

WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE SECTOR UPDATE



USAID/OFDA interviews a displaced family near Pedernales, Ecuador, in a location where portable toilets were provided by the Government of Ecuador. Photo by Trevor White/USAID

WASH Support for Households Affected by Ecuador Earthquake

On April 16, 2016, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Ecuador, resulting in at least 660 deaths and damaging or destroying more than 30,000 houses, as well as hospitals, schools, and other infrastructure. The earthquake damaged urban and rural water systems throughout the country, limiting the availability of safe drinking water. Earthquake-displaced households lacked access to basic sanitation facilities, heightening their risk of disease in the makeshift settlements where they sheltered immediately after the earthquake. USAID/OFDA partnered with multiple organizations to repair damaged water systems to reduce the need for bottled water distributions and restore water services. USAID/OFDA also funded non-governmental organizations (NGO) partners, including ADRA, Save the Children, and World Vision, to support affected households through integrated shelter and WASH interventions, including the construction of temporary sanitation facilities for shelters and the provision of essential hygiene items that were lost during the earthquake.

Helping Communities Respond to El Niño in Southern Africa

In response to the continuing effects of the El Niño climatic event in 2015 and 2016, USAID/OFDA funded numerous programs to improve water access and hygiene conditions in El Niño-affected communities in FY 2016. For many countries in the region, 2015 was the driest year on record after two years of failed rains in Southern Africa.

In southern Madagascar, USAID/OFDA-supported partners incorporated water infrastructure rehabilitation into food security and livelihoods programming to increase water access and protect vulnerable populations, agriculture, and livestock.

Sector Overview

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs represent vital components of USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) responses to slow- and rapid-onset disasters and complex emergencies, as disaster-affected populations are more susceptible to illness and death from waterborne and communicable diseases.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$247 million to support WASH programs in more than 35 countries.

WASH interventions in emergencies often include construction or repair of latrines, hygiene support, solid waste removal, and the provision of safe, treated water. Activities such as building latrines and establishing waste removal systems can prove challenging in areas with high water tables, hard rock sites, and high population density.

USAID/OFDA also links emergency WASH activities with transition and development programs funded by other USAID offices and incorporates institutional partners—such as local governments—in program planning and implementation to promote the sustainability of water- and hygiene-focused projects.

In addition, USAID/OFDA support to academic research has been essential to the development of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) response interventions, including refining protocols relating to chlorine use in the EVD response, a crucial aspect of prevention.

Responding to El Niño in Micronesia

Throughout FY 2016, the effects of the strong El Niño climatic events remained entrenched across the Pacific Islands. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that severe drought conditions were affecting northern areas of The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), where average rainfall accumulations fell to less than 20 percent of normal levels between December and March. Rainwater is the only source of fresh water on many remote atolls of RMI. In response to the severe drought, USAID/OFDA, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Government of RMI (GoRMI), conducted an assessment between March 18 and 27. The team conducted site visits to 16 remote isolated coral atolls, visiting 32 islets and villages to document WASH conditions. The main finding was a critical lack of safe drinking water. In response, USAID/OFDA provided emergency reverse osmosis water treatment units, capable of turning saline water into safe drinking water, to the remote island communities. The units provided a consistent source of safe drinking water during the drought. A USAID/OFDA WASH advisor also provided technical support and guidance to GoRMI emergency response personnel on the deployment, maintenance, and operation of reverse osmosis units.



A child accesses safe drinking water during the drought in the Marshall Islands. Photo by Peter Wallis/USAID

In Mozambique, USAID/OFDA partners worked closely with national emergency response authorities to ensure safe drinking water deliveries met immediate household water supply needs and supported longer-term projects including deepening wells and constructing water troughs for livestock.

In Zimbabwe, USAID/OFDA staff participated in a multi-sectoral assessment in March to evaluate the effects of El Niño-induced drought. The objective of the assessment was to identify critical needs, including WASH needs, in coordination with Government of Zimbabwe officials, USAID/OFDA partners, and other humanitarian actors. The assessment prioritized rehabilitating existing water sources, ensuring water points included separate water sources for livestock, and improving water storage. An additional priority was to coordinate with provincially established NGOs to enhance the connections between humanitarian and development WASH programming to build resilience and long-term sustainability in drought-affected communities.

Waste Management and Other WASH Support in South Sudan

USAID/OFDA provided more than \$24.5 million in FY 2016 for WASH support to vulnerable populations affected by the complex emergency in South Sudan. Since the start of the most recent conflict in December 2013, USAID/OFDA WASH interventions in South Sudan have prioritized essential WASH services in large internally displaced person (IDP) settlements and UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) protection of civilians (PoC) sites in order to mitigate public health risks through access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, and waste management. USAID/OFDA supported the International Organization for Migration to create waste stabilization infrastructure to safely dispose of wastewater in UNMISS PoC sites housing more than 127,500 IDPs. In order to more effectively address emergency malnutrition needs of vulnerable populations, USAID/OFDA also coordinates WASH and health activities closely with nutrition efforts. In addition, USAID/OFDA supports WASH activities under a rapid-response mechanism to mitigate the spread of endemic cholera outbreaks in South Sudan's capital city of Juba.

USAID/OFDA Support for EVD Prevention Research

USAID/OFDA-funded research at Tufts University, carried out in FY 2016, has assisted in the refinement of EVD response protocols, including chlorine use—a cornerstone of responding to and preventing the disease. With USAID/OFDA support, researchers carried out a series of tests on chlorine compounds to determine the life span of the disinfecting residuals of each chlorine solution. USAID/OFDA and Tufts researchers also determined the most accurate field-based chlorine test kits to measure free chlorine residuals to ensure prevention and disinfection during an EVD outbreak and were able to share this knowledge with implementing partners for application during the EVD response.

USAID/OFDA CONTACTS

Melissa Opryszko, Team Lead, mopryszko@ofda.gov
Frank Broadhurst, SRG WASH Advisor, fbroadhurst@ofda.gov
Angie Fleischer, SRG WASH Advisor, afleischer@ofda.gov
Albert Reichert, SRG WASH Advisor, alreichert@ofda.gov
Peter Wallis, SRG WASH Advisor, pwallis@ofda.gov
Trevor White, SRG WASH Advisor, trewwhite@ofda.gov
Team email: OFDAwatsan@USAID.gov