

## USAID/OFDA SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS SECTOR UPDATE – OCTOBER 2012

### SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is 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. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$20 million in humanitarian shelter assistance and shelter-related risk reduction activities in 16 countries. USAID/OFDA also continues to contribute to the broader S&S strategic framework within the international humanitarian community, including support of the North American S&S Network, an open membership working group hosted by InterAction. The following are selections of recent USAID/OFDA-funded projects.

### HAITI: LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD, AND LEARNING MORE

After the devastating January 12, 2010, earthquake, USAID/OFDA initiated a program that would ultimately become its largest-ever S&S sector intervention. Total spending eventually exceeded \$108 million in support of a range of humanitarian shelter solutions, which benefited approximately 62,600 households—more than 313,000 people—or roughly one-fifth of the 1.5 million people estimated to have been displaced by the earthquake. USAID/OFDA assistance included transitional shelter (t-shelter) assistance to more than 28,500 households, house repairs benefiting approximately 7,600 households, and hosting support to more than 26,500 households. This total exceeded the initial USAID/OFDA S&S objective of assisting 47,500 households by nearly 33 percent.

Although shelter needs remain, S&S lessons emerged and continue to emerge from the Haiti earthquake response, with five mentioned below.

First, hosting support really does work. Approximately 70 percent of USAID/OFDA-supported hosting arrangements for nearly 18,500 households have apparently evolved into permanent housing solutions for families who decided to stay in hosting arrangements for the foreseeable future. Hosting is thus not only an important humanitarian shelter solution, but also appears to be helping address longer-term housing needs at a cost far below housing reconstruction efforts in Haiti.

Second, seemingly limited resources can sometimes yield significant benefits. Although funding for house repairs is still needed, USAID/OFDA assisted its primary house repair implementing partner, Pan American Development Foundation–Miyamoto, in leveraging its \$4 million grant into an additional \$32 million from various public, quasi-public, and private entities, including the World Bank, American Red Cross, Caterpillar Foundation, and Clinton–Bush Foundation. The eight-fold increase in funding of repair activities supported a significant expansion of much-needed activities in Haiti.

Third, the “neighborhood approach” promoted by USAID/OFDA appears to be an effective operational means of guiding the recovery of disaster-affected communities. The approach was most fully developed in the KATYE (“neighborhood” in Creole) project in Ravine Pintade, a heavily damaged neighborhood in central Port-au-Prince. The project was a combined effort by Project Concern International and CHF International to systematically respond to needs using an integrated, multi-sectoral, community-based approach to not only address short-term needs, but also establish a basic platform for longer-term neighborhood recovery. Humanitarian agencies are conducting a project evaluation and preparing final reports, both of which will provide significant learning opportunities on the design and implementation of community-driven, area-based programs in dense urban settings. Further, the project was the subject of a

lengthy front-page article in the *Washington Post*<sup>1</sup>, which captured many of the project's beneficial impacts, as well as the challenges of working in dense urban settings.

Fourth, supporting Diaspora in their home countries pays significant dividends. Largely missing from the initial response to the January 2010 earthquake was an operational means of placing Haitian Diaspora in positions where they could apply their local knowledge and much-needed architecture, engineering, and urban planning expertise. In an effort to engage the Diaspora community, USAID/OFDA supported the Emergency Community Assistance and Planning (ECAP) project from July 2010 to March 2011. Managed by the Development Innovations Group, ECAP was the first international community initiative based exclusively on application of Diaspora expertise to post-earthquake response and recovery efforts. Through the ECAP, 11 experts in architecture, engineering, and urban planning deployed to work with Government of Haiti (GoH) agencies, local governments, the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, and USAID/OFDA-funded partners, enabling local officials and others to make informed decisions regarding safe sites for safe shelter. As testimony to the utility of supporting the Diaspora, the USAID/Haiti mission assumed support of ECAP at the conclusion of the USAID/OFDA project to ensure that these knowledgeable and qualified urban professionals remain involved in Haiti's recovery. This support continues, and includes assignment of Diaspora within the GoH Prime Minister's Office to provide technical and policy input on recovery and reconstruction.

Finally, disasters teach, and active learning efforts are needed to capture and document emerging lessons. USAID/OFDA is currently focusing on learning from its experiences in providing shelter assistance following the earthquake by engaging implementing partners on post-project evaluations, assessing sector performance, and conducting research on earthquake- and hurricane-resistant shelter design in Haiti. Much of this research work is being conducted at the Florida International University Engineering Center, and its findings will serve as a basis for detailed guidance for future S&S sector responses.

## **FSM AND RMI: DEVELOPING BASELINE DATA IN A NEW USAID/OFDA REGION**

In November 2008, USAID assumed responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), reflecting the transition of FSM and RMI from U.S.-administered trust territories to independent countries. USAID and FEMA developed an Operational Blueprint to provide a framework for U.S. Government (USG) disaster response and reconstruction in the two nations, under which USAID maintains FEMA's previous commitment to supplementing host government efforts as necessary to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of significant disasters.

In addition to supporting a full-time resident Regional Advisor in FSM and RMI, USAID/OFDA technical specialists have conducted sector-specific assessments to generate baseline information needed to prepare for future disasters. Most recently, health, S&S, and water, sanitation, and hygiene advisors conducted a one-month, multi-sector baseline assessment in FSM and RMI. Key findings of the S&S assessment included:

- Storms and associated winds and ocean swells are the main hazards to settlements featuring mostly timber-framed homes located in low-lying atolls and near the ocean in volcanic islands;
- Long-term exposure to hazards has enabled the resident population to cope with most shocks without relying heavily on external assistance; and
- Due mainly to the high-level resilience of the population, it is likely that fewer than 500 households would need humanitarian S&S assistance in most disaster events.

Key S&S assessment recommendations included:

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<sup>1</sup> David Brown, "In one of Haitian capital's roughest neighborhoods, a pretty good second chance," *Washington Post*, August 18, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/in-one-of-haitian-capitals-roughest-neighborhoods-a-pretty-good-second-chance/2012/08/18/0958982c-ae5c-11e1-936a-45aa2b40de38\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/in-one-of-haitian-capitals-roughest-neighborhoods-a-pretty-good-second-chance/2012/08/18/0958982c-ae5c-11e1-936a-45aa2b40de38_story.html).

- Expanding the USAID response strategy to include a wider variety of sheltering solutions such as host family support, rental subsidies, emergency and transitional shelters construction, and emergency housing repairs;
- Supporting humanitarian actors to develop and disseminate contingency plans, and strengthen and upgrade collective shelters; and
- Supporting the International Organization for Migration—USAID/OFDA’s main partner in both countries—to develop an organizational disaster response strategy and protocols tailored to the local context to more effectively respond to future disasters.

## **TRAINING AND OUTREACH**

In addition to supporting the S&S Working Group (SSWG) at InterAction, USAID/OFDA engages in a wide range of training and outreach activities to engage diverse audiences, including humanitarian agencies, public policy think tanks, trade associations, other USG agencies, and academic institutions. Examples include presentations at American University, the Brookings Institution, Canadian Relief Housing Conference, Catholic Relief Services Symposium, Harvard University, InterAction Forum, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Shelter Centre, the University of California, Davis, and Virginia Tech University. Interviews with media organizations and publications were additional means of outreach during the past several months. USAID/OFDA has also published pieces on hosting support in InterAction’s *Monthly Developments* (January/February 2012 issue) and a review of S&S efforts in Haiti for *Shelter Projects 2010*, a document prepared jointly by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the U.N. Human Settlements Program (UN HABITAT).

A feature of current training efforts is the design of a one-day S&S sector training course. Inaugural presentations of the course for USAID/OFDA and non-governmental organization participants were held in September 2012, with additional courses scheduled throughout the fall. USAID/OFDA prepared a number of new training materials for the course, including a “Description of Humanitarian S&S Sector Activities.” Finally, USAID/OFDA will work closely with the SSWG to expand training efforts by designing one-week and one-month courses, which will form the basis of larger efforts to certify S&S sector advisors.

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