USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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

FISCAL YEAR 2019

Photo Credit: USAID

Fulfilling 55 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 helps people affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies around the world. Recent responses include the 2018 Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, hurricanes in the Caribbean in 2016 and 2017, the 2015 Nepal earthquake, the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak, as well as ongoing crises in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, Nigeria, and Yemen.

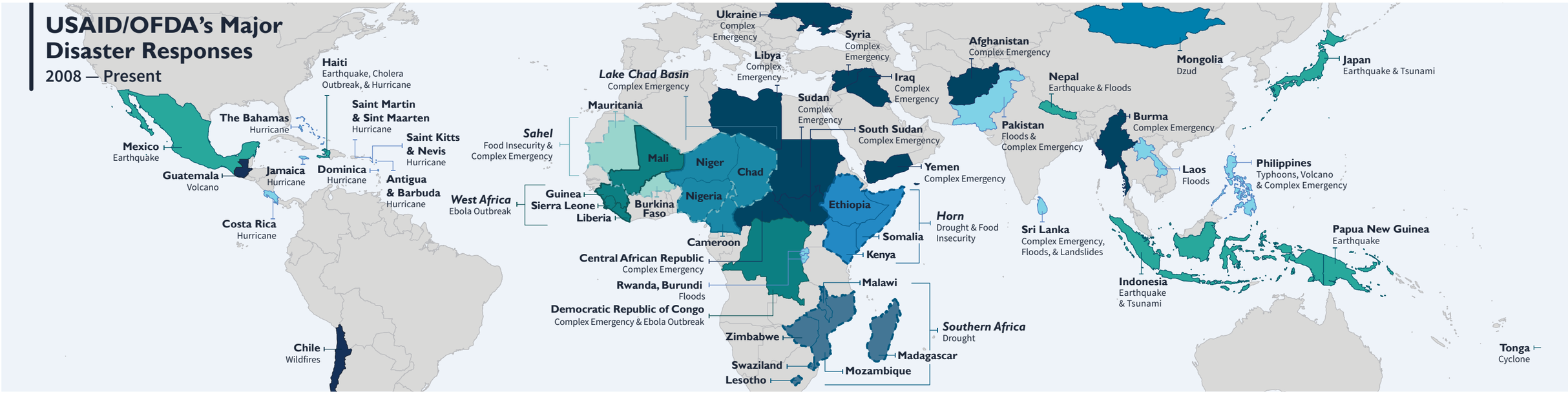
Responding in Times of Crisis

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 approximately 525 staff worldwide, working from its Washington, D.C., headquarters and at five 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 immediately after disasters strike, 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 places.



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 elite team of humanitarian experts and technical advisors are 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 humanitarian and disaster response experts with vast regional and technical knowledge who continually monitor global hazards, provide guidance, and prioritize programs for funding in the following sectors:

Agriculture and Food Security

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

Natural and Technological Hazards

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

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 assets to support small businesses, and create short-term employment opportunities.

Health

USAID/OFDA addresses the major causes of illness and death during disasters by supporting primary care, mobile health facilities, disease prevention and treatment, support for mental services as part of primary care, and child immunizations.

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.

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.

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.

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 operational research that supports a better emergency nutrition response.

Protection

USAID/OFDA prioritizes protection as a vital component of humanitarian assistance to mitigate threats faced by vulnerable populations, such as gender-based violence, child and family separation, psychosocial distress, exploitation and abuse, and exclusion from life-saving aid.

Shelter and Settlements

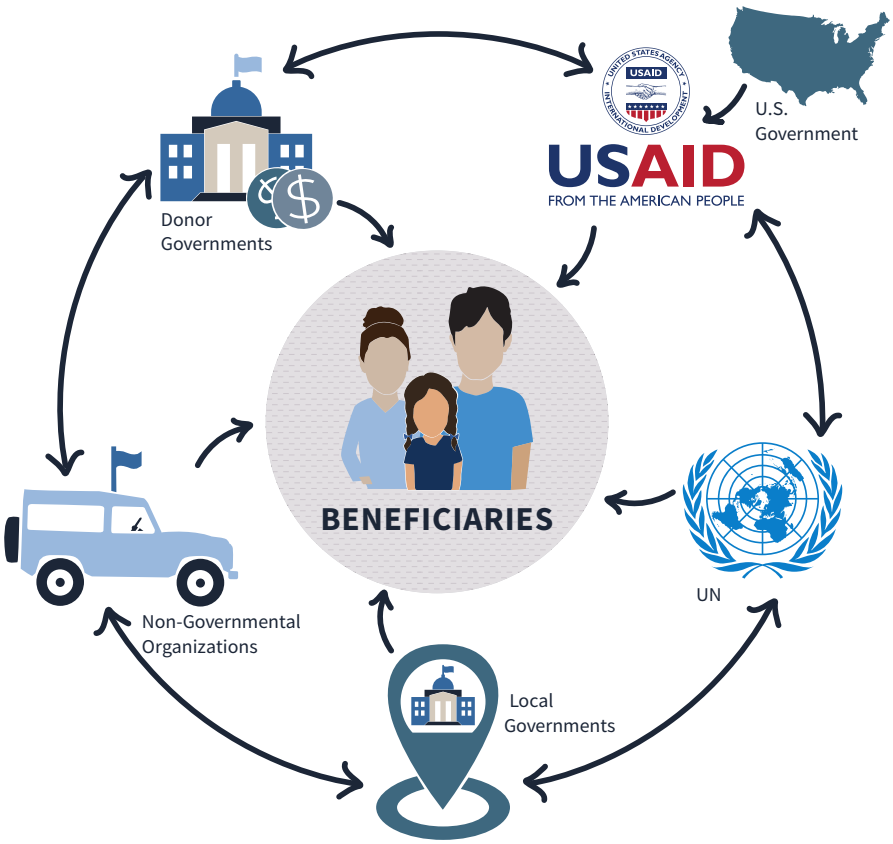
USAID/OFDA supports programs that provide safer, disaster-resistant structures and settlements, utilize local building materials, re-use rubble and debris in the response and recovery effort, and promote disaster risk reduction activities.

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 following disasters—through latrine construction and waste removal, hand-washing promotion, sanitation education, and the provision of safe drinking water.

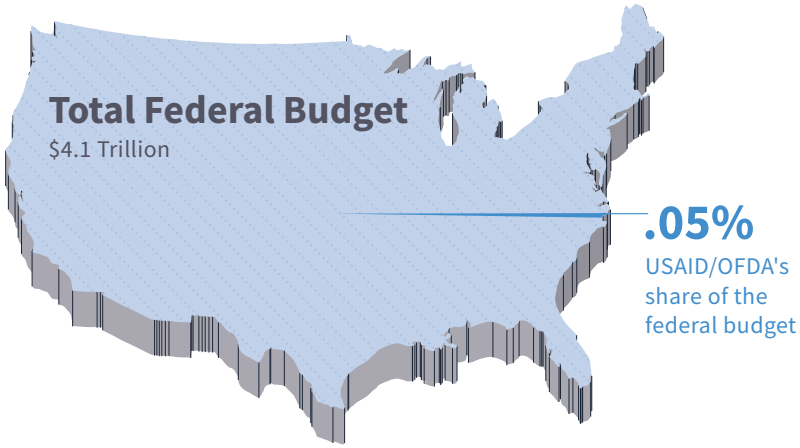
Humanitarian Coordination and Partnerships

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 UN agencies, international and non-governmental organizations, and community organizations, as well as its engagement with donor governments, local governments, and other entities. USAID/OFDA can call on other U.S. government agencies to assist with response efforts, whenever needed.



Financials

Approximately one 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 2018, USAID/OFDA responded to 54 disasters in 50 countries, providing more than $1.8 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. Conflict is the new normal in many parts of the world, and aid workers are caught in the middle. According to the Aid Worker Safety Database, more than 244 aid workers were killed, kidnapped, or injured in 2018. 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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