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**USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
(USAID/USAID/OFDA)**

**Southern Africa
DRR Strategy**

For the Period of 2009-2011



Southern Africa Regional Office

Mission Statement:

To lead U.S. Government humanitarian assistance in Southern Africa through disaster response, early recovery, and risk reduction activities that increase vulnerable communities' and households' resilience and reduce the impact of recurring shocks.

Background

USAID leads U.S. Government response for international disaster assistance for natural and human-induced emergencies and provides assistance to help vulnerable populations prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from these emergencies through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/USAID/OFDA). USAID/USAID/OFDA recognizes the need to develop a longer-term strategic approach to conduct activities that helps articulate funding and program priorities, streamline decision-making, define responsibilities and allow for a more definitive transition from humanitarian to developmental assistance.

The Southern Africa region¹ joins the two other USAID/OFDA Africa regional offices (West and North Africa and East and Central Africa) in raising concerns regarding four continent-wide trends affecting the context of USAID/OFDA's implementation environment. These trends are:

- 1) Increased urbanization of rural populations;
- 2) Climate variability;
- 3) Increased military involvement in humanitarian affairs; and
- 4) Increased need to transition from response to longer-term programming

Adding to these challenging trends, recurrent disaster events in the Southern

Africa region, particularly droughts, floods, and cyclones plague the region's vulnerable groups and add to a growing list of concerns among USAID/OFDA regional staff, other international humanitarian response agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the region. A devastating combination of chronic poverty, food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and weak government capacity is driving the decline in development indicators in the region, increasing vulnerable population numbers, and decreasing the resiliency of people to manage shocks.

USAID/OFDA also recognizes that many of the broader African trends and region-specific concerns interact in complex ways that create particular challenges for USAID/OFDA in Southern Africa. For example, the trend toward rapid and unplanned urbanization exposes chronically vulnerable populations to the risks of food price increases and unemployment. USAID/OFDA considers this and other such interactions throughout this strategy.

USAID/OFDA's Mandate

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) has the responsibility to provide foreign disaster assistance and to coordinate the response of the U.S. Government (USG) to disasters abroad.

USAID/OFDA's mandate is to **save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the economic impact of disasters. USAID/OFDA does this by:**

- Providing rapid, appropriate response to requests for assistance;
- Strengthening capacity of local, national, regional, and international entities on early warning of natural hazards;
- Fostering self-sufficiency among disaster-prone nations by helping achieve some measure of preparedness; and
- Enhancing recovery from disasters through rehabilitation programs

¹ The USAID/OFDA Southern Africa region includes the countries of Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Southern Africa Context

The term “Triple Threat” in Southern Africa refers to the combined danger of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, food insecurity due to climate variability, and weakened government capacity that have led to increasing vulnerability and fragility in the region. Alone, each of these threats pose major obstacles to Southern Africa’s vulnerable, but combined, they create a burgeoning crisis on a regional scale that demands new approaches from humanitarian and development agencies. USAID has established programs aimed to strengthen governance and combat HIV/AIDS, but climate variability is the factor within Southern Africa’s Triple Threat where USAID/OFDA programs can achieve the highest impact and represents the core dynamic of USAID/OFDA’s regional strategy.

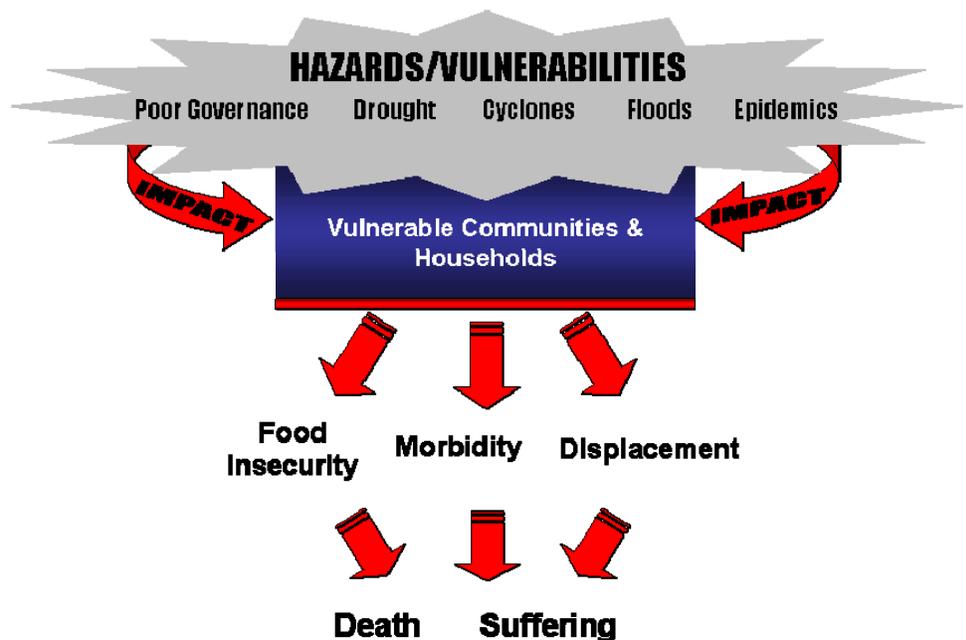
Climate extremes represent the single largest contributor to increasing vulnerability in Southern Africa. Livelihoods and economies in southern African countries are highly sensitive to climate fluctuations. Climate exerts a significant control on agriculture and natural resources, and it affects rural and urban water supplies, health, food security, income generation, and basic commodities prices. Climate shocks can also lead to migration, deepening poverty, inability to recover, increased reliance on external food aid, and susceptibility to high-risk behavior for urban and rural populations. Program focus will work to increase resilience to climate and weather induced disasters.

Although some parts of the region have registered marked improvements in cereal crop production, food and vulnerability assessments indicate that rural populations still face critical food shortages. The global food and fuel crisis introduce additional humanitarian challenges and USAID/OFDA will need to adapt its assistance approach to address the root causes of food insecurity rather than providing inputs and food aid to poor households each year at higher and higher costs.

The complex emergency in Zimbabwe continues to deteriorate. The failure of fair and free elections in March 2008 has exacerbated political repression resulting in additional and continued displacement. Worsening economic conditions, particularly hyperinflation, and the failure of social services is contributing to vulnerable population risks, such as food insecurity and social unrest. Zimbabwe displacement to neighboring countries has led to increased xenophobic violence in host countries and has had a destabilizing effect on the socio-economic and political landscape of recipient countries, especially in South Africa.

USAID/OFDA’s strategy will prioritize interventions based on assessed need and integration with other humanitarian and development efforts. In addition to USAID/OFDA’s traditional one-year period for programming, this USAID/OFDA Regional Office strategy will include longer-term interventions needed to pull people out of chronic food insecurity including activities that augment resiliency and purchasing power and increase food availability, access, and utilization.

The graphic at right illustrates the ubiquitous nature of these five hazards and vulnerabilities, and their impact on vulnerable communities and households, an impact leading to increased risks of food insecurity, morbidity, and displacement that result in reduced resiliency and, if not addressed, suffering and death.



This strategy provides a framework that considers humanitarian assistance, recovery, and risk reduction interventions within the constraints of limited financial resources and host government capacity and applies USAID/OFDA's knowledge of the region's needs and its relationships with governments, regional and international organizations, NGOs, universities, and other donors.

Regional Assumptions

- Food insecurity will continue or increase due to cyclical climatic shocks
- Cyclical human and livestock disease outbreaks will continue
- Rising food and fuel prices will lead to increases in violence and/or food insecurity especially in densely populated urban slums
- The majority of the most vulnerable communities will continue to be rural and dependent on subsistence rain-fed agriculture
- Xenophobia, combined with migration within the region, will increase instability and violence, particularly in light of expected increased population movements from Zimbabwe
- Potential exists to strengthen Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) activities through Southern African institutions.

Regional Constraints

- Limited national investment in and lack of institutional capacity to improve agriculture, water management, and infrastructure
- A weak private sector unable to create sustainable economic growth
- HIV/AIDS will continue to erode household and community resiliency
- Depleted pool of skilled labor
- Limited transition and coordination between humanitarian and development assistance
- Limited standardized data collection and analytical skills necessary to monitor and understand changes in vulnerability
- Lack of programs to address continued environmental degradation
- Lack of social protection and safety nets for chronically vulnerable households

USAID/OFDA Response

The Regional Office will serve USAID/OFDA as the region's point of contact for response to disaster events.

As such, USAID/OFDA provides:

- **Emergency response capabilities and technical assistance through damage and needs assessments, relief actions and Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART); and**
- **Relief commodities, services, transportation support, grants to relief organizations, technical assistance, or any combination thereof.**

USAID/OFDA Field Operations Guide (FOG) - 2005

Priority Program Selection

The Southern Africa strategy accounts for USAID/OFDA's comparative advantage in the region within the realm of the disaster management cycle.

USAID/OFDA will work within the crisis management principles of *Response and Early Livelihood Recovery* (See box at left) and the risk management principles of *Prevention, Mitigation, and Preparedness*. These principles provide the structure to house the goals, sectors and activities of this strategy and to allow for precise program prioritization and selection for future country plans.

Based on the principles identified above, the strategy prioritizes six USAID/OFDA technical sectors:

Agriculture and Food Security; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH); Natural and Technological Risks, Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS); Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management; and Protection. Additional needs in other humanitarian sectors might require targeted USAID/OFDA assistance, but the sectors mentioned above will actuate the major program decisions described in this strategy. USAID/OFDA acknowledges that circumstances might compel USAID/OFDA to conduct specific one-time activities or quick impact projects as needs arise, but the region generally will not program against the other USAID/OFDA sectors of Shelter and Settlements, Health, Nutrition, and Logistics and Relief Commodities.

This strategy serves to guide USAID/OFDA's programming under the purview of DRR or risk management over the next three years. However, USAID/OFDA's *Response* options will continue to encompass the full spectrum of USAID/OFDA technical sectors as required in a response situation and as such is not the focus of this strategy. The situation in Zimbabwe will continue to draw USAID/OFDA attention in this regard and is under close monitoring by USAID/OFDA staff.

Goals

Four overarching goals will guide USAID/OFDA activities in the Southern Africa region during the 2009-2011 strategic period. USAID/OFDA programs will support and promote activities that help reduce vulnerability of at-risk populations to climate-induced disasters and increase their resiliency to future shocks. These goals, listed in priority order, are:

- Reduce the vulnerability of households and communities to drought and increase their resiliency against poor harvests;
- Enable vulnerable households and communities to manage seasonal flood risks and accelerate recovery;
- Enhance vulnerable households' and communities' ability to use and act on cyclone early warning, increase recovery, and reduce risk; and
- Strengthen national and regional capacity to improve DRR, response, and recovery efforts.

Goal 1: Reduce the vulnerability of households/communities from drought and increase their resiliency against poor harvests

Explanation

Consistent dry conditions and recurrent drought events across Southern Africa increase community and household vulnerability to the risks of food insecurity, morbidity, displacement, and disease. The vast majority of the rural population in Southern Africa relies on rain-fed agriculture for their livelihoods, making them highly vulnerable to variability in rainfall and to frequent declines in crop productivity. Distribution of rainfall during growing season is critical for crop production in subsistence agricultural areas. If crop water requirements at various stages of growth are not met due to failure of rains, crops yields will be significantly lower leading to potential food insecurity for thousands, even millions, of subsistence farmers. Drought continues to challenge humanitarian and development efforts to reduce risks faced by vulnerable populations and respond with cost effective and sustainable programs to strengthen household, community, and national resilience. USAID/OFDA will support food insecurity mitigation programs in Southern Africa, primarily related to improved water resource management, agricultural practices, and market linkages.

1.1 Principle: Risk Reduction - Preparedness

Sector: Agriculture/Food Security

1.1.1 Activity: Water Resource Management - The Regional Office will support community-based water resources management activities to increase the communities' resilience to the effects of recurrent drought conditions and will consider programs that promote micro-agriculture water resource management and improved access to water. Examples include the development of multi-purpose water systems, rainwater harvesting and

irrigation techniques. Activities will focus on community-based, small scale, low-maintenance projects that use locally available inputs and raise awareness on the integrated and sustainable management of water resources. In addition, USAID/OFDA will seek to include preparedness planning, including community-based rangeland management, watershed management, drought response planning, and improved community water use and water conservation when preparing country plans.

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security

Activity: Agricultural Practices – The Regional Office will support agriculture interventions that will provide technical assistance, training, and material inputs, including but not limited to small-scale, low-cost agriculture technologies and practices that are community based and locally sustainable. Examples include conservation agriculture, drought-tolerant crop selection, provision of high quality fertilizers, quality seed distribution, crop diversification and improved graze lands, livestock, and veterinary services management. The focus is to improve and promote agricultural practices that are drought-tolerant and lead to a reduction of crop losses or to mitigate the economic impact resulting from losses due to drought. Naturally, reduction in losses leads to greater economic gains and a stronger asset base with more resilience to the next shock event.

Sector: Economic Recovery and Market Systems

1.1.3 Activity: Strengthening Market Linkages – Market-oriented agriculture in Southern Africa needs to focus on strengthening farm-agribusiness linkages to help accelerate productivity, increase income and employment generation, improve food security, and increase competitiveness in regional and international trade. The Regional Office will support programs that provide small farmer households better access to inputs such as high quality seeds, fertilizer, feed, tools and veterinary services and better access to output markets to sell products at a fair price. Contract farming between buyers and farmers to establish conditions for production and marketing, and voucher programs designed to decrease input costs are two creative examples under consideration.

Goal 2: Enable vulnerable households and communities to manage seasonal flood risks and accelerate recovery

Explanation

The Southern African region has suffered severe flooding leading to widespread damage to infrastructure and crops, loss of lives and livestock, and affecting millions of people. Floods continue to be a significant threat to lives and livelihoods in the region due to both climatic and non-climatic factors such as environmental degradation, limited institutional capacity on monitoring, forecasting and early warning, settlement in the marginal lands, and trans-boundary nature of major river basins. USAID/OFDA will continue to support activities to reduce the adverse impact of floods on health through water, sanitation, and hygiene programs and to increase community and institutional capacity to manage impacts of floods through risk reduction programs

2.1 Principle: Risk Reduction

Sector: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

2.1.1 Activity: Environmental Health Management – USAID/OFDA will support activities that lessen the underlying determinants of adverse health consequences due to floods including poor drainage, inadequate solid waste disposal, and unhygienic conditions that promote the spread of water- and vector-borne diseases such as cholera and malaria.

Sector: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

2.1.2 Activity: Water Source Protection – USAID/OFDA recognizes that although in general, groundwater has advantages over surface water as a source for human consumption, the protection of water sources, both ground- and surface water, from potential contamination and pollution, and physical damage due to

disasters is needed to avoid water system failures. Rainwater can provide an immediate short-term alternative to flood-contaminated groundwater, and household and community systems of rainwater catchments and cisterns in flood-prone areas will be promoted. Interruption of water systems, scarcity of reliable and potable water supply, or access to water sources may force communities to resort to sources that may not be suitable for human consumption. The implementation of well-considered, community accepted drinking water quality management procedures could effectively raise unacceptable water quality to acceptable levels. Skills training, capacity building, technical support and mentoring for point of use household treatment are vital to ensure successful drinking water quality management in countering the risk of water contamination due to flooding.

2.2 Principle: Risk Reduction

Sector: Natural and Technological Risks

2.2.1 Activity: Community-based Disaster Risk Management – USAID/OFDA’s approach to community-based DRR will be participatory, using disaster risk assessment methods, risk management planning,

Goal 3: Enhance vulnerable households’ and communities’ ability to use and act on cyclone early warnings, increase recovery, and reduce risk

commun
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and

community managed implementation. Program priorities will focus on asset protection, preparedness, flood hazard mapping, and watershed management.

Explanation

Indian Ocean island states and coastal regions of southeastern Africa are some the most vulnerable areas to cyclones. In an average season, more than 10 tropical cyclones develop in the southwest Indian Ocean. Despite the advances in forecasting cyclones and lead time, communities in the coastal countries remain vulnerable to cyclones due to limited of access to information and warnings and lack of preparedness to potential hazards. USAID/OFDA will continue to support activities the reduce fatalities due to cyclones in the region by assisting communities to understand cyclone forecasts and warnings and to improve capabilities to cope with cyclone-induced floods, interpret the data correctly, and respond appropriately in a timely manner.

3.1 Principle: Risk Reduction

Sector: Natural and Technological Risks

3.1.1 Activity: Community-based Disaster Risk Management – USAID/OFDA’s approach to community-based disaster risk management will be participatory-based, using cyclone and secondary risk assessment methods, risk management planning, community organizing and training, and community managed implementation. Program priorities will focus on asset protection, preparedness, cyclone hazard mapping, and watershed management.

Goal 4: Strengthen national and regional capacity to improve DRR, response, and recovery efforts.

Explanation

USAID/OFDA is promoting a comprehensive approach to response management for the entire disaster cycle that includes risk reduction and close coordination with development partners. DRR programming enables USAID/OFDA to reduce the impact of hazards outside the established disaster declaration structure. In addition to the DRR approach used in the programming priorities described above, the challenge to integrate DRR into disaster response management includes a better understanding of human-induced shocks, prioritizing risk management principles of mitigation, preparedness and preparation, and encouraging the international development community to incorporate risk reduction in development programs.

4.1 Principle: Risk Reduction

Sector: Natural and Technological Risks

4.1.1 Activity: Capacity Building – USAID/OFDA recognizes the need to build more sustainable and integrated capabilities in disaster risk and vulnerability reduction consistent with global disaster reduction priorities reflected in the Hyogo Framework for Action. This includes the need to build on local commitments in the region by supporting current university-based DRR efforts. USAID/OFDA will identify appropriate institutions and partners engaged in Disaster Management and DRR and support their capacity building efforts at regional, national and community levels, focusing on the following aspects of DRR: longer-term DRR education programs; risk awareness and assessment training; hazard and vulnerability analysis; knowledge development to include training and information management; support to public institutional frameworks particularly at the community level; environmental management; land-use and urban planning; protection of critical facilities, and local research and vulnerability reduction policy advocacy.

4.1.2 Activity: Early Warning Systems – USAID/OFDA supports the development of strong early warning systems, particularly in the case of slow onset droughts. Ideally, these systems should have several components including information on household vulnerability, availability of drinking water, hydro-meteorological information, agricultural and harvest information, and food accessibility and availability. USAID/OFDA will look for opportunities to support efforts to strengthen these systems. USAID/OFDA will also continue to support the Famine Early Warning Systems Network in the region to build capacity with host government counterparts to improve early warning systems and will look for additional opportunities to work with a variety of partners to provide access of information to communities.

4.2 Principle: Risk Reduction

Sector: Humanitarian Coordination/Information Management

4.2.1 Activity: Enhancing Data Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination Systems

USAID/OFDA activities to enhance data collection will include work that improves capacities for forecasting, dissemination of warnings, preparedness measures, response, and early recovery. The objective is to improve a range of information products, tools and services to provide decision-makers with the up-to-date information and accurate data necessary to avert or mitigate the impact of food security shocks.

4.2.2 Activity: Support Humanitarian Coordination - The Regional Office will assume a participatory role in promoting a community-based approach to DRR. In concert with the international community, the Regional Office will support activities to facilitate, coordinate, organize, and advocate for a more cross-sectoral and inclusive DRR approach. USAID/OFDA will consider, but not be limited to, the following activities when

developing its country action plans: convene and host meetings, seminars, workshops and conferences focused on reducing risk among vulnerable households; design and promote evidence-based best practices among the donor and NGO community; engage and inform the development community on the transition and integration of humanitarian assistance into national development programs; and develop information and monitoring capacities to support improved program design.