In the past decade, chronic food insecurity and malnutrition, cyclical drought, locust infestations, seasonal floods, disease outbreaks, and recurrent complex emergencies have presented significant challenges to the vulnerable populations of the West Africa region. Between Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 and FY 2012, USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) and USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) have provided humanitarian assistance to lessen the impacts of a diverse range of natural and manmade disasters, including food insecurity, malnutrition, high food prices, and locust infestations in the Sahel; complex emergencies in Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone; meningitis, cholera, and measles outbreaks in multiple countries; and flooding throughout the region.

Between FY 2003 and FY 2012, USAID provided more than $1.4 billion in humanitarian assistance to West Africa, comprising nearly $1.2 billion from USAID/FFP for emergency food assistance and more than $280 million from USAID/OFDA for agriculture and food security, economic recovery and market systems, health, humanitarian coordination and information management, logistics and relief commodities, nutrition, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions.

Since 2003, USAID has deployed multiple humanitarian assessment teams to the region—most recently to Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Between FY 2003 and FY 2012, USAID provided more than $1.4 billion in humanitarian assistance to West Africa, comprising nearly $1.2 billion from USAID/FFP for emergency food assistance and more than $280 million from USAID/OFDA for agriculture and food security, economic recovery and market systems, health, humanitarian coordination and information management, logistics and relief commodities, nutrition, protection, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions.

Since 2003, USAID has deployed multiple humanitarian assessment teams to the region—most recently to Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, The Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal in 2012. In addition, three Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DARTs) were assembled for major responses, including the complex emergency in Liberia in 2003 and locust infestations and food insecurity in the Sahel in 2004 and 2005.
USAID/OFDA disaster response activities in West Africa focus on meeting immediate needs while building resilience against future crises. USAID/OFDA supports the provision of emergency relief supplies and basic services to meet affected populations’ urgent needs, as well as activities to increase agricultural production, improve livestock health, strengthen community-based management of acute malnutrition, support livelihoods recovery and income-generating activities, protect and assist displaced populations, and improve water and sanitation conditions.

In addition to short-term assistance for vulnerable populations, USAID/OFDA supports national and regional structures to strengthen early warning and response systems. To complement emergency assistance interventions and other regional efforts, USAID/OFDA’s West Africa disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy seeks to reduce the risks and effects of acute malnutrition, displacement, and epidemics through programs that decrease community and household fragility and increase resilience to future shocks by addressing the root causes of recurrent emergencies in the region.

Through emergency and development food assistance programs, USAID/FFP works to save lives and reduce food insecurity in times of crisis and situations of chronic food insecurity. USAID/FFP emergency food assistance includes both in-kind food aid and cash-based assistance in the form of local and regional procurement of food commodities, cash transfers, and food vouchers, where market conditions allow.

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1 FY 2012 rounded figures represent committed or obligated amounts as of September 30, 2012. FY 2012 figures are subject to fluctuations due to end-of-fiscal-year financial review and reconciliation activities. Figures do not include USAID/OFDA disaster preparedness and mitigation assistance provided outside of declared disaster responses or USAID/FFP development assistance.

2 Other includes countries receiving less than $1.2 million in funding each: Cameroon, Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Togo.

3 Chart does not include stand-alone DRR projects, administrative support costs, or funding that cannot be categorized by sector due to changes to the USAID/OFDA accounting system that occurred during the decade covered by this document.