

The USAID/OFDA Approach to Shelter and Settlements Sector Activities

GOAL: The goal of any USAID/OFDA Shelter and Settlements (S&S) activity will be occupancy of covered living space that can serve as minimally adequate shelter for disaster/crisis affected populations in an expeditious and appropriate manner.

APPROACH: USAID/OFDA emphasizes the use of market-based assessments of damage and need to better gauge impacts, resources, and opportunities in disaster/crisis affected areas. The core target group of proposed actions will be the most vulnerable among affected populations. Provision of support to this group may require technical assistance, rather than a reliance on self-help capacity.

Shelter will be adequate, habitable, safe, private, and secure, cognizant of Sphere Project and USAID/OFDA guidelines, and the related, possible need to engage in disaster risk reduction.

Where possible and appropriate, USAID/OFDA will emphasize community-based approaches and reliance on local materials and labor, to enhance prospects for sustainability, cost-effectiveness, and livelihood generation. USAID/OFDA will, therefore, support shelter sector interventions that feature a settlements approach, thereby permitting identification of, and linkages with, other sectors, particularly agriculture and food security, livelihoods, WASH, and protection.

Deployment of tents and/or pre-fabricated structures will not be considered as a default response, but will only be deployed after a field-based determination that no other shelter resources are available in affected areas, affected populations are willing to accept tents and/or pre-fabricated structures, and sufficient resources are available to support purchase and deployment costs.

Shelter sector interventions will be designed to facilitate or “jump-start” the recovery of affected populations by emphasizing transitions to the longer-term housing development process.

USAID/OFDA will also:

- Continue to integrate disaster risk reduction into S&S interventions, to include training programs where possible and appropriate, enhance prospects that interventions reduce long-term hazard risk in affected settlements
- Continue to engage with development entities such as USAID Bureaus and missions, World Bank, U.N. agencies, and the private sector to better integrate S&S activities into development policy, and
- Continue to work with other humanitarian community actors on relevant policy and technical issues to enhance organizational capacity and highlight transition concerns.

ON THE HORIZON: Upcoming S&S activities include support of a North American shelter sector network, possible support of an electronic “scrapbook” of Better Shelter Practices to provide specific, project-based information on humanitarian shelter activities, support of research on livelihood-shelter linkages, and support of research on urban displacement.

WEBSITE RESOURCES: USAID/OFDA reference material on S&S, as well as other program information, appears on-line at:

- http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/sectors/shelter.html