

PROTECTION SECTOR UPDATE



Adolescent girls in the Central African Republic. Photo courtesy of D. Belluz/IRC

Protecting and Empowering Women and Children in Cameroon

Since 2015, Cameroon's Far North Region experienced increasing attacks from Boko Haram, prompting population displacement, compromising access to basic services, and increasing the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation for women, girls, and boys in one of the most underdeveloped and highest populated regions in the country. USAID/OFDA has supported a partner organization in Far North since 2015 to provide essential life-saving protection services to populations at greatest risk of violence, with a particular focus on women and children. With assistance from USAID/OFDA, the partner provides critical GBV response and prevention services for women and girls and coordinates with other child protection actors to ensure access for child survivors of GBV to specialized GBV and child protection-focused assistance. The partner operates centers for women and girls, offering psychosocial support, GBV risk reduction activities and safety planning, and confidence-building life-skills trainings where survivors of GBV can work with counselors and case workers to recover, heal, and rebuild their lives. The USAID/OFDA partner also developed child-friendly spaces that serve as safe areas for children and youth to play, learn, and grow.

Providing Psychosocial Support in Conflict-Affected Ukraine

Conflict between the Government of Ukraine (GoU) military and separatists in eastern Ukraine that began in March 2014 had displaced approximately 1.7 million people as of August 2017. The ongoing conflict and persistent insecurity have forced the GoU to suspend many public services, including support for hospitals, pensions, social welfare institutions, and social security, in non-government controlled areas (NGCAs). Humanitarian organizations have highlighted the need for critical psychosocial support, child protection, and GBV activities on both sides

Sector Overview

Natural disasters and conflict often exacerbate the vulnerability of individuals; people must cope with threats such as sexual violence, violence in the home, separation of families, exploitative labor, and exclusion from life-saving humanitarian assistance. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to protect conflict- and disaster-affected communities and mitigate these potential threats. While working to minimize and respond to specific risks, USAID/OFDA requires partners to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the safety of those receiving emergency assistance across all sectors of a response and in all relief programs.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$135 million to support protection programs, including more than \$11.1 million to 13 partners for global and regional protection initiatives and more than \$124 million to 38 partners for protection activities in 20 countries. Worldwide, these programs have supported millions of people, providing services for child protection, psychosocial support, prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV), and coordination of and advocacy for protection activities.



Adolescent girls draw during an assessment in Nigeria. Photo courtesy of a USAID/OFDA partner

of the contact line—the boundary between GoU-controlled territory and NGCAs—as the conflict and high concentrations of armed combatants have placed people at higher risk for protection concerns. Populations near the contact line exhibit high rates of anxiety, depression, and acute stress. Approximately 75 percent of displaced persons in Ukraine who require mental health care do not receive it, and an estimated 200,000 children who live within ten miles of the contact line have limited access to safe spaces. In response to humanitarian protection needs in areas of critical concern, a USAID/OFDA partner deployed two mobile protection teams—comprising caseworkers, community outreach workers, and psychologists—to provide child protection, GBV, and psychosocial services interventions for conflict-affected populations in government-controlled areas near the contact line. The organization’s outreach programs provided communities with safe spaces and mental health services, along with support for GBV survivors. The USAID/OFDA partner and a local organization also supported four family-friendly centers to provide daily activities for children, older people, and caregivers, as well as psychosocial support for local populations. The USAID/OFDA partner, in coordination with a local organization, provided case management services for survivors of GBV and referral mechanisms to assist vulnerable women and girls to access medical and psychosocial services.

Transforming Child Protection Case Management

Children are often among the most affected by humanitarian emergencies such as natural disasters and armed conflict, events which can separate families and disrupt normal caregiving for children, placing them at greater risk of abuse and exploitation. USAID/OFDA supports partner organizations to implement child protection case management programs in response to the increased vulnerabilities that children face during emergencies by ensuring adequate protection measures for children. Since 2013, the Case Management Task Force (CMTF), chaired by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), has supported countries and international agencies seeking to improve their capacities for effective child protection case management—a type of social-work that identifies and assesses the needs of children with particular vulnerabilities and connects them with critical material, medical, and psychosocial support services. USAID/OFDA supported IRC and CMTF to expand interagency guidelines for case management to include standardized training materials and in-service coaching and mentoring for case workers and supervisors to improve the quality of child protection case management during emergency responses. With USAID/OFDA support, IRC piloted a mentorship program in the Middle East and Africa that trained 150 child protection emergency staff in interagency coordination, conducting needs assessments, and sensitive interviewing techniques. The findings from these USAID/OFDA-supported trials will improve international child protection outcomes by advancing comprehensive standards and training for humanitarian relief workers.

Integrating Protection with Humanitarian Programming

In recent years, humanitarian agencies have worked to integrate protection responsibilities into all levels of programming—a process known as protection mainstreaming—to better ensure the dignity and safety of those served by humanitarian assistance. In 2015, relief actors advocated for minimum mainstreaming requirements within the donor community, improved methods to evaluate protection mainstreaming within broader strategies for humanitarian intervention, and streamlined integration methods for protection activities. With USAID/OFDA support, IRC developed and piloted a Protection Mainstreaming Monitoring & Evaluation System (ProMMS) Toolkit to meet these needs within the humanitarian community. The Toolkit allows relief organizations to advance protection mainstreaming in high-level strategic and financial planning while also monitoring accountability, empowerment, participation, safety, and meaningful access for populations receiving humanitarian assistance. In November 2017, the Global Protection Cluster—the coordinating body for protection activities, comprising UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders—began promoting the ProMMS Toolkit for worldwide implementation.