

Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management Sector Update – Highlights of FY 2014 Activities

HIGHLIGHTS OF FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2014 ACTIVITIES | OCTOBER 2014

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Humanitarian coordination and information management are crucial elements to a cohesive and effective disaster response. Humanitarian coordination helps bring together relevant national, regional, and international actors and ensure common understanding of the urgent needs and response gaps, while information management helps collect, process, and package data and information in a useful way for those involved in a response. Humanitarian coordination and information management activities include assessing situations and needs, developing common response strategies, and monitoring impact and outcomes of activities—all with the aim of ensuring greater predictability and accountability among humanitarian actors.

USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA), the lead U.S. Government (USG) office for international disaster response, engages with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the U.N., and other donors to support humanitarian coordination and information management during an emergency, including through the humanitarian cluster system, which comprises the coordinating bodies for humanitarian activities in a disaster-stricken country. In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$61 million worldwide for humanitarian coordination and information management programs. In addition to the projects highlighted below, USAID/OFDA supports activities by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP), the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), and others.

EXPANDING AWARENESS OF HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS



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With USAID/OFDA support, the Sphere Project—an initiative working to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance and the accountability of humanitarian actors—unveiled a new website for Arabic speakers in October 2013. The website at <http://SphereProject.org/ar/> includes translated materials and resources, including a new e-learning course, *Sphere Handbook in Action*, which aims to strengthen the effective use of the Sphere Handbook, a widely recognized guide of common principles and universal minimum standards for humanitarian activities. The website also makes available an Arabic version of *Humanitarian Standards in Context*, a 20-minute film depicting examples of how humanitarian actors have applied standards outlined by the Sphere Handbook in the field.

USAID/OFDA has been supporting the Sphere Project since FY 2012 to conduct outreach to the Arabic-speaking world, where recent humanitarian emergencies have rendered the need for guidance on humanitarian principles and standards more urgent. By providing materials and training opportunities in Arabic, USAID/OFDA and the Sphere Project seek to expand awareness of Sphere principles and standards and continue improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian aid around the globe.

BUILDING A BETTER RESPONSE (BBR)

Since FY 2012, USAID/OFDA has provided nearly \$7.2 million for the Building a Better Response (BBR) project—implemented through a consortium comprising the International Medical Corps (IMC), Concern, and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative—to improve the capacity of national and international NGO and other humanitarian staff to engage

with the international humanitarian system in a way that strengthens overall coordination and response. In May 2014, the BBR consortium launched a five-unit e-learning course on the international humanitarian coordination system, developed in consultation with more than 500 staff members representing over 100 humanitarian organizations. The course's objective is to build the knowledge of NGO and other humanitarian personnel on the foundations of humanitarian action, the international humanitarian architecture, the cluster approach, and humanitarian standards, among other topics of importance to a humanitarian response. Those who complete all five units will receive a certificate from the Humanitarian Academy at Harvard.

In 2013 and 2014, the BBR project conducted a series of workshops on the basics of international humanitarian architecture for more than 300 participants in 10 different countries, including Chad, Haiti, Kenya, the Philippines, Senegal, South Sudan, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates. With ongoing USAID/OFDA support, the BBR project plans to finalize a blended learning curriculum that utilizes the e-learning course in a workshop setting. The BBR consortium also anticipates translating the e-learning course and other training materials into Arabic and French to expand its reach to Arabic- and French-speaking countries.

Building a Better Response is a superior solution for training humanitarian responders because it was developed by NGO practitioners who understand that in the fast-paced, high-stress humanitarian profession, easily accessible and applied training is essential to making real progress in our work.

*Jeremy Konyndyk,
USAID/OFDA Director*

SUPPORTING THE JOINT IDP PROFILING SERVICE (JIPS)

Reliable, disaggregated data on internally displaced persons (IDPs)—on who and where they are, as well as their needs, capacities, plans, and protection risks—are key to humanitarian efforts to assist such individuals. To facilitate the collection of core data on IDPs, USAID/OFDA supports the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), an inter-agency service established in late 2009 and supervised by a steering committee comprising a number of relevant humanitarian actors, including the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA).

With USAID/OFDA support, JIPS is working to enhance humanitarian coordination and responses to displacement by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on IDPs; refining IDP profiling tools, guidance, and training packages; and building capacity for profiling coordination at the field level. In June 2014, JIPS held a profiling-coordination training for U.N., NGO, and government staff from countries prioritized for support, including Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Kosovo, and Somalia. USAID/OFDA is also supporting JIPS' development of an online, publicly available reporting system that enables humanitarian and development actors to explore, analyze, and visualize displacement data according to their agencies' priorities. JIPS plans to launch its Dynamic Analysis and Reporting Tool in October 2014. Since FY 2013, USAID/OFDA has provided nearly \$1 million for JIPS.

ADDRESSING CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION GAPS DURING A RESPONSE

In the aftermath of a natural disaster or in the midst of a conflict, humanitarian actors often face challenges in gathering the information needed to design an effective response. To improve the availability of humanitarian information, USAID/OFDA supports REACH—a joint initiative of Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), IMPACT Initiatives, and the U.N. Operational Satellite Applications Program (UNOSAT) that facilitates coordinated assessments and develops information tools and products that would address critical information gaps during a response. In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$8.3 million to support REACH efforts around the world.

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