

**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

IDP AND HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION – MARCH 2008

OVERVIEW

USAID is the lead within the U.S. Government (USG) for internally displaced persons (IDPs), promoting protection of IDPs, life-saving humanitarian assistance, and information-sharing to build policy consensus in the international community. Since USAID adopted an agency-wide policy for IDPs in 2004, USAID/OFDA has worked with other USAID/DCHA offices, USG agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the U.N. to implement and strengthen protection activities for vulnerable populations in emergencies. Among international donors, USAID/OFDA is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's effort to place greater emphasis on protection across all levels of relief planning and implementation. Vulnerable populations—including women, children, widows, the elderly, disabled, and displaced persons—often bear a heavy burden during emergencies due to the loss of support structures, poverty, and low social status. In insecure environments, women and girls are at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.



USAID/OFDA programs in Darfur incorporate protection into as many activities as possible, with a particular focus on reducing violence against women (Tiaré Cross, USAID/OFDA).

PRIORITIZING PROTECTION IN DARFUR

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, 16 of USAID/OFDA's 21 NGO partners in the Darfur region of Sudan identified protection as a cross-cutting theme in their programs. NGOs incorporate protection into their programming in a variety of ways, including offering confidential health care services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, referring extremely vulnerable persons in health or nutrition programs to psychosocial or income-generation programs, and consulting women and children about their safety preferences when establishing new water points or latrines. In addition, in FY 2007, USAID/OFDA funded seven stand-alone protection programs in Darfur. These activities are specifically focused on meeting such protection needs as providing income-generating opportunities for women to reduce their reliance on firewood collection, which often places them at increased risk of sexual violence. Other protection activities identify extremely vulnerable individuals and provide linkages to special support networks. Thus, through both mainstreamed activities and targeted programs, USAID/OFDA partners are helping to protect civilians affected by conflict in Darfur.

SUPPORTING GLOBAL INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS FUEL ISSUES

In FY 2008, USAID/OFDA renewed funding to support the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children program "Getting Fuel on the Map: Promoting a Coordinated Strategy for Addressing the Fuel Needs in Conflict-Affected Settings." This program spearheaded the establishment of a new InterAgency Standing Committee task force dedicated to addressing energy and fuel issues in humanitarian settings, in addition to reducing the exposure of women and children to abuse, harassment, exploitation, and violence while collecting firewood. Other objectives include the development of information-sharing and management tools, as well as the organization of an international conference to disseminate data and discuss household fuel issues.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE AND LIBERIA

In 2002 and 2005, reports surfaced of sexual exploitation and abuse of refugees and IDPs in coastal countries of West Africa, including allegations that humanitarian workers and U.N. peacekeepers were involved in perpetrating the abuses. To counter future sexual exploitation and abuse in emergencies throughout the region, OFDA and its implementing partners are tackling the issue at every level: from headquarters to projects sites, from directors to field staff.

USAID/OFDA has funded the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) to facilitate protection workshops in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia to enable WFP and partner agency staff to integrate protection issues into strategies and action plans targeting IDPs and refugees. In Liberia, USAID/OFDA supported a U.N. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Coordination Officer to train U.N. staff and implementing partners, improve reporting and investigation systems for sexual exploitation and abuse cases, and strengthen coordination at the local and national levels. In FY 2007, USAID/OFDA funded the American Refugee Committee to help communities in Liberia prevent and respond to gender-based violence through community sensitization and awareness-raising activities, the provision of legal aid to survivors, and capacity building.

During the five-year conflict in Cote d'Ivoire, rape and sexual abuse were used to humiliate and terrorize the civilian population. To improve protection of women and girls and reinforce mechanisms for prevention and response to gender-based violence, USAID/OFDA supported the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Rescue Committee to provide medical, psychosocial, and legal assistance to victims of sexual violence in western Cote d'Ivoire. This assistance is also expanding knowledge of and expertise on the issue through trainings for beneficiary communities and NGO workers and activities to raise awareness of sexual violence in communities. When IDPs began to return home following the March 2007 peace agreement, USAID/OFDA supported the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) protection monitoring activities in areas of return in Guiglo, Bangolo, Duékoué, Bloléquin, Danané, and Man districts. UNHCR strives to ensure that IDPs return voluntarily with safety and dignity, and works with Ivorian authorities and aid agencies to address problems that IDPs face in areas of return.

PROTECTING DISPLACED POPULATIONS IN SRI LANKA

Since April 2006, renewed fighting between Government of Sri Lanka forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam separatist group has led to widespread displacement in several of Sri Lanka's eastern districts. Recruited by armed groups, children in Sri Lanka are particularly vulnerable when separated from the informal protection offered by extended family and community networks. In response, USAID/OFDA funded partner organizations to undertake humanitarian protection activities to assist these conflict-affected children. Activities include establishing child-friendly spaces for recreation, distributing educational materials, and providing psychosocial support. Child protection officers work with parents, teachers, community leaders, and local government officials to raise awareness of child protection issues. USAID/OFDA partners are also undertaking the registration of children who are unaccompanied or separated from their families, facilitating additional aid and family reunification.

HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION WORKSHOPS

In January and June 2007, USAID/OFDA hosted humanitarian protection workshops in Dakar, Senegal, and Pretoria, South Africa, for partners in West Africa and Southern Africa. Staff members from USAID missions and 42 organizations traveled from Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Zambia, and Zimbabwe to attend. In October 2007, USAID/OFDA held two humanitarian protection workshops in Sri Lanka. Seventeen participants representing 15 NGOs attended the first training in Batticaloa. The second training was held in Colombo, with a total of 23 participants representing 20 NGOs. The workshops' objectives were to introduce USAID's IDP policy, and provide an overview of USAID/OFDA's approach to humanitarian protection and an opportunity to share best practices for the Sri Lankan context.