

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

SUCCESS STORY

MENINGITIS RESPONSE IN BURKINA FASO SAVES LIVES

Semi-arid Sahelian countries in the region known as Africa's meningitis belt are hit each year by meningitis outbreaks during the dry season from December to June. Every 10 to 12 years, the meningitis bacterium reaches peak epidemic levels in the belt, which extends from Mauritania in West Africa to Ethiopia in East Africa. Burkina Faso has been particularly affected between 2006 and 2008, when the country experienced the most severe meningitis epidemics in a decade. The early response in 2008 prevented the meningitis epidemic from reaching the magnitude of the 2007 epidemic. USAID/OFDA's contribution during the early stages of the 2008 meningitis season played a critical role, mitigating the impact of the epidemic and saving lives. In 2007 and 2008, USAID/OFDA provided a total of nearly \$950,000 for the purchase of vaccines and meningitis surveillance, education, and laboratory detection. In total, nearly 892,000 people received vaccines provided by USAID/OFDA.



USAID/OFDA's contribution to the meningitis vaccination campaign benefits a child in Burkina Faso (Photo by Alexandra Riboul, USAID).

WORST MENINGITIS EPIDEMIC IN 10 YEARS

In 2007, Burkina Faso's meningitis epidemic was particularly severe, with a total of 25,782 suspected cases reported and 1,732 deaths. The epidemic affected 48 of the country's 55 districts. Difficulties in obtaining vaccines and funding delayed procurement and distribution, preventing an effective and quick response to the epidemic. USAID/OFDA's contribution provided urgently needed vaccinations and filled a critical gap in the country's meningitis immunization program.

SUCCESS OF EARLY RESPONSE AND USAID/OFDA FUNDING IN 2008

Recognizing the importance of preparing for and mitigating the impact of a meningitis outbreak, USAID/OFDA and the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou worked together to provide early support to the response in 2008. In conjunction with the vaccine stockpile provided by the Government of Burkina Faso, USAID/OFDA-funded vaccines were the first to be used in the meningitis immunization program implemented by the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO).

The results of the early response and funding in 2008 are clear. The number of cases was significantly lower than in 2007 as vaccines and resources, including USAID/OFDA's contribution, were available sooner than last year. In 2007, the number of suspected cases reported from January to early June was 25,782, compared to 9,467 for the same time period in 2008. The number of deaths for the same time period is nearly half the amount: 1,732 in 2007 compared to 926 in 2008.

WHO praised USAID/OFDA and the U.S. Government for recognizing the importance of an early meningitis response and supporting the immunization campaign. A WHO representative stated, "We are very satisfied with the support of USAID/OFDA and the U.S. Government. It is not only the quantity, but also the timing. Receiving the funding early assured us that we had support and encouraged other donors to also support us."