

FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2019

# PROTECTION SECTOR UPDATE



Adolescent girls participate in an IRC program to discuss the risks of violence they face and services available to make them safer. Photo by Elizabeth Pender/USAID.

## Preventing and Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) policies and procedures are intended to ensure that beneficiaries can safely access needed assistance. While international PSEA policies are in place, many local relief organizations—often the immediate points of contact for the beneficiary community—lack the training and resources needed to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. To address this critical gap, USAID/OFDA partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is supporting more than 30 local organizations in three pilot countries—Haiti, Indonesia, and the Philippines—to contextualize international PSEA standards and build staff capacity to prevent and respond to these violations. In each pilot country, CRS convened the organizations’ leadership, determined each organizations’ needs, and developed tailored coaching plans. Based on the needs identified, CRS conducted trainings on reducing risk through project design and gaining community trust through better communication mechanisms. The project supported local partners as they created organizational codes of conduct and standard operating procedures to respond to allegations. CRS also trained human resources staff on improving recruitment practices to avoid hiring perpetrators, as well as mapped local laws relating to sexual exploitation and abuse. CRS aims to shift partner organizations’ attitudes towards PSEA by addressing cultural barriers, ensuring strong leadership buy-in, and prioritizing the safety of the people they serve.

## USAID/OFDA Protection Activities

FY 2019 FUNDING

Standalone Global and Regional Protection Programs	<b>\$10,476,711</b>
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Protection Interventions Worldwide	<b>\$157,255,782</b>
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**\$167,732,493<sup>1</sup>**

## Sector Overview

Natural disasters and conflict often exacerbate individuals’ vulnerability. People must cope with threats such as sexual violence, violence in the home, family separation, exploitative labor, and exclusion from life-saving humanitarian assistance. USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) is at the forefront of the humanitarian community’s efforts to protect and support conflict- and disaster-affected communities and mitigate these potential threats. While working to minimize and respond to specific risks, USAID/OFDA requires partners to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring the safety of those receiving emergency assistance across all sectors of a response and in all relief programs.

<sup>1</sup> All USAID/OFDA programs include protection mainstreaming components. USAID/OFDA funding supported standalone humanitarian protection activities in 35 countries in FY 2019, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

## Strengthening Community-Based Protection for Children and Women Amid EVD Response

A key lesson of the 2014 West Africa Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak was that an exclusively medical response was not sufficient to gain the trust of the population; community engagement was as important as treatment itself. In response to the EVD outbreak that began in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in August 2018, USAID/OFDA supports the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to improve access to health care services and information for women and children, while also increasing community involvement and trust in EVD response and prevention activities. In December 2018, IRC completed a joint assessment with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other actors to better understand women and children's perception of health care services, including accessibility, barriers, and any concerns or fears about health care service utilization. IRC is using the assessment findings, supplemented by regular consultations with women and children, to adapt programming and share beneficiaries' concerns with the wider DRC humanitarian community to improve overall response activities. IRC health and protection experts also developed community outreach approaches targeting women and children, integrating relevant information on the alert system, testing, and treatment for suspected EVD cases.

In addition, IRC continues to provide services to women and children facing exacerbated protection risks due to the combination of ongoing displacement and the EVD outbreak. This includes establishing safe spaces where women and girls can voice concerns regarding EVD and the response, and access clinical and psychosocial services for gender-based violence survivors and others facing protection-related consequences of EVD. IRC also helps manage children's stress through social-emotional learning tools. Beyond protection services, the safe spaces also serve as entry points for women and children to access EVD-related information, supporting the outbreak response.

## Enhancing Child Protection in Conflict

Children are exceptionally vulnerable to protection risks during emergencies, including exploitation and violence, recruitment by armed groups, and separation from their families. In addition to addressing the immediate needs of children in individual responses, USAID/OFDA supports the global community to develop needed humanitarian response resources; in FY 2019, this included specialized tools for preventing family separation and reintegrating children formally associated with armed groups. These boys and girls often have complex and diverse needs that may include physical and psychological injuries, stigmatization, and lack of livelihoods opportunities; girls released from armed groups may also return pregnant or with children. USAID/OFDA is supporting IRC to develop a parenting curriculum for caregivers of adolescents to address the drivers of recruitment and promote reintegration at home and in the community. Additionally, IRC is building on other adolescent-focused tools to design strategies to increase the protection and safety of adolescents at risk of recruitment or during reintegration. To complement this work, USAID/OFDA partner UNICEF is creating a toolkit for case managers working with children, families, and communities to facilitate reintegration. The toolkit is informed by the UN agency's continuous efforts promoting family reunification and community reintegration at the field level. By building the capacity of child protection staff in the field and designing innovative programs, these USAID/OFDA-supported projects aim to provide responders with the tools they need to provide effective and timely care to vulnerable children in emergencies.

## Ensuring Inclusive Disaster Risk Management in Disaster-Prone Areas

The Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is prone to natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, landslides, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and wildfires. While many countries in the region have established disaster preparation and management systems, they rarely address the needs of indigenous people, older persons, persons with disabilities, and women. For example, evacuation plans should account for persons with disabilities who may not be able to hear early warning alerts or quickly flee to higher ground. The specific needs of vulnerable groups must be addressed in disaster risk management (DRM) planning and decision-making processes at the national and regional levels, which requires better understanding of their needs through increased participation of these groups' representatives. USAID/OFDA partner Humanity and Inclusion (HI) works with government authorities and civil society actors to develop inclusive DRM frameworks in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru. With HI support, the six countries' national inclusive DRM committees and a regional working group are evaluating their respective DRM systems and identifying steps to make them more accessible and safer. HI assists the committees and working group to improve their DRM systems by convening workshops to monitor progress, as well as share learning and tools among the participants and from the wider humanitarian community. HI also conducts advocacy across the region on the importance of inclusive disaster planning and response. The USAID/OFDA-funded project provides authorities and civil society actors across LAC with the support they need to ensure that the most at-risk groups are not excluded from life-saving disaster planning and response systems.

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