

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

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS SECTOR UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2009

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID/OFDA is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's shelter and settlements activities, all of which revolve around a common goal: the expeditious and appropriate provision of covered living space to adequately shelter displaced populations. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$33.5 million in humanitarian shelter assistance and shelter-related risk reduction activities, compared to nearly \$13 million provided in FY 2007. In FY 2008 and to date in FY 2009, USAID/OFDA has supported shelter and settlements projects in 25 countries, including Afghanistan, Burma, Cuba, Georgia, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Pakistan, Peru, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Sudan. USAID/OFDA also continues to contribute to the broader shelter and settlements strategic framework within the international humanitarian community, including current support of the Sphere Project handbook revision effort.

AFGHANISTAN: URBAN RECOVERY MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING IN KABUL

Since early 2002, the Kabul-area population has increased three-fold to 4.5 million people. An influx of refugee returns, internally displaced persons, and migrants account for approximately 80 percent of Kabul-area growth. In response to increasing shelter needs, USAID/OFDA implemented the Kabul Area Shelter and Settlements (KASS) project from 2006 to 2007 and began the current KASS-2 project in August 2008. In addition to project-level activities, and in cooperation with implementing partner Shelter For Life, USAID/OFDA is engaging Kabul Municipality staff on policy and strategic issues through a two-year capacity building project. Despite several challenges, staff participating in the capacity building effort recently completed the first initiative of the project, a hillside areas assessment. Designed to improve settlements planning to accommodate the population influx in a safe and cost-effective manner, assessment activities included the identification of steep slopes, flash flood hazards, seismic hazards, landslide/rockfall hazards, and uncleared minefields from previous conflicts. Assessment results also indicated that the cost of providing basic services in hazard-prone hillside areas was approximately 30 to 40 percent more than basic service provision in flatter, less hazard-prone areas, suggesting that settlements in certain locations should be discouraged or prohibited.

BANGLADESH: BUILDING BACK BETTER – AND BETTER

In response to Cyclone Sidr, USAID/OFDA provided \$2 million in FY 2008 to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Caritas to support a 10-month transitional shelter project. Completed in early 2009, the project incorporated flood- and wind-resistant construction measures into a traditional shelter design, benefitting an estimated 2,800 households. In addition, construction engineers and skilled laborers received training in risk reduction activities.

In May 2009, Cyclone Aila damaged or destroyed an estimated 450,000 houses, affecting some of the post-Sidr project



A USAID/OFDA-supported shelter constructed post-Sidr by implementing partner CRS (Courtesy of CRS).

beneficiaries. Assessments following Cyclone Aila confirmed the utility and cost-effectiveness of USAID/OFDA-supported shelter and settlements projects—in several locations only the USAID/OFDA shelters provided following Cyclone Sidr remained. Based on results from the post-Sidr experience, USAID/OFDA has provided approximately \$2.8 million to CRS and CARE to implement a 2,800-household assistance project to further improve flood- and wind-resistant structures.

NORTH AMERICAN SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS NETWORK

USAID/OFDA fully funded the North American Shelter and Settlements Network in July 2009, and InterAction is serving as host organization. The Network—accessible to both members and non-members of InterAction—seeks to promote improved shelter and settlements sector practice through stronger linkages to the broader international debate on sector issues, training and outreach activities, and publications on relevant issues. Initial Network activities are scheduled to commence in the coming months.

PROMOTING BETTER SECTOR PRACTICE

In a new effort to improve humanitarian practice, USAID/OFDA plans to issue a series of updates on sector-specific issues. As part of this initiative, the USAID/OFDA Shelter and Settlements Advisor prepared guidance notes for USAID/OFDA activities in the shelter and settlements sector, which include information regarding the use of plastic sheeting in non-food item kits and identify concerns associated with the use of schools, tents, and pre-fabricated shelters as humanitarian interventions.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES

In addition to the activities mentioned, USAID/OFDA has increased engagement with both humanitarian and development actors. Some of the activities include:

- Shelter and Settlements training presentations at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, August 2008, March 2009, and June 2009
- Urban Planning Applications in Humanitarian Assistance presentation at University of California, Berkeley, October 2008
- USAID/OFDA and InterAction sponsored Shelter and Settlements Year in Review workshop, November 2008
- Disaster Risk Reduction presentation at the American Institute of Architects, December 2008
- Shelter and Settlements presentation at the Humanitarian Initiative course at Harvard University, January 2009
- Peer review of submission on Urban Slum Growth and Change in Bangladesh for the International Journal of Health Geographics, February 2009
- USAID/OFDA sponsored Shelter and Settlements workshop in San Jose, Costa Rica, February 2009
- World Bank's Lessons Learned from Housing Reconstruction forum discussant, May 2009
- Humanitarian Action in Urban Areas presentation at the Interaction Forum, July 2009

UPCOMING SECTOR ACTIVITIES

- Creating an electronic scrapbook on better shelter and settlements practice
- Supporting research on urban displacement
- Publishing an article on shelter and settlements issues in Kabul, Afghanistan