



For-Work Guidance

This guidance outlines suitable types of emergency Cash-for-Work (CFW), Vouchers-for-Work, and Food-for-Work (hereafter, “for-work”; also sometimes called “for-assets”) activities for USAID funding in humanitarian contexts. It is a supplement to the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Application Guidelines (see the For-Work keyword, and the Temporary Employment and Conditional Food Assistance sub-sectors). Please refer to the BHA Application Guidelines for technical requirements regarding for-work interventions (e.g. wages, protection concerns, delivery mechanism, beneficiary selection, etc.). Additional guidance is found in individual sectors, and in the cross-cutting guidance and keywords for Structures/Infrastructure and Natural Resource Management. This document is intended to supplement the Application Guidelines, and to provide intervention-specific guidance for commonly proposed for-work interventions.

Please note that this is **not** an exhaustive list; all for-work activities are individually reviewed upon application submission.

Broadly, for-work interventions are designed to provide short-term income to disaster-affected populations. For-work interventions aim to construct or rehabilitate communal infrastructure that can be sustainably maintained after the program ends. USAID/BHA-funded for-work projects should (1) Benefit the community as a whole; (2) Have a demonstrated link to the impact of the disaster; (3) Not complete work that people would normally do on their own, such as repair their own shelters; (4) Not complete tasks that are recurring responsibilities of the community, such as trash pick-up; and (5) Have a realistic plan in place for sustainable maintenance.

In general, USAID/BHA prefers low-cost, simple, and rehabilitation-focused for-work interventions over larger, more structurally complex, or new construction interventions. Construction/rehabilitation interventions need proper engineering oversight, from design to building.

Examples of for-work interventions, and accompanying guidance:

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
Animal carcass removal	Generally acceptable; see Issues	If needed; and if design and worker safety/hygiene requirements are met.

Borehole construction or rehabilitation	Not typically acceptable	Not supported through for-work due to technical requirements.
Bridge rehabilitation	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Proper engineering design and oversight must be ensured.
Building land stabilizing structures, e.g. rock filled gabions	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Any gabions proposed to be used along water bodies or rivers or for flood control purposes must meet technical requirements.
Building new market stalls	Depends heavily on context	Depends on the objective and justification, what percentage of market actors will benefit, and more. Brand-new marketplaces often do not work out. Upgrading existing marketplace infrastructure may be appropriate. If individual vendors will benefit (e.g. by getting their own stall or storage) they should contribute their own, unpaid, labor as well.
Clearing/ preparing private or communal farmland; establishing or maintaining nutrition gardens	Not typically acceptable	Farming yields its own benefit, so for-work is usually unnecessary. However, this may be acceptable under extremely limited circumstances.
Desilting water pans or ponds (water catchment system rehabilitation)	Depends heavily on context	Depends on the reason that desilting is needed, the scope of the work (whether manual labor is appropriate), design requirements, and intended use. USAID/BHA does not generally support surface water runoff for household water supply. Paying communities every few years to do desilting is unsustainable.
Drainage rehabilitation/ construction	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Requires oversight. Sustainability and appropriate maintenance must be addressed.
Fencing existing structures; rehabilitation of fencing (e.g. water points, schools, communal pasture areas)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Must be for a genuinely communal asset. For example, for-work to fence a garden that only some people share is not appropriate.

Hygiene promotion	Not typically acceptable	While BHA does support incentives for volunteers, hygiene promotion is considered a skilled task and the selection criteria for volunteers should be different than those for for-work participants.
Irrigation Systems - new irrigation systems	Depends heavily on context	Requires strong justification. The provision of irrigation materials and training, if needed, should be enough for farmers to provide unpaid labor, and all construction activities from design to building must be overseen by professional engineers and environmental compliance officers.
Irrigation Systems - rehabilitating existing irrigation systems (e.g. cleaning out canals)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Only communal parts of canals (e.g. primary canal; not the tertiary canals that go to individual farms) can be considered for for-work. Depends on the reason the canals need rehabilitation (disaster-related damage or displacement are appropriate; a long-term lack of upkeep is not); plans for future maintenance; and the percentage of the community who benefits (if only the better-off farmers have access to canals, then it does not really benefit the whole community).
Latrine Communal latrine construction; handwashing station construction	Depends heavily on context	Only acceptable in managed camps. Depends on context and stage of emergency; requires oversight. USAID/BHA does not support for-work to build household latrines.
Major road rehabilitation	Depends heavily on context	Requires strong justification and professional engineering oversight. Depends on context and objective; cost/scale; possible drainage, watershed, and related environmental impacts; plans for maintenance; and appropriateness of for-work (unskilled labor). Generally not consistent with USAID emergency/humanitarian mandate if project entails paving and other major construction activities.
Minor road rehabilitation (feeder or dirt roads; footpaths)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Depends on context and objective; cost/scale; possible drainage, watershed, and environmental impacts; and plans for maintenance.

Pasture reclamation and greening (bunds, zai holes, demi-lunes, invasive species removal, planting of species for greening, fire lines)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Must be on communal land. Reseeding is generally acceptable, as long as there is a plan within the community to manage or restrict grazing until the grass establishes itself, and to sustainably manage the land and grazing afterwards. Planting species that require significant follow-on care (such as tree seedlings) is not usually supported through for-work, as it is impossible to ensure appropriate care once the payments end.
Piecework / manufacturing items (e.g. NFIs)	Depends heavily on context	Only when there is an assessed humanitarian need for the items in question, and they will be distributed as part of the project. Not frequently supported.
Plant Nurseries	Not typically acceptable	Plant nurseries should ideally be run as profitable businesses so this is not a good fit for for-work. See “Pasture reclamation and greening” for further detail on tree seedlings.
Rehabilitating existing market or public infrastructure (e.g. schools; community spaces)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Major repairs/upgrades require technical oversight and designs. Regular market cleanup is not acceptable.
Riverbank reinforcements, ‘dams,’ flood walls, dikes, levees, river diversion	Depends heavily on context	Please see Natural Hazards and Technological Risks (NHTR)/Hydrometeorological Hazards sub-sector requirements. If done incorrectly, such activities may actually increase risks to people. If the activities are technically sound and done on communal/public land, they may be appropriate for for-work. Dam construction is rarely supported.
Shelter construction or rehabilitation	Not typically acceptable	Generally not supported, whether on one’s own shelter or on someone else’s (creates a disincentive for people to repair their own homes, can undermine traditional labor-sharing arrangements, may not provide quality control). Vulnerable households with no access to labor can receive cash to hire labor.
Training - vocational	Not typically	Vocational training typically should target

	acceptable	those who wish to practice that vocation for a living; while meals or transport stipends are acceptable, paying 'sitting fees' is generally avoided. However, this is occasionally supported in rare contexts.
Trash/garbage removal	Depends heavily on context and duration	Not typically acceptable for ongoing solid waste management but one-time community cleanup may be acceptable post-disaster.
Well construction or rehabilitation (hand-dug)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Generally acceptable for hand-dug wells, if they are communally used, and if there is adequate oversight. Clarify well purpose(s) and include health design measures as needed.