

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS SECTOR UPDATE – MARCH 2007

SECTOR OVERVIEW

USAID/OFDA is at the forefront of the humanitarian community's shelter and settlements activities, all of which revolve around a common goal: the recovery of the physical places where people live, interact, and often work. In FY 2006 through March 2007, USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$34 million in humanitarian shelter assistance and shelter preparedness activities in Afghanistan, East Timor, Guatemala, India, Lebanon, Liberia, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. USAID/OFDA also provided technical assistance in several instances, contributing significantly to the broader strategic response of the international humanitarian community.

PAKISTAN: INCORPORATING HAZARD MITIGATION INTO DISASTER RESPONSE

As part of USAID's \$75 million response to the magnitude 7.6 earthquake that struck Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan in October 2005, USAID supported \$20 million in emergency and transitional shelter assistance. More than 1,500 winterized tents and 8,000 rolls of plastic sheeting met immediate shelter needs of approximately 290,000 earthquake-affected people. Distribution of corrugated galvanized iron sheeting and support for livelihood activities to rebuild structures and remove rubble further supported emergency relief activities. As the emergency phase of the response shifted from relief to reconstruction, USAID provided transitional shelter assistance for approximately 600,000 people. Transitional assistance featured incorporation of seismic-resistant construction measures, and was supplemented by training programs in seismic-resistant construction for masons and carpenters in several locations throughout the earthquake-affected region.

USAID/OFDA's shelter and settlements advisors worked closely with the Government of Pakistan to provide technical expertise on shelter sector strategies, policies, and guidelines. This advice, which featured recommendations on sheltering-in-place options, host family living, and reuse of salvaged debris, allowed earthquake-affected populations to remain on land near their homes and jump started the longer-term rebuilding process.

INDONESIA: APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED TO A NEW EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

The magnitude 6.3 earthquake that struck the Indonesian island of Java on May 27, 2006, killed nearly 6,000 and destroyed or damaged more than 570,000 homes. From the onset of the relief operation, USAID/OFDA applied lessons learned from the South Asia response, the 2004/2005 tsunami response, and recent work in Afghanistan and elsewhere to the new situation. In addition to the airlift and distribution of emergency relief supplies, including 150 rolls of plastic sheeting, USAID/OFDA implemented a \$4.8 million shelter and settlements strategy that linked



Local community members receive training in carpentry, masonry, and other trades. These programs in Pakistan address the shortage of skilled labor and also contribute to the rebuilding process. (Kaukab Smith, USAID)

immediate relief to longer-term shelter recovery activities and promotion of hazard mitigation awareness. Similar to activities in Pakistan and elsewhere, the USAID/OFDA program in Indonesia emphasized reliance on salvaged materials and shelter-in-place programs over the creation of camps. A public outreach campaign imparted key information on relevant post-disaster issues, including rebuilding shelters and houses with earthquake-resistant technologies.



A USAID-funded poster in Indonesia that shows how to create seismically resistant bamboo structures.

AFGHANISTAN: ADDRESSING RAPID URBAN GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRAINS

Since late 2001, Kabul's population has increased by 230 percent, from 1.5 million to approximately 5 million people, making it one of the world's fastest growing cities. During the same period, however, the physical size of Kabul expanded by only 65 percent leading to a significant increase in population density. As a result, houses in Kabul are overcrowded, with an average of 2.5 to 3 households in each single dwelling space.

In response to these urban changes, USAID/OFDA is working with USAID/Afghanistan and implementing partner CARE to address the lack of adequate shelter and corresponding infrastructure problems. The Kabul Area Shelter and Settlements project is providing more than 3,600 households in 7 districts of Kabul with safe, adequate, and habitable shelter assistance. Vulnerable households are benefiting from integrated shelter activities, such as the rehabilitation of safe water supplies and training programs in health, sanitation, and hazard mitigation. USAID/OFDA is also supporting the establishment of 35 community councils in the same districts to help prioritize and respond to local needs for public services and liaise with government officials on shelter issues. In addition to providing traditional shelter benefits, this project is serving as a model for other programs by addressing the complex mix of shelter and settlement problems in urban areas.

WORKSHOP ON SHELTER AND SETTLEMENT INITIATIVES

Together with InterAction, USAID co-sponsored a Shelter and Settlements Workshop in Washington, DC, on September 22, 2006, the first such gathering in North America since at least 1996. Drawing upon the expertise of nearly 70 participants, workshop themes included broadening the sectoral understanding of shelter to include transitional shelter as a means of bridging the gap between relief and reconstruction; addressing underlying causes of shelter vulnerability; building greater capacity within the shelter sector through clear guidelines, principles, and information resources; and establishing a shelter community that would meet regularly and provide shelter training. According to Charles Setchell, USAID/OFDA Shelter, Settlements, and Hazard Mitigation Advisor, "The workshop succeeded in initiating a process of sector-based engagement in the North America that has been lacking for some time." Workshop findings will be released in November 2006.