MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING SECTOR UPDATE

Third-Party Monitoring in Complex Emergencies

In countries experiencing complex emergencies, security concerns can prevent USAID/OFDA and expatriate partner staff from conducting regular site visits to monitor the progress of programs. Contracting a third party to conduct quantitative and qualitative output and outcome monitoring aims to increase USAID/OFDA and partner understanding of the outputs, outcomes, progress, challenges, successes, and lessons learned of USAID/OFDA-funded programs. USAID/OFDA contracts independent third-party monitors, who possess an in-depth understanding of local customs and security conditions, to implement monitoring projects combining quantitative and qualitative methods—including surveys, individual interviews, focus group discussions, direct observations, and document reviews—for data collection at program sites. Subsequently, the contractors prepare monthly reports that allow USAID/OFDA and implementing partners to make programmatic adjustments to improve the quality of assistance in complex emergencies. Third-party monitoring projects can also inform future USAID/OFDA program design and strategic decision making. In FY 2017, USAID/OFDA provided approximately $9 million to support third-party monitoring in complex emergencies.

Performance Evaluations: West Africa, Nepal, and EAP

USAID/OFDA supported three external performance evaluations in FY 2017, including assessments of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) response in West Africa, USAID/OFDA DRR programs in Nepal, and Incident Command System (ICS) programs in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) region.

Assessing the EVD Response

In FY 2017, USAID/OFDA completed an evaluation of the relevance, coordination, timeliness, and effectiveness of its participation in the U.S. Government (USG) response to the EVD outbreak in West Africa, which spanned more than two years and primarily affected Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. The evaluation aimed to improve USAID/OFDA's understanding of its regional response performance and inform future large-scale humanitarian responses to infectious disease outbreaks.

The West Africa EVD outbreak began in southeastern Guinea's Forest Region in December 2013, spreading to the neighboring countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone in early 2014. The outbreak grew to a humanitarian emergency, and, in response, the USG deployed an interagency Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in August 2014 and stood up a corresponding Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT) to support the DART and enhance coordination. During its 17 months of operation, the DART coordinated the

Sector Overview

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) integrates monitoring, evaluation, and learning (ME&L) activities into emergency response and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs worldwide to improve the quality of programming, enhance accountability, and ensure that USAID/OFDA-supported assistance is appropriate and effective.

As a critical component of program management, ME&L helps USAID/OFDA and its partners understand the progress and results of recent and ongoing humanitarian responses so that future programs can better save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the social and economic impacts of humanitarian emergencies.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, USAID/OFDA provided approximately $9.5 million to directly support ME&L activities, including third-party monitoring programs in difficult-to-access areas and external performance evaluations across various contexts. USAID/OFDA's ME&L support complements and builds upon ME&L work conducted by the partners implementing USAID/OFDA-funded humanitarian programs.

USG emergency response to West Africa's EVD outbreak, supporting critical interventions such as health and humanitarian coordination, case management, surveillance and epidemiology, restoration of essential health services through infection prevention and control measures, social mobilization and communications, and logistics activities. Between FY 2014 and FY 2016, the USG provided approximately $2.6 billion towards the EVD response—toward which USAID/OFDA committed nearly $805 million and led EVD response coordination efforts.

In FY 2016 and FY 2017, USAID/OFDA supported a partner to conduct an external performance evaluation with four complementary focus areas: overall efficacy, effectiveness of various programmatic components, relevance of the response strategy, and coordination of USAID/OFDA's response to the EVD outbreak in West Africa.

Evaluating USAID/OFDA DRR Programming in Nepal

USAID/OFDA has supported natural disaster preparedness and resilience in South Asia for decades. In Nepal, USAID/OFDA has provided approximately $19.4 million to bolster DRR efforts since 1998, including grants and cooperative agreements with non-governmental organization (NGOs) to implement DRR programs in close coordination with Government of Nepal (GoN) authorities. In FY 2017, USAID/OFDA completed an evaluation of the effectiveness of USAID/OFDA DRR programming in Nepal prior to the April 2015 earthquake to better understand its performance in improving Nepal's preparedness and resilience to large-scale natural disasters. An implementing partner evaluated the performance of two USAID/OFDA-supported DRR projects implemented in Nepal from 2010–2016: the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) and the Building Code Implementation Program in Municipalities of Nepal (BCIPN). The nine-month performance evaluation confirmed that beneficiaries had retained disaster response and earthquake-resistant building skills acquired in USAID/OFDA-funded PEER and BCIPN training programs, respectively, over time. The evaluation documented that impact was likely to continue although the projects had ended and, importantly, noted this was true for trainees of both USAID/OFDA expatriate instructors and USAID/OFDA-trained Nepali instructors. The evaluation also emphasized that ultimate sustainability relies on GoN authorities to support continued training and maintenance of medical and search-and-rescue equipment.

Understanding ICS Performance in East Asia and the Pacific

USAID/OFDA's DRR strategy in EAP includes support for programs aiming to increase national ICS capacities for effective disaster response. The overall objectives of ICS training programs, which began in 2003, are to enhance the capacity of countries to effectively manage disaster response operations, particularly during the initial emergency phase prior to the arrival of external assistance. USAID/OFDA has supported the U.S Forest Service to conduct ICS capacity-building activities in ten countries in the EAP region. The USAID/OFDA-funded evaluation—conducted over a period of eight months—examined the effectiveness and sustainability of ICS programming in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. The evaluation determined that ICS programs have identified appropriate host government authorities to receive training and that ICS capabilities are improving to various degrees among the trainees. The evaluation also recommended further adapting ICS curriculum to suit local contexts, including highlighting response structures unique to each country, and encouraging local government agencies to develop performance management plans tracking effectiveness.

Developing a Global Guide to Monitoring Emergency Response Activities

USAID/OFDA provided $200,000 in FY 2017 funding to ALNAP—a global network of NGOs, UN agencies, members of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, donors, academics, and other stakeholders dedicated to learning how to improve humanitarian response mechanisms—to develop a monitoring guide for emergency response activities. ALNAP is drawing from best practices, lessons learned, and the experience of its diverse network to codify available monitoring resources in a single guide tailored for the challenges of humanitarian contexts. This project aims to increase the international humanitarian community's access to monitoring tools and thereby improve monitoring capacity for humanitarian emergencies.