

PROTECTION SECTOR UPDATE – JANUARY 2010

SECTOR OVERVIEW

During disasters, affected populations may face challenges that material assistance alone cannot adequately address. For example, conflicts or natural disasters often separate families, disrupting normal care-giving for children, elderly, and disabled persons. Displacement, loss of family members, or disruption of livelihoods may increase vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and abuse for men, women, and children. Conflict exposes some people to harmful threats from attacks or landmines. Disaster-affected populations confront protection challenges like these in many countries throughout the world. In response, USAID/OFDA promotes the protection of disaster-affected populations by supporting specific protection activities that minimize the risks and address the effects of harm, exploitation, and abuse, and by working with implementing partners to incorporate protection principles into all other relief activities.

GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE PROTECTION

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, USAID/OFDA continued to support global research, advocacy, and training initiatives related to the protection of disaster-affected populations, particularly internally displaced persons (IDPs). USAID/OFDA supported the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), which maintains a global database of statistics on conflict-induced displacement, provides analysis on the protection needs of IDPs, as well as the types of protection assistance provided by the humanitarian community, and partners with governments and aid agencies to advocate for improved protection of IDPs. IDMC also trains government, international, and local non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives in protection principles and practices. In addition, USAID/OFDA provides funding to the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement to disseminate the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and related guidelines; analyze and advocate for national and international policies and practices related to internal displacement; and provide training on human rights and natural disasters. USAID/OFDA's support to the InterAction¹ Protection Working Group helps facilitate and improve coordination of humanitarian protection actors and promote protection practices within the U.S.-based NGO community. USAID/OFDA also provides funding to the Women's Refugee Commission to develop a strategy for addressing household energy concerns in humanitarian contexts.

ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In FY 2008, USAID/OFDA funded four NGOs to implement gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response activities in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Nepal. In Liberia, ChildFund International and EQUIP Liberia supported community-based protection committees—comprising community leaders, women, and children—to raise GBV awareness in local villages. A survey indicated that the number of men with a basic understanding of GBV increased from 42 percent to 91 percent following the training, and communities reported that the work of the protection committees reduced the number of incidents of GBV. ChildFund also facilitated access to health and legal services for GBV survivors and provided grants to women's groups to establish new livelihoods activities, reducing participants' vulnerability to GBV. EQUIP Liberia worked with local police and judiciary officials in Nimba County,



USAID/OFDA partner ChildFund sponsors livelihoods programs in Liberia (Anita Malley, USAID).

¹ InterAction is the largest coalition of U.S.-based international NGOs

Liberia, to bring rape cases to court. In 2009, Nimba County recorded more criminal rape convictions than any other county in Liberia.



Girls participate in SC/UK life skills and vocational training in Côte D'Ivoire (Anita Malley, USAID).

In neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, Save the Children/United Kingdom (SC/UK) implemented similar community-based activities with USAID/OFDA support. SC/UK established five community centers where local volunteers organized trainings for children and youth on life skills to help raise GBV awareness. SC/UK also worked with groups of men and women to raise GBV awareness in local communities. In addition, SC/UK built the capacity of a local NGO, Bingnet-Pah, to assess and mitigate the risks of GBV. With SC/UK support, Bingnet-Pah has improved access to justice for GBV survivors and implemented outreach activities designed to raise awareness about harmful traditional practices.

In conflict-affected areas of Nepal, USAID/OFDA supported The Asia Foundation's (TAF) work with several local NGOs to address GBV. TAF and local partners established "men against violence" groups to raise awareness regarding the harmful effects of GBV. A TAF-supported local group used an innovative interactive theater approach to raise awareness, pausing the performance midway to request community guidance on the appropriate resolution to the mock situation, which led to discussion among community attendees about GBV. In addition, TAF and local NGOs trained community social workers to provide psychosocial support for GBV survivors and offered livelihoods training for vulnerable women.

PRIORITIZING PROTECTION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Repeated attacks by armed groups, which frequently include GBV, has resulted in significant displacement of the civilian population in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since 1998. Responding to associated protection concerns, many USAID/OFDA implementing partners incorporated protection into traditional relief activities during FY 2009. For example, humanitarian agencies located plots for demonstrating agriculture techniques in areas that women could safely access and consulted internally displaced women regarding placement of laundry facilities. USAID/OFDA partners providing health services ensured availability of confidential and appropriate treatment for GBV survivors. To reduce the incentive for armed groups to attack relief commodity distribution sites, USAID/OFDA partners planned distributions to small groups of individuals. In areas of DRC where the Lord's Resistance Army has abducted children, USAID/OFDA has supported the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) to care for children who have escaped or been released, ensuring placement with foster families while agencies work to reunite the children with their families.

INTERNATIONAL GENDER AND DISASTER WORKSHOP

In October 2009, Turkey's Kocaeli University organized the fourth international Gender and Protection Workshop with support from USAID/OFDA. The workshop convened participants from more than fifteen countries to discuss the integration of gender considerations into disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response activities. Using the 1999 earthquake in Izmit, Turkey, as a case study, several sessions focused on the security and economic problems facing women, men, and children during significant humanitarian events.

HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION WORKSHOPS

Since 2007, USAID/OFDA has hosted humanitarian protection workshops for NGOs and U.N. agencies. In FY 2009, USAID/OFDA offered workshops in Bangkok, Tokyo, and Addis Ababa for a total of 60 participants representing 35 organizations in seven countries.