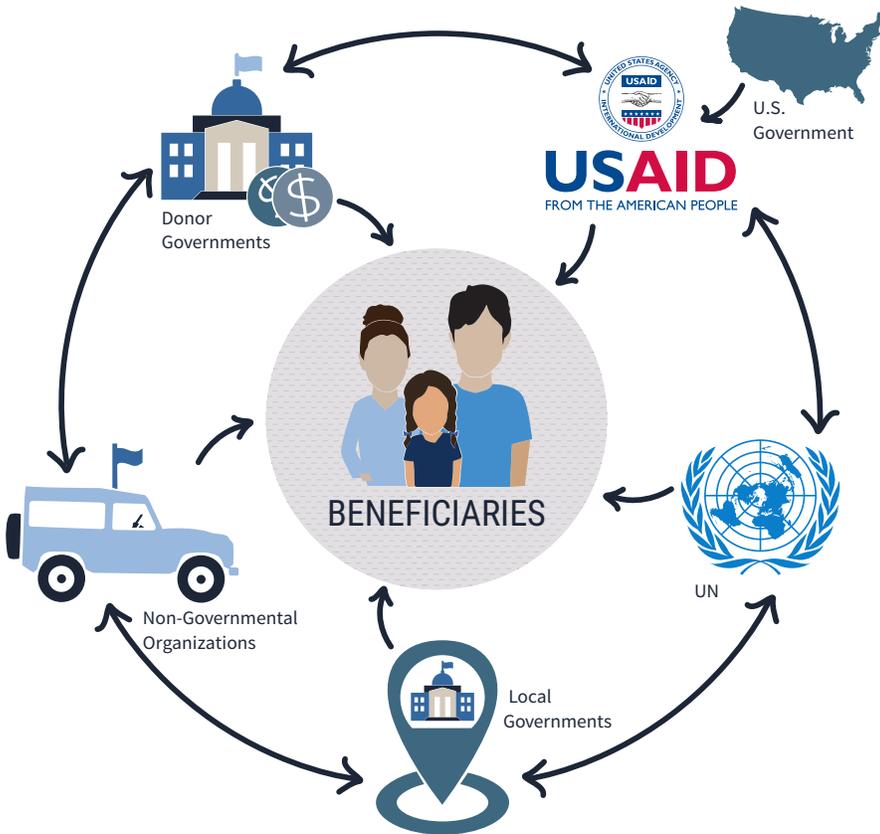


**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

USAID/OFDA helps reduce morbidity and mortality associated with water- and sanitation-related diseases as well as poor environmental conditions. WASH interventions include latrine construction, hand-washing promotion, sanitation education, and the provision of safe drinking water.

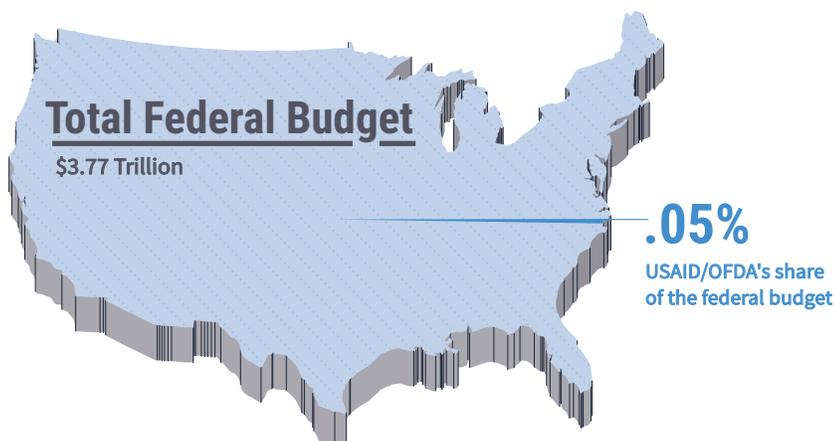
## Humanitarian Coordination and Partnerships

USAID/OFDA works strategically with international responders and other donor governments to maximize resources to save more lives. The Office taps into a vast international network of humanitarian partners through its funding of and engagement with UN agencies, donor governments, other international and non-governmental organizations, local governments, community organizations, and other entities. USAID/OFDA can call on other U.S. government agencies to assist with response efforts, whenever needed.



## Financials

Approximately 1 percent of America's federal budget is allocated for foreign assistance, and USAID/OFDA's budget is a mere fraction of that. Humanitarian action can mean the difference between life and death for tens of millions of people every year. In fiscal year 2015, USAID/OFDA responded to 49 disasters in 45 countries, providing \$1.9 billion in humanitarian assistance.



Saving lives is becoming more difficult as crises increase in complexity and magnitude. In just over a decade, the number of people in need of humanitarian aid has more than doubled. Attacks on aid workers are at record highs with nearly 330 relief workers killed, injured, or kidnapped in 2014. In many parts of the world, conflict is the new normal, and it shows no sign of ending. USAID's disaster experts are working with humanitarian partners around the world to overcome these challenges and navigate shifting conflict lines to deliver life-saving aid.

## History of USAID/OFDA

USAID/OFDA was created in 1964 to lead and coordinate the U.S. government's disaster response efforts overseas. Following a massive earthquake in the former Yugoslavia that killed more than 1,000 people and a volcanic eruption in Costa Rica that destroyed large parts of the country, the U.S. government determined a need for a lead agency to coordinate disaster assistance offered to foreign governments and affected people. Rooted in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended, the President designated the USAID Administrator to lead foreign disaster response for the U.S. government through USAID/OFDA.

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