



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance



Photo Credit: Phil Gelman/USAID

Fulfilling 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 populations affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies. This includes the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, as well as ongoing crises in countries such as Syria, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen.

Responding in Times of Crisis

When a natural disaster or conflict destroys cities and markets, 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 the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) does every day, all around the world.

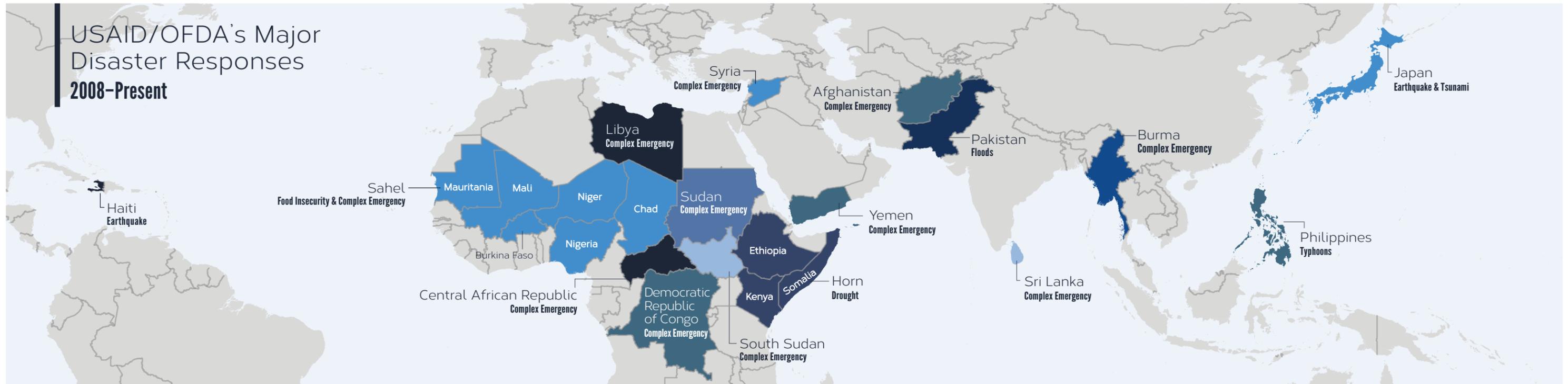
USAID/OFDA leads and coordinates the U.S. Government's humanitarian assistance efforts overseas. The Office responds to an average of 70 disasters in more than 50 countries every year, ensuring that aid reaches people affected by rapid onset disasters, including earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods, as well as slow-onset crises, such as drought and conflict.

USAID/OFDA operates with 300 staff worldwide, located in Washington, D.C., and in six regional and 10 field offices. Its team of seasoned humanitarian professionals, policy advisors, and technical experts—including infectious disease specialists,

nutritionists, logisticians, and hydrometeorological advisors—identify the most urgent humanitarian needs immediately following a disaster, 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; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates are stocked with essential relief supplies, including emergency shelter materials, warm blankets, water treatment systems, and hygiene kits that can be transported rapidly to disaster-affected areas all around the globe. USAID/OFDA also works with the international humanitarian community to give vulnerable populations 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 most dangerous regions around the world.

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 are on the ground to assess the situation firsthand, identify the most urgent needs, and 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 whenever their expertise is needed.

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.



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:



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.



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.



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.



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 get people out of harm's way.



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 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.



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 protection coordination and advocacy activities.



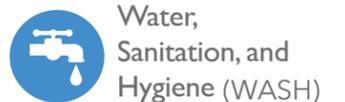
The diverse health interventions supported by USAID/OFDA include life-saving medical assistance, immunization campaigns, disease surveillance systems, and medical trainings for health workers in other countries.



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 promote disaster risk reduction activities.



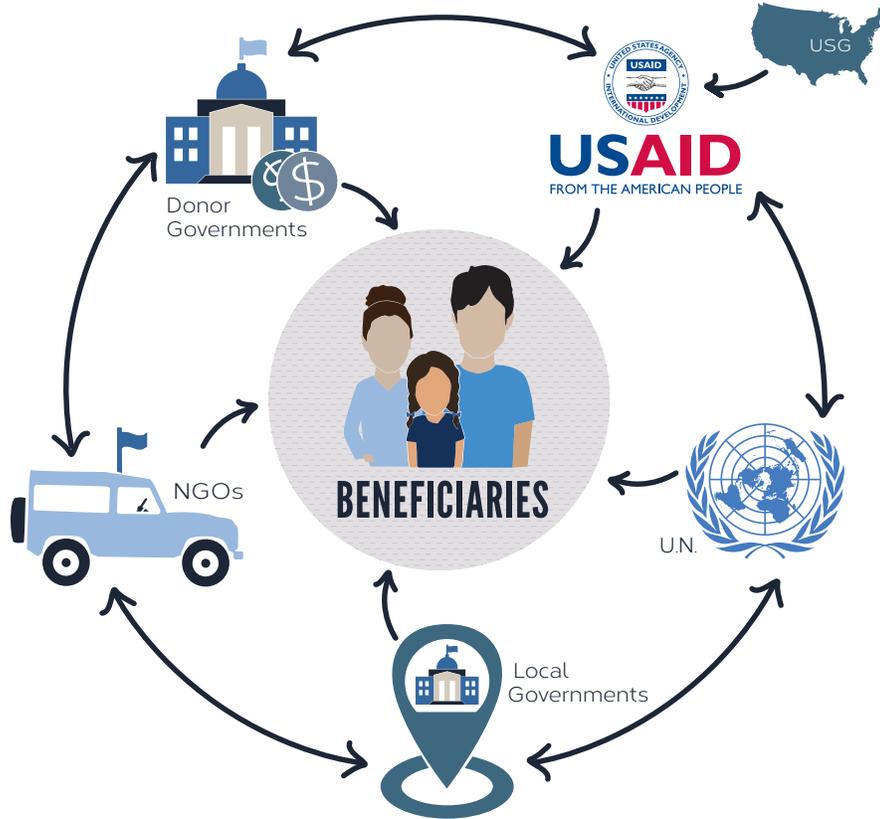
USAID/OFDA supports activities that enhance international and local coordination mechanisms and strengthen needs assessments and information management to ensure the timely and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance.



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.

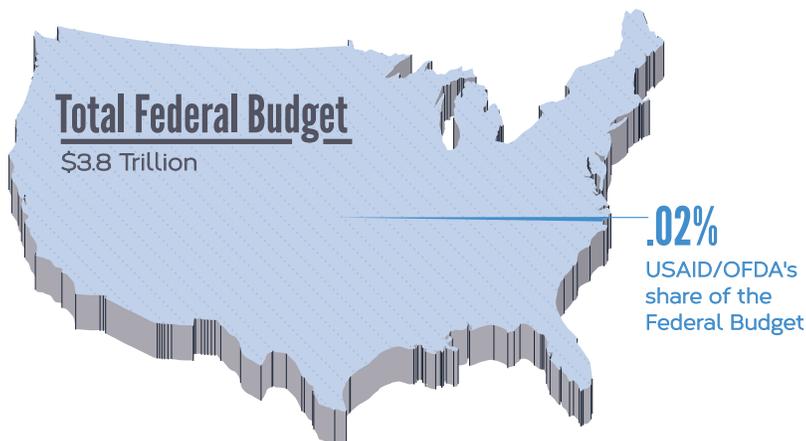
Humanitarian Coordination and Partnerships

USAID/OFDA works strategically with international responders and other donor governments to maximize resources to save more lives. The Office also taps into a vast international network of humanitarian partners through its funding of and engagement with U.N. agencies, donor governments, other international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), 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 2013, USAID/OFDA responded to 52 disasters in 40 countries, providing \$883 million in humanitarian assistance.



The United States is the single largest donor of humanitarian aid for the children, women, and men affected by the crisis in Syria. USAID is providing food aid, relief supplies, including hygiene kits, blankets, mattresses, medical supplies, and plastic sheeting to construct temporary shelters. USAID is also supporting more than 260 field hospitals, clinics, and medical points across Syria. This life-saving assistance has enabled more than 190,000 surgeries, has allowed for the treatment of hundreds of thousands of patients, and has saved countless lives.

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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