

USAID/OFDA WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE SECTOR UPDATE – OCTOBER 2011

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs often represent vital components of the response by USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) to rapid-onset disasters and complex emergencies, as disaster-affected populations are more susceptible to illness and death from waterborne and communicable diseases. As a result, WASH interventions include latrine construction, provision of safe drinking water, and hygiene promotion—commonly focused upon improved hand-washing, water collection and storage, and sanitation practices. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$130 million for WASH programs in 28 countries. USAID/OFDA also links emergency activities with transition and development programs funded by other offices in USAID and incorporates institutional partners, such as local governments, in program planning and implementation to promote sustainability. The following are selections of recent USAID/OFDA-funded projects.



Schoolchildren pick up sachets of oral rehydration salts distributed by USAID/OFDA partner Mercy Corps at a community hygiene promotion and cholera prevention education event near Mirebalais, Haiti (Photo by Kendra Helmer, USAID).

RESPONDING TO WASH NEEDS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

As of October 2011, the Horn of Africa was experiencing its worst drought in 60 years, with more than 13.3 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. Decreased water availability had negatively impacted health and nutrition conditions among drought-affected populations and adversely affected livestock health and food security. Affected individuals with high levels of acute malnutrition were particularly vulnerable to the health consequences of poor water and sanitation conditions due to their compromised immunity.

In FY 2011, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$20 million for WASH programs in the Horn of Africa, including rehabilitation and construction of water infrastructure to increase vulnerable communities' access to safe water for human and livestock consumption. To improve the quality of available water, USAID/OFDA supported WASH interventions such as water chlorination, water quality testing, and distribution of point-of-use water treatment supplies. In addition, USAID/OFDA, through partners, carried out hygiene promotion activities and pre-positioned cholera treatment supplies, particularly in high-risk areas of Somalia. Given ongoing instability in the Horn of Africa, USAID/OFDA also supported training on the management of shared water resources to help ensure more equitable access to water and reduce conflict.

As an example of WASH interventions in FY 2011, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$3.2 million to an implementing partner to improve access to safe drinking water for more than 365,000 drought- and flood-affected people throughout Ethiopia. USAID/OFDA also maintains a WASH rapid response mechanism through an implementing partner that enables ongoing activities to quickly expand throughout Ethiopia in the event of a large-scale emergency such as the current drought. The program provides disaster-affected communities with access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, well rehabilitation, water trucking, and community-based water supply transportation. The flexible nature of USAID/OFDA rapid response programs in Ethiopia has helped meet escalating needs during the current drought.

WASH INTERVENTIONS IN PAKISTAN

In July and August 2010, monsoon rains and subsequent flooding throughout Pakistan affected more than 18 million people in 82 of Pakistan's 122 districts. With floodwaters damaging and contaminating existing

water sources and infrastructure, the most pressing needs included safe drinking water and other disease transmission prevention measures. Through funding of relief agency partners and provision of relief commodities, USAID/OFDA supplied 134,335 families with two 10-liter water containers each, provided up to 2 million people a day with drinking water, and distributed 25,000 bars of soap daily to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases among flood-affected populations. USAID/OFDA also provided grants to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deliver emergency relief supplies, promote good hygiene, and increase access to safe drinking water. In addition, USAID/OFDA-funded NGOs utilized cash-for-work programs to rehabilitate water sources and infrastructure in flood-affected areas.

HYGIENE PROMOTION AND COMMODITY DELIVERY TO HELP STEM CHOLERA IN HAITI

As of September 2011, the Government of Haiti reported that the cholera outbreak that began in Haiti in October 2010 had resulted in nearly 460,000 cases, more than 240,000 hospitalizations, and nearly 6,500 deaths across all regions of the country. In FY 2011, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$40 million to prevent cholera cases, reduce the number of cases requiring hospitalization, and reduce the case fatality rate. USAID/OFDA's response strategy included provision of chlorine to increase availability of safe drinking water; hygiene promotion and cholera prevention education; provision of emergency WASH and medical supplies, including sachets of oral rehydration salts (ORS); and medical treatment.

Of the total, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$7 million for WASH interventions to mitigate the spread of cholera. USAID/OFDA partners trained networks of 10,000 community health workers and hygiene promoters to provide cholera-related hygiene education and distribute soap and water purification supplies throughout Haiti. USAID/OFDA also funded sanitation activities, such as waste management, hand-washing stations, and disinfection of contaminated households to limit the spread of cholera. The cholera outbreak started in an area not affected by the January 2010 earthquake and was unaffiliated with the earthquake. Ongoing USAID/OFDA earthquake response programs continued to provide WASH services in earthquake-affected areas and displacement camps, primarily in the metropolitan Port-au-Prince area, to reduce the impact of the cholera outbreak.

At the height of the response, more than a dozen USAID/OFDA partners were conducting hygiene promotion and cholera prevention education activities throughout Haiti that reached an estimated 98,000 people each day. Sessions drew large crowds and included demonstrations of proper hand-washing technique, demonstrations of home preparation of ORS (with salt, sugar, and lime), and activities for children, including hand-washing practice and learning of songs to help children remember the different steps of successful cholera prevention. At sessions, USAID/OFDA partners also distributed ORS, water purification tablets, and containers for safe water storage. USAID/OFDA partners also chlorinated public water supplies and trained community decontamination teams. USAID/OFDA partners reported that ongoing, persistent WASH interventions helped local populations improve hygiene and sanitation habits, improve cholera awareness, and lower the rate of new cholera cases.

USAID/OFDA's hygiene promotion and sanitation interventions complemented USAID/OFDA funding for medical treatment—including establishment and operation of cholera treatment facilities (CTFs) and oral rehydration points—and for procurement and delivery of WASH supplies. In total, USAID/OFDA procured and transported 15 million water purification tablets, sufficient to provide purified water to 750,000 people for one month; 30 metric tons of calcium-hypochlorite (concentrated powder chlorine) for water purification and disinfection of homes, latrines, and CTFs; 5.3 million ORS sachets; 5 million 200-gram bars of soap; 33,180 hygiene kits with supplies for nearly 166,000 individuals; 30,000 ten-liter containers for safe transport of water from distribution points; and personal protective equipment and disinfection supplies for CTF personnel. USAID/OFDA provided more than \$18.4 million for procurement and transportation of cholera-related relief commodities for Haiti in FY 2011.

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