

SHELTER & SETTLEMENTS SECTOR UPDATE



A USAID/OFDA engineering consultant assesses earthquake damage in Manta, Ecuador, in April 2016. Photo by Eddie Argenal/USAID

Engaged in Humanitarian “S&S” Activities Around the World

USAID/OFDA S&S advisors deployed throughout FY 2016 to serve on a USAID Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART), conduct field assessments, design sector strategies, and monitor project activities. Travel to affected areas entailed conducting land and housing market analyses to better understand impacts, needs, and resources, as well as engaging with affected populations, cluster lead agencies, host country institutions, and implementing partners. Following the April 2016 Ecuador earthquake, an S&S advisor served on the Ecuador DART to ensure timely access to shelter and develop strategies to improve the living conditions of disaster-affected populations. Throughout FY 2016, S&S advisors worked closely with regional and field teams to provide guidance on sector strategies, including in Iraq, South Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine. The S&S team’s contingency planning for a potential failure of Iraq’s Mosul Dam, as well as contingency planning for potential conflict-induced displacement from the city of Mosul, are of particular note. S&S advisors also participated in discussions with USAID colleagues and other stakeholders on post-earthquake housing reconstruction in Nepal, reflecting growing engagement on recovery issues, such as more effective promotion of the transition from humanitarian shelter to housing reconstruction. Central to nearly all efforts throughout FY 2016 was the identification of opportunities for the incorporation of DRR measures into S&S sector programming, where needed and appropriate. Finally, USAID/OFDA S&S advisors participated in the research and evaluation of plastic sheeting, solar-powered lights, and other non-food items, often in concert with other humanitarian agencies.

“Ten Years On” Review of 2006 Post-Earthquake Shelter Response in Indonesia

At the request of USAID/OFDA, the SSWG conducted a “ten years on” review of the shelter response to a magnitude 6.3 earthquake that struck Java, Indonesia, on May 27, 2006.

Sector Overview

USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) remains at the forefront of the humanitarian community’s shelter and settlements (S&S) activities, which focus on a common goal: the expeditious and appropriate provision of covered living space to adequately shelter displaced populations, while also promoting safer, healthier settlements that link emergency S&S assistance to longer-term recovery efforts.

USAID/OFDA contributes to the international humanitarian community’s broader S&S strategic framework through participation in the Shelter and Settlements Working Group (SSWG)—an open membership group hosted by InterAction—and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. USAID/OFDA also participates in Global Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster activities.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$81 million for humanitarian S&S assistance and shelter-related disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities, including nearly \$80 million for S&S interventions in 24 countries and more than \$1.1 million for global and regional S&S initiatives.



Transitional shelter provided in 2006 after the magnitude 6.3 earthquake in Java, Indonesia, upgraded to permanence. See summary of SSWG post-project “ten years on” review. Photo courtesy of InterAction

The earthquake resulted in nearly 6,000 fatalities, damaged or destroyed 628,000 homes, and displaced approximately 1.5 million people. The earthquake response was also one of the first to be directed by the newly-adopted cluster system—the coordinating mechanism for humanitarian response activities, comprising UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

USAID/OFDA was fully engaged from the outset in working with cluster members and government actors to develop strategies and design assessment protocols. In addition to other response activities, USAID/OFDA implemented a \$4.8 million shelter and settlements strategy that featured the use of insecticide-treated plastic sheeting as a key input to emergency shelter for more than 4,000 households; durable, transitional shelter units for approximately 10,000 households; and training on seismic-resistant building techniques in more than 340 earthquake-affected settlements. Within a few months of the disaster, Shelter Cluster members provided more than 300,000 households with shelter assistance, including 80,000 transitional shelters. One of the most important factors in explaining the rapid and effective response was the strength of existing social coping mechanisms, such as reliance on the cultural practice of *gotong royong*, which emphasizes communal volunteerism to promote general welfare and recovery. Most of the assistance provided to affected communities utilized these coping mechanisms, with support from both government and non-government actors.

Although intended for two years of continuous occupancy, the SSWG team found that transitional shelters were still in large-scale use as recently as 2013, largely due to household-level factors related to limited resources and capacities to engage in reconstruction. Thus, the transitional shelters served as a valuable form of assistance well beyond the intended two-year duration. Transitional shelter use for most assisted households evolved, however, from sheltering entire households to sheltering fewer household members to serving as storage or supporting livelihood activities. By June 2016, during the SSWG field visit, most transitional shelters had been absorbed into the housing market, although remnant materials were still visible or being stored for potential future use, and thus clearly viewed as valuable household assets.

The post-project review concluded that transitional shelter laid the foundation for immediate recovery, and was thus a fundamental step in the overall recovery process, including supporting community members' livelihoods, education, and health needs. This success can be attributed in large part to engagement with community social structures, early implementation of development housing programs, functioning local and national government structures, and active local civil society organizations.

Update on the “Neighborhood Approach”

The USAID/OFDA-supported *Barrio Mío* (“My Neighborhood” in Spanish) project in Guatemala that began in 2012 has evolved from a small-scale neighborhood intervention to a focal point in Government of Guatemala efforts to nationalize the “neighborhood approach” as the official basis for responding to urban disasters and implementing DRR-based upgrading activities in high-risk informal settlements. The neighborhood approach is a participatory, evidence-based, multi-sector process for responding to needs in hazard-prone urban areas that features engagement with residents, local officials, and the private sector to create safer shelters and settlements.

Training and Outreach: One-Day Events, Online Courses, and Requested Talks

Throughout FY 2016, S&S advisors presented the one-day USAID/OFDA S&S training course for both in-house staff and those from numerous other humanitarian organizations. The online version of the course, launched in April 2015, is available at OFDA Academy, USAID University, and publically accessible websites. FY 2017 plans include translating the course into Spanish for broader distribution.

USAID/OFDA advisors also presented on a multitude of S&S and DRR topics for various organizations during FY 2016, including the governments of Chile, Ecuador, and Peru, the CCCM Cluster, RedR, the World Bank, InterAction Forum, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Emory University, Harvard University’s Humanitarian Academy, University of Vermont, Saint Michael’s College, and George Washington University.

Training and Outreach: Graduate Student Fellowships in S&S

USAID/OFDA awarded two graduate student fellowships in May 2016 as part of larger efforts to improve S&S programming, increase awareness of the sector in North America, and expand career options for S&S activities. The successful candidates, from programs in civil engineering at the University of Colorado and emergency and development at Oxford-Brookes University in London, are focusing field activities on post-Haiyan S&S recovery activities and developing guidelines for rent-based shelter recovery programs, respectively.

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