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## **USAID/OFDA MONITORING AND EVALUATION SECTOR UPDATE – OCTOBER 2012**

### **SECTOR OVERVIEW**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical components of the USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance's (USAID/OFDA) mandate to save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of disasters. USAID/OFDA monitors humanitarian assistance programs to ensure that cash and in-kind assistance delivered during disaster responses manifest into desired outputs and outcomes. USAID/OFDA similarly monitors disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs to ensure that inputs, often in the form of training and technical assistance, meet pre-established benchmarks.

Informed by data gathered before, during, and after program implementation, USAID/OFDA evaluates humanitarian assistance and DRR programs to increase accountability to stakeholders—including USAID leadership, the U.S. Congress, and the American public—and increase learning, with the ultimate goal of improving program effectiveness. Evaluation specialists conduct performance evaluations of innovative humanitarian interventions, identifying useful program components that may be replicated elsewhere and pinpointing areas for improvement to ensure that programming remains relevant, appropriate, and sustainable. USAID/OFDA is currently working with partners and other entities to determine the feasibility of conducting impact evaluations of humanitarian assistance programs as a part of USAID/OFDA's ongoing work toward strengthening evidence-based programming.

### **CREATING AN M&E STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT**

In 2012, the Evaluation and Reporting Group (ERG), which oversees USAID/OFDA's M&E activities, drafted an M&E strategic plan covering fiscal years (FY) 2012–2014. The strategic plan provides a framework that will help USAID/OFDA strengthen internal M&E capacity, contribute to the development of partner M&E capacity, and undertake an increasing number of evaluations. The M&E strategic plan calls for the creation of evaluation tools based on industry best practices, including those of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee, for conducting quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods evaluations. The strategic plan also calls for greater inclusion of technical expertise from USAID/OFDA's Preparation, Strategic Planning, and Mitigation Division in M&E efforts.

### **IMPROVING PROGRAM MONITORING**

USAID/OFDA utilizes sector-specific performance indicators to track programmatic outputs and outcomes, which non-governmental organization partners are required to use when reporting on USAID/OFDA-funded programs. In FY 2012, USAID/OFDA's technical experts revised the sector-specific performance indicators to improve real-time program monitoring and generate evaluation-ready data. The revised indicators will be included in the updated Guidelines for Proposals scheduled for release at the beginning of FY 2013. In FY 2013, USAID/OFDA will also introduce a new reporting portal that will allow partners to directly enter performance data and upload reports for USAID/OFDA awards. The portal connects to USAID/OFDA's web-based program

management system, allowing both partners and USAID/OFDA staff to manage awards and run reports to improve program oversight, evaluation, and administration.

## **EVALUATING INNOVATIVE RESPONSE AND DRR PROGRAMS**

Between February and April 2012, a USAID/OFDA evaluation team conducted an internal performance evaluation of two USAID/OFDA-supported rapid response programs (RRPs) that



*Nutrition RRP beneficiaries discuss program experiences with the USAID/OFDA evaluation team in SNNPR, a region in southwestern Ethiopia. (Photo by Langdon Greenhalgh/USAID)*

support urgent nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs in Ethiopia. Adopting a participatory approach that involved a total of more than 100 key stakeholders in Ethiopia and Washington, D.C., the evaluation team collected existing secondary data and conducted key stakeholder interviews, direct observation, and focus group work during a two-week field mission in Ethiopia. This mixed-methods evaluation— informed by triangulated quantitative and qualitative information from RRP partners and their beneficiaries—explored the effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability of the RRP umbrella grant mechanisms, as well as USAID/OFDA's ongoing nutrition and WASH assistance in Ethiopia.

In FY 2013, ERG staff plan to evaluate several long-standing DRR programs to ensure that they are meeting stated objectives, starting with a long-standing program through which USAID/OFDA provides technical assistance to national volcano monitoring organizations, including training in hazard assessment, development of early warning plans, and installation and updating of volcano monitoring equipment. Planning is also underway to evaluate a program through which USAID/OFDA provides technical assistance and training on disaster response, preparedness, and risk reduction in 30 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, ERG staff intend to evaluate numerous other innovative USAID/OFDA interventions, including programs that promote rainwater harvesting, strengthen seed storage systems, reduce the risk of gender-based violence, enhance grazing management, and utilize ceramic water filters in areas facing water shortages.

## **WORKSHOPS AND OUTREACH**

In February 2012, ERG members participated in the Measurement of Selected Sphere Indicators Expert Group meeting, hosted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. Meeting objectives included developing expert consensus on a select set of Sphere indicators useful for the cross-sector evaluation of a humanitarian response in a broad range of settings at a particular phase of the response.

The ERG has also begun redesigning M&E training courses available to all USAID/OFDA staff and has created an internal guidance paper that will serve as a succinct reference guide on evaluation principles and practices for USAID/OFDA staff.

## **USAID/OFDA CONTACT**

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