

HUMANITARIAN AND TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

Since the end of the Cold War, the nature of delivering humanitarian assistance has changed dramatically. Ethnic and national tensions, leading to increased civil strife, have led to an explosion in the number of complex emergencies and refugees around the globe. From 1989 through 1994, the number of complex emergencies (conflict caused by civil strife) to which the U.S. government responded soared from 17 percent to 41 percent of all officially declared emergencies worldwide. During 1995, 90 percent of USAID's international disaster assistance expenditures went to the victims of complex emergencies. (See Figure 8.)

In response to the changing dynamics of humanitarian relief, USAID focuses more on prevention and transition out of crises as a way to staunch the escalating costs and human suffering caused by these emergencies. The activities USAID uses to respond to complex emergencies cut across the agency's other strategic objectives and are often funded from multiple sources, including the Development Assistance Fund, Economic Support Fund, Food for Peace and the Development Fund for Africa.

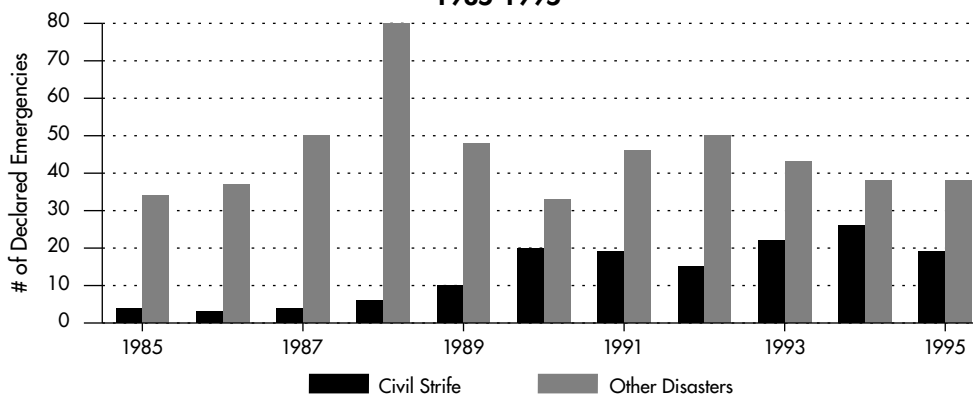
Humanitarian and transition assistance is measured through the achievement of three general categories of objectives: pre-disaster interventions; relief responses; and transition to stability following crises. Tracking humanitarian assistance performance as a distinct program sector is new for USAID. Over the last year, a tentative set of agency indicators has been developed, which will continue to be refined and tested over the next year.

Preventing Crises

While it is not always possible to prevent emergencies from occurring, their potential impact can be reduced. USAID's increasing involvement in complex emergencies has led the agency to use a strategic approach to try to identify and address the root causes of these crises, an approach it has pursued for two decades in its work to mitigate the effects of natural disasters. USAID has played a key role in developing effective early warning, preparedness and mitigation systems for natural

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Figure 8
Number of Declared Disasters by Type:
1985-1995*



* Civil strife includes displaced persons/emergencies/expellees/refugees

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disasters, such as the Famine Early Warning System in Africa, disaster management training in Latin America and a worldwide industrial accident prevention program.

One of the most successful disaster early warning programs sponsored by USAID has been the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program. In late 1994, the program provided equipment and technical assistance to the local volcano observatory in Papua New Guinea to help local officials determine an appropriate evacuation plan. When the Rabaul volcano erupted in 1995, 40 percent of the buildings in the town were damaged or destroyed, but only four people were killed, compared to over 500 people killed in a similar 1937 eruption of Rabaul.

In instances of complex emergencies and conflict potential, USAID is breaking new ground in the field of prevention. Since 1994, the United States has been working with African leaders and other donors to create a vision for the future of one troubled region through the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative. The growing number of crises in the region has disrupted long-term development and increased requirements for emergency and relief assistance. The Greater Horn of Africa Initiative's achievements include: consensus on common goals of food security and the need to address root causes of political conflict; African ownership of a process to restructure economic and political relations through a regional organization centered on food security, long-term development and conflict prevention; and donor commitment to consult and coordinate integrated emergency and relief interventions, early warning systems and response capacity.

Meeting Urgent Relief Needs

Timely and effective emergency relief activities include meeting critical human needs (particularly of women and children), enhancing short-term

food security and coordinating emergency activities with other countries and relief organizations. In 1995, nearly 24 million people received emergency food aid. Approximately 60 percent of these were in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and the New Independent States, and Latin America.

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Of the three epidemics, including an outbreak of cholera in Niger, the most notable was the Ebola outbreak in Zaire. On May 9, 1995, the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed an outbreak of hemorrhagic fever around the town of Kikwit, Zaire, caused by the Ebola virus. USAID funded plane loads of supplies, carrying plasma-substitute, protective medical clothing and other critical equipment to Zaire. In all, approximately 7,000 pounds of supplies and an emergency epidemiological team were sent to Zaire, preventing the spread of the virus.

Relief related to complex emergencies also addresses a wide variety of critical needs and is often related to a country's transition out of crisis. An example of this is USAID's collaborative relief effort in Armenia. Because of the collapse of the former Soviet Union and economic embargoes resulting from civil conflict, the Armenian people suffered from a breakdown of the central heating system and the near lack of electricity. A "winter warmth" activity, which began in 1993 and continued into 1996, provides heating kerosene and heaters to identified vulnerable population groups and to schools during the winter months. More than 200,000 families (roughly 25 percent of the total population) have received critical heating

Learning from Experience: **Food Aid in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Through humanitarian relief activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, USAID has learned some important preventive approaches to reduce the amount of suffering in the region. A monitoring

and survey system of nutritional needs was implemented in the most adversely affected areas. The survey in Sarajevo found that most families supplemented their food-aid rations by

selling or exchanging their possessions for food on the black market. These conclusions have allowed USAID to better target food aid to the most vulnerable beneficiaries, to expand

USAID-funded agricultural and horticultural production programs and to promote local income-generating projects, especially for women.

Mozambique: Emerging from Conflict

Mozambique signed a peace agreement in October 1992, ending its 16-year-long civil war amidst one of the worst droughts of the century. More than a third of Mozambique's population found refuge in neighboring countries or fled to other locations inside the country because

of the war and drought. Virtually the entire nation's rural infrastructure was destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of land mines had not been removed from the countryside. Two-thirds of the population lived in absolute poverty. In a joint effort with other donors, Mozambique and

private voluntary organizations, USAID provided emergency food, water and medical aid; financed election support; helped demobilize military troops; and supported land mine clearance and road rehabilitation. Today, Mozambique is a very different country. More than 91,000

soldiers have been demobilized, the first multiparty elections were held, tens of thousands of refugees have returned to their homes, and Mozambique's economy has taken a marked upturn.

assistance each winter. Since the start of the program, schools have remained open during the winter.

Helping Nations Emerge from the Cycle of Crisis

The goal of transition activities is to facilitate the successful return of a country from crisis to the path of sustainable development. Such activities include supporting demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants into the civil society; addressing concerns of displaced and vulnerable populations; promoting civil-military relations; removing land mines; supplying prosthetics and encouraging conflict resolution.

Working with other donors and international organizations, USAID has supported demobilization of soldiers and the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian societies in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Uganda. Through USAID support of El Salvador's National Reconstruction Program, approximately 11,000 ex-combatants have received credit for agricultural production or microenterprise development, and 20,000 people, about 43 percent of whom are women, have been trained in trades and agriculture. In its effort to reactivate the El Salvadoran economy, USAID also has provided approximately \$34 million for the purchase and distribution of farmland through the Land Bank. More than 28,000 beneficiaries, including more than 16,000 non-combatant squatters, have received land titles. Twenty-six percent of the total number of recipients are women, more than double the percentage affected in previous agrarian reform efforts.

In other regions, USAID is assisting in the reunification of children and their families. The Displaced Children and Orphans Fund is assisting in documenting, tracing and reunifying unaccompanied children in Angola, Liberia, Mozambique,

Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. In Rwanda, for example, more than 40,000 children (about half the total number of separated children in camps and transit centers) have been registered and documented.

Prevention, Relief and Development Linkages

Well-designed relief programs are springboards for development, and development programs play a key role in prevention and transition from crises. USAID has been successful in using long-term development strategies to prevent and respond to crises. USAID's effort in Haiti in 1995 illustrates how development and humanitarian assistance programs reinforced each other to produce lasting benefits.

The intensified international embargo last year in Haiti dramatically decreased the number of jobs, making it difficult for hundreds of thousands of Haitians to buy food and other basic essentials. USAID's response provided a daily meal to 1.2 million people and put thousands of Haitians to work repairing and rehabilitating the country's productive infrastructure.

The benefits of these activities, short-term relief and long-term economic assistance, have been substantial. As of January 1995, 1,000 miles of irrigation canals were rehabilitated, opening almost 67,000 acres of land to full cultivation; over 550 miles of roads were rehabilitated, providing market access for over 800,000 people; and over 16,000 acres of land were protected through conservation measures. In addition, over 80 cents of every dollar spent under this program has gone to wages. By providing hundreds of thousands of poor families with the means to earn additional income needed for adequate diets and through improvements in infrastructure, the program has also had a significant impact on food security.

The Challenges for 1996

USAID will continue to face a number of challenges in the coming year. As an international agency, the demands placed upon USAID will depend significantly on emerging foreign policy priorities, the occurrence of new humanitarian crises and the relative progress of nations in transition to freer political and economic systems. As always, because the agency works across sectors in a range of countries, it will face a diverse host of both opportunities and obstacles.

It is clear that the agency will continue to respond to high-profile foreign policy initiatives and struggle with the burdens of an unprecedented number of victims of humanitarian crises. In addition, limited resources and

downsizing will remain critical concerns for USAID.

The agency's programs have served as an effective vehicle for promoting long-term U.S. interests abroad and improving the lives of literally millions of individuals. However, because USAID continues to face declining resource levels for virtually all of its activities, the agency will, in all likelihood, increasingly limit both its field presence and scope of work. Fuller assessment of the potential damage to America's foreign policy and national interests must be considered when judging the impact of further reducing the national investment in foreign assistance programs.