

**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)  
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

**WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE SECTOR UPDATE –  
MAY 2009**

**SECTOR OVERVIEW**

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs frequently represent critical components of the USAID/OFDA response to rapid-onset disasters and complex emergencies, as affected populations are more susceptible to illness and death from waterborne diseases. WASH interventions include latrine construction, hand washing promotion, education on safe drinking water and healthy sanitation practices, and provision of safe water or water treatment supplies.

In FY 2008, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$92 million for WASH programs in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. To promote sustainability, USAID/OFDA 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.

**MITIGATING CHOLERA IN ZIMBABWE AND SOUTH AFRICA**

Beginning in August 2008, a cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe killed more than 4,200 people from the more than 97,000 reported cases to date, according to the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO). The lack of access to clean drinking water, soap, or sanitation facilities in rural areas and the poor condition of urban water and sewer systems, resulting from financial neglect and lack of maintenance, led to vulnerabilities that contributed to perpetuating the cholera outbreak.

In response, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$6 million to the U.N. Children's Fund and other humanitarian partners for WASH programs including hygiene promotion, home-based water treatment, and targeted water source rehabilitation. USAID/OFDA also supported procurement and distribution of 400 metric tons of soap, 30 million water purification tablets, 30,000 water containers, and 30,000 buckets.



*Community Hygiene Promoters at work in Bulawayo (Michael Keegan, USAID)*

An ongoing USAID/OFDA-funded WASH program likely also contributed to the exceptionally low rate of cholera in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city. The program, initiated in 2007 in response to water shortages and a diarrheal disease outbreak in the city, supported the installation of community water tanks, hygiene education, and hygiene supply distributions. To date, WHO reported a total of 445 cholera cases in Bulawayo, while the number of cases in the capital of Harare and nearby suburbs reached more than 19,000.

Cholera also affected South Africa, including cases reported among Zimbabwean migrants crossing the border via Mussina town, Limpopo Province. In response, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$400,000 to educate South African farmers and migrant laborers about cholera, provide hygiene materials and water treatment supplies, and build latrines.

## **RESPONDING TO WASH NEEDS IN BURMA AFTER CYCLONE NARGIS**

Cyclone Nargis left more than 130,000 people dead or missing and presumed dead, while severely affecting an estimated 2.4 million people in Ayeyarwady and Rangoon divisions, according to an assessment by U.N., Government of Burma, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations staff. The cyclone inundated agricultural land and water sources in the lower Ayeyarwady Delta, contaminating community water sources and destroying infrastructure, including latrines. Affected populations required WASH interventions to increase access to safe drinking water, provide hygiene supplies to replace items lost in the storm surge, and rehabilitate or replace latrines, wells, and community ponds.



*A rehabilitated village water collection point in the Ayeyarwady Delta (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)*

As part of an overall humanitarian response, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$2.4 million to support WASH sector interventions for affected populations. In the aftermath of the cyclone, USAID/OFDA also provided urgently-needed potable water by transporting 10 water treatment units, while also contributing more than 95,000 ten-liter water containers and nearly 39,000 hygiene kits for distribution by humanitarian partners. To meet longer-term needs, USAID/OFDA-funded partners rehabilitated community ponds and provided supplies for household water treatment. Partners also constructed community and household rainwater collection systems, reinforcing traditional practices. In addition, USAID/OFDA supported latrine construction and the training of community hygiene promoters and village-level WASH committees.

## **WASH PROGRAMS IN HAITI IN RESPONSE TO SEVERE FLOODING**

Between August 15 and September 7, 2008, heavy rainfall from two tropical storms and two hurricanes resulting in severe flooding that particularly affected Haiti's southern peninsula and Central and Artibonite departments. Floodwaters up to three meters deep contaminated wells and destroyed other WASH infrastructure.

While responding to overall humanitarian needs, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$750,000 in WASH assistance. USAID/OFDA-chartered aircraft also transported more than 15,000 hygiene kits, more than 25,000 ten-liter water containers, and five 10,000-liter water bladders to meet immediate WASH needs of flood-affected populations. USAID/OFDA partner World Vision also distributed hygiene kits containing water containers, water treatment tablets, and other hygiene supplies to approximately 13,000 people displaced by flooding. In addition, USAID/OFDA supported World Vision to restore safe drinking water supplies for more than 56,000 people by rehabilitating nearly 140 affected wells and repairing a town aqueduct damaged by the flooding and a water system that was clogged with silt and debris. World Vision worked closely with municipal representatives and community water committees to complete the projects.