

Shelter and Settlements Sector Update

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

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) remains at the forefront of the humanitarian community's shelter and settlements (S&S) activities, all of which revolve around a common goal: the expeditious and appropriate provision of covered living space to adequately shelter displaced populations, while also promoting safer, healthier settlements and linking S&S assistance to longer-term recovery efforts. USAID/OFDA contributes to the international humanitarian community's broader S&S strategic framework through participation in the Shelter and Settlements Working Group (SSWG)—an open membership group hosted by InterAction—and support of the annual *Shelter Projects* report, spearheaded jointly by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the U.N. Human Settlements Program. In FY 2014, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$39 million in humanitarian S&S assistance and shelter-related risk reduction activities, including more than \$36 million for S&S interventions in 18 countries, and nearly \$3 million for global and regional S&S initiatives.

PROGRAMMING: ENGAGED IN RESPONSES AROUND THE WORLD

FY 2014 was marked by multiple deployments of S&S advisors to serve on Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs), conduct field assessments, design sector strategies, and monitor project activities. Deployments to crisis-affected areas entailed considerable land and housing market analysis to better understand impacts, needs, and resources, as well as engagement with affected populations, cluster lead agencies, host country institutions, and implementing partners. In the Philippines, Ukraine, Serbia, and South Sudan, this work led to the design and promotion of emergency and transitional shelter strategies linked to other sectors, such as protection and water, sanitation and hygiene, with an emphasis on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and longer-term recovery. Assessments of previous projects have confirmed the utility of S&S projects, particularly transitional shelter, as a platform for DRR programs and the facilitation of the longer-term, incremental housing recovery process.

POLICY: GUIDANCE ON DISABILITY, PLASTIC SHEETING, AND COOKSTOVES

USAID/OFDA continues to promote agency-wide disability guidelines—based on the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990—that have been clarified for use in emergency and disaster contexts, including for S&S DRR activities. Activities are considered appropriate when found to be “at least substantially equivalent” to the agency's accessibility and usability guidelines. Humanitarian community accessibility guidelines developed in recent years provide a basis for attaining the “substantially equivalent” standard adopted by USAID, and USAID/OFDA continues to work with implementing partners to ensure application of the USAID disability guidelines.

Recent experience with plastic sheeting use has shown that displaced populations are sometimes not well-served when sheeting is included in non-food item distributions but not complemented with other shelter inputs, such as framing materials and tools, to create needed covered living space. The USAID/OFDA S&S team continues to promote the incorporation of an S&S sector in proposals when plastic sheeting is identified as a need among displaced populations.

The S&S team is also participating in agency discussions on possible Phase 2 (2015-2018) activities of the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, as well as discussions on the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) initiative, which focuses on meeting the energy needs of crisis-affected populations located in camps, host communities, and other settings. In this regard, USAID/OFDA recently provided funding to support one month of fuel purchases for IDPs living in a displacement site in Bor, South Sudan.

TRAINING: ONE-DAY COURSE & DEVELOPMENT OF FIVE-DAY COURSE

The S&S team regularly presented the USAID/OFDA one-day S&S training course during FY 2014, to both in-house staff and to other humanitarian organizations. The course is currently being converted into a five-part video series, with release scheduled for late 2014. The training packet for the one-day course, containing all course material, is available on the ReliefWeb site.¹ In addition, a five-day S&S training course is currently in development and scheduled for completion in early 2015.

OUTREACH

Support of the Frederick Cuny Collection

USAID/OFDA is supporting the transfer and digitization of the Frederick Cuny Disaster Management Research Collection, comprising nearly 6,600 documents and 8,000 images, much of which are related to S&S activities, to the Texas A&M University Cushing Memorial Library and Archives for permanent housing. Disaster management expert Frederick Cuny is widely viewed as the originator of many approaches to humanitarian assistance in use today. Key documents will be digitized and made available on-line, thereby increasing access to materials for the humanitarian community.

USAID/OFDA S&S Graduate Student Fellowships

USAID/OFDA awarded two graduate student fellowships in June 2014, as part of larger efforts to improve S&S sector programming, increase awareness of the sector in North America, and expand career options for S&S activities. One recipient is developing a guidance note on urban planning for use by humanitarian actors, based on research in Colombia and Haiti. The other recipient is using geographic information systems software to visualize past and future changes in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with the aim of devising strategies to better incorporate DRR measures into neighborhood-level plans.

Publication of Articles on Land and S&S Issues

- “Addressing the Land Issue: Tackling Land Issues in Shelter Programming After Disasters,” by Lee Malany.²
- “Under One Roof: Promoting Transitional Shelter as Both Humanitarian Response and Permanent Housing Reconstruction,” by Chuck Setchell and Eddie Argenal.²

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

USAID/OFDA will continue to develop and disseminate training material through both in-person and on-line courses. Emphasis on linking S&S activities to larger recovery and resilience efforts promoted by both humanitarian and development actors, particularly in urban areas, will continue. In addition, USAID/OFDA will continue efforts to generate guidance notes on wind-, seismic-, and flood-resistant construction and settlements measures to inform the creation of safer structures and communities.

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¹Available at: <http://is.gd/OFDAsheltertraining>

²Available at: http://www.interaction.org/sites/default/files/MD_JanFeb_2014_web.pdf