



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Resilience at USAID

Chronic poverty and recurrent shocks are driving many of the same communities into crisis year after year, resulting in human suffering—loss of life, livelihoods, and aspirations—and staggering economic loss.

USAID is at the forefront of a movement to build resilience globally. In partnership with governments, regional institutions, and other humanitarian and development partners, we are helping the global community pivot from being reactive in the wake of disaster to making evidence-based investments that enable communities and households to minimize exposure to, adapt to, and recover quickly from inevitable shocks.

We are engaging partners at the global and regional levels to support country-led plans for resilience. We are investing in early-warning systems to predict shocks and take early action to save lives before disaster strikes. We are also bringing our humanitarian and development experts together to design programs that address underlying vulnerabilities and foster inclusive growth. Experience has shown us that each dollar spent on resilience yields nearly three dollars in development benefits and reduced humanitarian spending.<sup>1</sup>

Resilience is a cornerstone of our efforts to end extreme poverty by helping the world's most vulnerable people prepare for and recover from shocks and get on a solid path to development.



Participants in Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel-Enhanced Resilience in Niger watering crops with the help of a solar-powered irrigation system, allowing them to grow nutritious foods year round.

*Photo Credit: Hamidou Balkissa (NCBA-CLUSA)*

### RESILIENCE DEFINED AND MEASURED

USAID defines resilience to recurrent crisis as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.”

Resilience relates to the ability of people to absorb and recover from shocks and stresses, while adapting and transforming their communities and livelihoods to withstand future events. While many of USAID's programs have some elements of resilience built into their objectives and activities, our focused resilience efforts aim to have a measurable impact on populations in targeted geographies. We rely on multiple indicators to assess the impact of resilience investments, including a reduction in humanitarian assistance needs, depth of poverty, moderate-to-severe hunger, and Global Acute Malnutrition levels. Our current focus countries include Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Somalia, and Uganda. For more information on our resilience measures, please visit [www.usaid.gov/resilience](http://www.usaid.gov/resilience).

<sup>1</sup> CVenton, C. et al. (2012) The Economics of Early Response and Disaster Resilience: Lessons from Kenya and Ethiopia. London: DFID.

## USAID'S FOCUSED RESILIENCE EFFORTS

### Horn of Africa

In 2011, the Horn of Africa experienced the worst drought in 60 years, putting approximately 13.3 million people at severe risk. In close collaboration with international partners, USAID devoted an estimated \$1.3 billion in humanitarian assistance to help meet the needs of 4.6 million people in the region. Since that time, we have mobilized significant resources to build resilience to recurrent crisis, aiming to save lives and protect livelihoods. Examples of our resilience efforts include:

- **Crisis Modifiers:** USAID has pioneered the use of crisis modifiers to quickly inject emergency funds during crises into existing development programs. These funds allow partners to respond rapidly to address humanitarian needs, reducing livelihood and other development losses. In 2014, crisis modifier funds provided nearly 12,700 households animal feed to protect the health of more than 25,000 livestock in Ethiopia when early warning systems predicted that rangelands were at risk of drought.
- **Tackling the Root Causes of Vulnerability and Poverty:** In our focused resilience zones, we layer activities to address underlying vulnerabilities that impact a community's ability to cope with recurring shocks, like drought. In northern Kenya, USAID has aligned food security; water, sanitation, and hygiene; market development; and natural resource management activities through Kenya's Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth. This program seeks to foster inclusive growth and mitigate conflict so that communities can prosper peacefully and sustainably.
- **Jointly Addressing Short-Term and Long-Term Needs:** The Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), designed by the Government of Ethiopia with support from USAID, the World Bank, and other donors, builds resilience to shocks by addressing chronic food shortages. Participants receive seasonal food and cash stipends in exchange for work from able-bodied household members on public works projects. As a result, families do not have to sell their assets to buy food during crises and communities complete local conservation and infrastructure projects critical to community and household resilience.
- **Reducing Emergency Needs through Development Investments:** Improved access to new water sources has reduced the need for high-cost emergency water trucking during future droughts in chronically water-insecure areas in Ethiopia. Since 2012, USAID has provided year-round safe drinking water for more than 250,000 people in Ethiopia's drylands by creating 25 new water supply systems and rehabilitating 22 non-functional water systems.



Community members in northern Kenya participating in natural resource mapping exercise. These maps help to identify potential areas of conflict based on competition over natural resource use, such as grazing corridors. *Source: USAID/Kenya*

### Protecting Assets and Building Resilience in Ethiopia



Bedaso Tare and her daughter attend the livestock insurance payout ceremony. *Photo Credit: Yenew Berhan/Mercy Corps*

Bedaso Tare and her eight children live in Aralio district of Ethiopia's Oromia region, where drought and subsequent loss of livestock are constant risks.

In January 2014, when Bedaso learned about a USAID-supported livestock insurance product that covered livestock losses in case of prolonged drought, she bought insurance policies for two of her 10 goats for 60 birr—or around \$3—each. Following a poor rainy season in her community, she lost five of her goats. Just a few months later, she received reassuring news: “When I was told that I would receive 800 birr [or approximately \$40] for each goat that was covered, I could barely believe it,” says Bedaso. Now that she has received the insurance payout, she has started to make plans. “With the money I received, I’ll buy three goats.”

## The Sahel

In the Sahel, complex and interrelated challenges—including a changing climate, state fragility, food insecurity, and violent extremism—have kept millions in a state of perpetual humanitarian crisis. In February 2014, USAID launched an unprecedented initiative called RISE, or “Resilience in the Sahel – Enhanced,” in Niger and Burkina Faso. RISE brings USAID’s humanitarian and development programs together to address the drivers of instability and entrenched poverty in the Sahel, by strengthening institutions and governance, increasing economic wellbeing, and improving health and nutrition. These investments aim to help an estimated 1.9 million of the most vulnerable Sahelians break the cycle of crisis, escape chronic poverty, and reduce their need for humanitarian assistance in the future. Examples of these efforts include:

- **Reducing Recurrent Humanitarian Assistance Requirements:** USAID seeks to decrease vulnerability to shocks, like drought and floods, and build resilience in Niger and Burkina Faso through the multi-sectoral projects that comprise RISE. One project, Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) combines nutrition-led agriculture and livestock rearing activities; disaster and conflict risk management; improved hygiene and sanitation practices; natural resource management; and increased access to health services and safe drinking water to address the root causes of vulnerability and impediments to economic growth. These activities complement other USAID investments—such as emergency and development food assistance programs and strategic investments in select crop and livestock value chains—to maximize impact and increase the resilience of communities and households.
- **Building on Lessons Learned and Creating Space for Collaboration:** The USAID-supported Sahel Resilience Learning Project (SAREL) works closely with regional organizations, governments, the private sector, non-government organizations, and other donors to capture and disseminate key learnings to accelerate the development and adoption of resilience-enhancing best practices, innovations, and models.
- **Innovative Mapping:** In partnership with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), USAID works with communities to produce maps detailing current and projected land use, including how these uses have evolved due to climate change and population growth. The maps help to identify potential areas of conflict based on competition over natural resource use, such as grazing corridors. In addition, USAID has collaborated on an extensive vulnerability mapping project in Burkina Faso. By identifying places where people are most vulnerable to drought and other recurring natural events, USAID can help to target long-term resilience investments where they are needed the most.

## Asia

Asia is the most disaster-prone region in the world in terms of socioeconomic and human losses. However, unlike in Africa, recurring crises are often not in the same geographical location. USAID plans to expand resilience efforts in Asia in the coming years, including capturing lessons learned from resilience programs in Nepal and exploring how resilience best practices can be applied to Asia.

Building on decades of cutting-edge, disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities in Asia, USAID is integrating resilience principles across development portfolios to address key trends that put stress on communities, such as rapid urbanization, climate change, and natural resource degradation from unsustainable practices, as well as sudden-onset shocks like earthquakes, floods, and typhoons.

- **Bridging Sectoral Gaps:** Prior to the devastating earthquake in Nepal in April 2015, USAID led interagency efforts to implement an integrated DRR framework focused on: preparedness, awareness, and mainstreaming into development activities. In 2014, USAID/Nepal expanded its approach to include the Community Resilience Program, which builds resilience among more than two million vulnerable people. By layering agriculture, environment, maternal and child health, and community development investments, the Community Resilience Program takes an integrated approach to tackling the multidimensional barriers to building resilience. The program works to bridge the gaps among ongoing activities by focusing on sectors less emphasized by other programs, such as alternative livelihoods and community-based DRR.



In Nepal, USAID trains farmers to create low-cost plastic greenhouses and plastic tunnels that protect plants from low temperatures and untimely rains. Source: USAID/Nepal

## PARTNERING FOR RESILIENCE

There is an old African adage “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Recognizing that building resilient communities needs to be a collective effort, we invest a significant amount of time and resources into fostering relationships with governments, regional bodies, local institutions, the private sector, and a range of international humanitarian and development partners. Some of our efforts to date include:

### Global Resilience Partnership

With an initial investment of \$150 million from USAID, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Global Resilience Partnership is addressing key resilience challenges in three focus regions: the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and South and Southeast Asia. The Partnership’s goals include:



- developing new models for accessing, integrating, and using data and information;
- advancing evidence-based tools and approaches to help prioritize and scale up the most promising resilience investments and innovations;
- promoting more effective integration of development and humanitarian resources.

The Global Resilience Partnership’s first activity—the Global Resilience Challenge—is a three-stage grant competition focused on developing locally driven, high-impact, scalable solutions that build resilience in the three target regions. For more information, please visit: [www.globalresiliencepartnership.org](http://www.globalresiliencepartnership.org).

### Global Alliance for Action for Drought Resilience and Growth

In April 2012, East Africa’s Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and international humanitarian and development agencies launched the Global Alliance for Action for Drought Resilience and Growth to strengthen donor engagement and coordination to support resilience efforts underway in the Horn of Africa. The Global Alliance provides technical expertise and policy development support to the IGAD-led initiative to end drought emergencies in the Horn of Africa. USAID has led the Global Alliance since its founding.

### Global Alliance for Resilience - Sahel and West Africa (AGIR)

AGIR was launched in December 2012 at the initiative of the European Commission and with support from USAID, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), U.N. agencies, and other humanitarian and development bodies. This partnership seeks to enhance the effectiveness of Sahelian and West African resilience initiatives that aim to eradicate hunger and chronic malnutrition in the region in the next 20 years.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING RESILIENCE AT USAID

In December 2012, USAID launched its first-ever policy and program guidance on “Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis,” that commits USAID to put more of its development focus on the most vulnerable, to build the adaptive capacity of these populations, and to improve the ability of communities, countries, and systems to manage risk. In 2015, we will explore developing additional guidance that reflects resilience challenges and opportunities in Asia. As part of the Country Development Cooperation Strategy planning processes, we are working to embed resilience into our overall assistance strategy for focus countries.

To support and coordinate USAID’s resilience efforts, we have established a senior-level Resilience Leadership Council, the Center for Resilience housed within the Bureau for Food Security, the position of the Resilience Coordinator, and a network of Resilience Focal Points located within regional bureaus and key missions.