



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

# **East & Central Africa DRR Strategy**

**For the Period of 2009-2011**

October 2, 2008

## East & Central Africa Regional Office Mission Statement:

**To lead U.S. Government humanitarian assistance in east and central Africa through disaster response, early recovery, and risk reduction activities that strengthen community and household resiliency to disasters and increase capacities to reduce risk.**

## 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 its activities that will help articulate funding and program priorities, streamline decision-making, define responsibilities, and allow for a more definitive transition from humanitarian to developmental assistance.

The East and Central Africa region<sup>1</sup> joins the two other USAID/USAID/OFDA Africa regional offices (West/North Africa and Southern Africa) in raising concerns regarding four continent-wide trends affecting the context of USAID/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 an
- 4) Increased need to transition from response to longer-term programming.

Adding to these challenging trends, unhindered population growth, chronic conflict, cyclical drought, floods, and environmental degradation lead a list of hazards in the region that plague vulnerable communities and households and contribute to rising poverty indicators and increased vulnerability. This rise in vulnerability has lowered resiliency and increased recovery time from disasters associated with the risks of acute malnutrition, asset depletion, population displacement, morbidity, and violence. USAID/USAID/OFDA recognizes that these alarming trends and many of the broader African trends and region-specific concerns interact in complex ways that create unique challenges for USAID/USAID/OFDA in east and central Africa. This strategy defines USAID/USAID/OFDA non-response humanitarian activities in the region through a livelihood

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

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<sup>1</sup> The USAID/OFDA East and Central Africa region includes: Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

approach, to include asset protection, livelihood development, transition, risk reduction, and capacity building.

## **East and Central Africa Context**

Conflict is a major aspect of the regional context. The east and central Africa region is susceptible to conflict caused by ethnic and tribal tensions, border disputes, civil unrest, political instability, and resource competition, which result in morbidity, mortality, asset and livelihood loss, displacement, and food insecurity. Although USAID/USAID/OFDA cannot prevent conflict in the region, programming strategies that use disaster risk reduction and livelihood approaches to reduce risk and increase resiliency can have positive impacts on populations in conflict-prone areas.

A second important characteristic of the region is the challenge posed by over-population. The exponential increase in demand for limited resources and services outstrips national capacity for basic social services, leaving escalating populations increasingly poor and vulnerable to shocks. Continuous population growth has reduced the carrying capacity of scarce arable land, degraded the environment, and reduced resiliency. It also means limited humanitarian aid is spread ever thinner.

The global food price crisis has reinvigorated the discussion of food aid and the underlying causes of food insecurity in the region. Despite having some of the largest food-aid programs in the world, there are inadequate resources to address the underlying causes of regional food insecurity including societal breakdowns, climatic irregularities, decreased agricultural production, weakened social and economic infrastructure, and diminished community and household coping mechanisms due to increased poverty..

Finally, poor governance persists throughout the region and is a major cause of some of the region's problems. Corruption, government ineffectiveness, and limited legitimacy (in some cases) exacerbate underlying causes of conflict, increase dependency on foreign assistance, and reduce ability to address poverty.

### **Regional Assumptions**

- Uncontrolled population growth will continue to increase demands for response and social services and dilute program impact.
- The risk of violence and conflict will remain high and their root causes will remain largely unaddressed.
- Climate variability will continue to create unpredictable meteorological irregularities affecting food production.
- The global food price crisis will continue to affect food access and availability.
- Emergency response will remain a priority USAID/USAID/OFDA activity and will provide opportunities to establish early recovery and disaster risk reduction activities.
- Funding levels for longer-term disaster risk reduction activities will reflect the continuing high priority that the east and central Africa region holds for the U.S. Government.
- United States military presence will impact humanitarian assistance in the region unpredictably.
- An escalating demand for USAID/USAID/OFDA engagement will create increased USAID/USAID/OFDA staffing needs.

### **Regional Constraints**

- Poverty constraints throughout the region constrain USAID/USAID/OFDA's ability to engage in non-response activities.
- Variable government capacity and political will to reduce poverty challenges USAID/USAID/OFDA's ability to implement humanitarian programs.

- Lack of skill sets, knowledge, and experience limits humanitarian assistance capacity, increases program costs and project durations, and decreases program impact.
- Poor infrastructure (dilapidated road networks, weak communication links, inconsistent air services and inadequate civil and government services) strain humanitarian budgets and assistance impact.
- Limited humanitarian access to many affected areas due to insecurity and political restrictions limits USAID/USAID/OFDA programming and decreases program impact.

## Priority Program Selection

This strategy capitalizes on USAID/USAID/OFDA's comparative advantage in the region within the disaster management cycle.

USAID/USAID/OFDA will focus on the crisis management principles of *Response* and *Early Livelihood Recovery* (See box at right), understanding that stabilization and continuation of response activities is essential for transition to early recovery, and the risk management principles of *Prevention, Mitigation, and Preparedness*. These principles provide the structure for the goals, sectors, and activities of this strategy and allow for precise program prioritization and selection for future country plans.

Based on the principles identified above, this strategy prioritizes five USAID/USAID/OFDA technical sectors: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Nutrition, Agriculture and Food Security, Health, and Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management. Additional needs in other USAID/USAID/OFDA

sectors may require targeted assistance, but the sectors mentioned above will actuate the major program decisions described in this strategy. Circumstances might compel USAID/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/USAID/OFDA sectors of Shelter and Settlements, Economic Recovery and Market Systems, Logistics and Relief Commodities, Protection, and Risk Reduction (Natural and Technological Disasters), within the context of this DRR strategy. However, USAID/USAID/OFDA's *Response* options will continue to encompass the full spectrum of USAID/USAID/OFDA technical sectors as required in a response situation and as such is not the focus of this strategy.

## Goals

Two overarching goals will guide USAID/USAID/OFDA activities in the East and Central Africa region during the 2009-2011 strategic period. USAID/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:

1. Reduce the impact of climate variability and human-caused shocks on food security for pastoralists and farmers, while increasing the resiliency of vulnerable communities.

### 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**

2. Strengthen national and regional capacity to improve disaster risk reduction, response, and early recovery efforts.

**Goal 1: Reduce the impact of climate variability and human-caused shocks on food security for pastoralists and farmers, while increasing the resiliency of vulnerable communities.**

## **Explanation**

The complexities of hazards and risks in East and Central Africa require a multi-sectoral approach to the goal of reducing food insecurity and increasing the resiliency of vulnerable households and communities. Recurrent climate and human-caused shocks affect food access, availability, and utilization that in turn escalate the risks of malnutrition, morbidity, hunger migration and displacement, and livelihood loss. Drought and flood impacts are countered with water management programs that ensure sufficient and well-distributed water supplies. Improved agricultural, water, sanitation, and hygiene practices will positively impact food utilization and increase food security. Potential and ongoing conflict erodes coping mechanisms and social structures, increasing the risk of food insecurity, particularly where basic services are weak or non-existent. Reducing the direct and indirect impacts of conflict on vulnerable communities, such as displacement and reduced economic activity, through risk reduction activities will help propagate community stability, prevent asset depletion, and improve food production.

## **1.1 Purpose: Early Recovery**

### **Sector: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene**

**1.1.1 Activity: Improve access, yield, and quality of water** - USAID/USAID/OFDA water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions will focus on the rehabilitation and improvement of existing water infrastructure for human and animal use. Activities including the protection of wells, natural springs, and livestock access points will build on local knowledge and technologies within the community's capacity. Where cost effective, improving access to water through construction of new water points and water harvesting technologies will be considered. Sanitation and hygiene, key components of food utilization, will accompany each water intervention.

### **Sector: Health**

**1.1.2 Activity: Reduce morbidity** - USAID/OFDA-supported health interventions, while addressing the major causes of morbidity and mortality, will include the development and scale-up of regional, national, and local disease prevention programs. This may include expanded program of immunization (EPI), health education programs, maternal and child health disease surveillance programs, and the development of regional and national health strategies, treatment protocols, guidelines, and the integration of parallel health initiatives into primary health care systems.

### **Sector: Agriculture and Food Security**

**1.1.3 Activity: Stabilize production systems** – USAID/OFDA will support farmers and pastoralists to resume or stabilize production systems following a crisis. Assessment information for agriculture interventions will allow for accurate program targeting and appropriate responses to food insecurity. Livestock interventions will reduce further loss of animals and support systems that allow for natural restocking of grazing lands. Examples include promoting the use of the Seed System Security Assessment tool to determine immediate needs and to support local seed systems, farmer-

based seed selection, distribution of quality seed, animal health interventions, and, as appropriate, provision of supplementary fodder or nutrients.

### **Sector: Nutrition**

**1.1.4 Activity: Improve local capacity to manage malnutrition** - Current support to emergency nutrition programs on the treatment of severe and moderate acute malnutrition will focus on community management of acute malnutrition (including stabilization centers, outpatient therapeutic programs, and supplementary feeding programs). Mainstreaming and integrating the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition into primary health care systems will remain a major USAID/OFDA priority. The Regional Office will emphasize the need for capacity building of health and nutrition workers at all levels, from the national, regional, and local level, and at the community and health facility level through formal and on-the-job training programs in the management of acute malnutrition. USAID/OFDA will support the development and revision of national malnutrition treatment guidelines as well as dissemination and capacity building on use of these new guidelines.

## **1.2 Purpose: Risk Management**

### **Sector: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene**

**1.2.1 Activity: Improve resiliency of pro-active communities prone to recurrent shocks** - In communities actively working to mitigate recurrent shocks, USAID/OFDA water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions will focus on the rehabilitation and improvement of existing water infrastructure for human and animal use. Activities including the promotion of water harvesting and sustainable water management schemes will build on local knowledge and technologies within the community's capacity. Where cost effective, improving access to water through construction of new water points and water harvesting technologies will be considered. Sanitation and hygiene, key components of food utilization, will accompany each water intervention.

### **Sector: Health**

**1.2.2 Activity: Encourage participation in health related activities** - USAID/OFDA encourages partner participation in regional and national level health clusters, working groups, task forces, and advocacy platforms in order to ensure good coordination among programs, partners, and donors. Other activities that USAID/OFDA supports are epidemic preparedness, disease surveillance, development of health information systems, education and communication (IEC) materials coordinated with national health policies, health behavior change of communities, and training of health providers and community health workers and educators.

### **Sector: Agriculture and Food Security**

**1.2.3 Activity: Improve agricultural and animal production systems** - USAID/OFDA often addresses food availability problems through food production programs, normally considered a development approach rather than a risk management approach; this strategy will address sustainable increases in food production by vulnerable subsistence farmers or pastoralists not targeted by development activities. USAID/OFDA will reduce risk to farmers and pastoralists through interventions that provide technical assistance, training, material inputs, and support for sustainable production practices. Examples for farmers include increasing the availability of improved seed or cuttings (drought- or disease-resistant), improved soil fertility through production and use of organic fertilizers, promotion of conservation farming, reduction of post-harvest loss, and crop diversification. For pastoralists, programs may include improved rangeland management, animal health interventions or fodder production programs.

### **Sector: Nutrition**

**1.2.4 Activity: Improve local capacity to manage and prevent malnutrition** - USAID/OFDA will support nutrition surveillance programs and nutrition early warning systems in order for governments, U.N. agencies, non-governmental organizations, and donors to have reliable and relevant information to formulate appropriate program strategies to address malnutrition. USAID/OFDA also recognizes the need to strengthen the health system to monitor and respond to malnutrition and will emphasize the need for capacity building of health and nutrition workers at the

national, regional, and local level, and at the community and health facility level through formal and on-the-job training programs in the prevention and management of malnutrition.

The Regional Office will increase focus and emphasis on the prevention of acute malnutrition, support to programs that address nutrition behavior change, the expansion and strengthening of local capacity to assess and monitor the nutritional status of at-risk populations, and support to developing and strengthening country nutrition policies and guidelines to improve the prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition.

**Goal 2: Strengthen national and regional capacity in targeted countries to improve DRR, response, and recovery efforts.**

**Explanation**

To support policy, institution and community level DRR efforts, USAID/OFDA will provide funds to several institutions to coordinate and centralize information regarding numerous ongoing DRR activities and best practices, to link high-level policy development with institutions and activities at the national and community level, and to undertake practical DRR activities to demonstrate the benefits of this approach. USAID/OFDA will commit resources for a minimum of three years to DRR in East and Central Africa. An expert consultant will be engaged and tasked to design a program that will work to mainstream DRR into all relief and development activities.

**2.1 Purpose: Risk Management**

**Sector: Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management**

**2.1.1 Activity: Targeted support to international and regional institutions for preparedness and to help operationalize the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) -**

USAID/OFDA supports the addition of DRR components to the regional U.N. office platforms to harmonize and coordinate DRR efforts undertaken by humanitarian organizations, raise awareness of policy-level DRR activities of the ISDR and link practical activities undertaken by other humanitarian actors. Support to regional institutions working towards ISDR goals would also be considered. Such institutions would also advocate for DRR inclusion in development activities and disseminate information on DRR and new DRR field approaches.

**2.1.2 Activity: Support coordination and centralization of data -** Numerous organizations gather, analyze, produce, and share geographic information systems (GIS) and other electronic data, yet the sector remains fragmented and difficult to access for humanitarian organizations, especially in the low bandwidth environment in East and Central Africa. USAID/OFDA will consider support to regional institutions and governments willing to increase their capacity to address this fragmentation, increase access to data by the humanitarian community, improve data quality, facilitate sharing GIS data quickly, and promote the standardization of data.

**2.1.3 Activity: Support to disaster management units in selected countries -** Several countries, including Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, have instituted disaster management units. Usually under the Prime Minister or President's office, these units enjoy a varying level of legislative support, political will, resource allocation, and capacity. USAID/OFDA will consider a project to increase the capacity of at least one of these units.

**2.1.4 Activity: Support to humanitarian organizations implementing DRR activities –** USAID/OFDA will fund organizations implementing DRR activities at the community level in the five sectors listed in this strategy: WASH, Health, Nutrition, Agriculture and Food Security and Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management.