

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

**LOGISTICS AND RELIEF COMMODITIES SECTOR UPDATE –
AUGUST 2009**

SECTOR OVERVIEW

As the lead U.S. Government (USG) office for international disaster response, USAID/OFDA facilitates and coordinates the purchase and movement of emergency relief commodities worldwide.

USAID/OFDA stockpiles relief supplies at regional warehouse hubs in Miami, Florida; Pisa, Italy; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Stockpiled commodities include commonly needed items such as blankets, plastic sheeting for temporary shelter construction, family hygiene kits, 10-liter collapsible water containers, 10,000-liter water storage bladders, and trailer-mounted water treatment units. Logistics, transport, and procurement systems ensure that vital emergency relief supplies and services quickly and efficiently reach people in need.



USAID/OFDA staff assess the condition of USAID/OFDA-provided plastic sheeting in a flood-affected Burmese village (photo by Robert Demeranville, USAID/OFDA).

To respond rapidly in the aftermath of a disaster, USAID/OFDA maintains a full-time logistics team. During large-scale response operations, USAID/OFDA can supplement the team with USAID/OFDA-trained logisticians, including staff from the U.S. Forest Service's Disaster Assistance Support Program and the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department and Los Angeles County Fire Department.

USAID/OFDA logistics officers in Washington, D.C., coordinate the delivery of relief supplies from regional warehouse hubs to affected areas via air, sea, or land. Logistics personnel in the field receive the commodities and ensure that supplies reach implementing partners for distribution to affected populations. USAID/OFDA may pre-position personnel and emergency relief supplies in the event of an impending disaster, such as a hurricane or volcanic eruption, in order to provide assistance to affected communities as humanitarian needs arise.

To date in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$148 million for relief commodities, provided in-kind and through grants, and associated transport, compared to nearly \$115 million in FY 2008 and nearly \$76 million in FY 2007. As humanitarian needs have increased in recent years, USAID/OFDA's commitment to providing emergency relief supplies has kept pace.

PROVIDING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO CYCLONE-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN BURMA

On May 2, 2008, Cyclone Nargis made landfall in Burma with a maximum sustained wind speed of approximately 132 miles per hour and a storm surge of 12 feet, according to the U.S. Joint Typhoon Warning Center. Travelling up the Ayeyarwardy River delta and passing the city of Rangoon, the cyclone left more than 130,000 people dead or missing and presumed dead, the Government of Burma reported. The U.N. estimated that Cyclone Nargis significantly affected an estimated 2.4 million people through widespread damage to houses, public buildings, schools, water sources, transport infrastructure, livestock, and agricultural land.

In response to the effects of the cyclone, USAID/OFDA organized 12 flights from the regional warehouses in Pisa and Dubai to deliver emergency relief commodities to Thailand, the hub of the USG air bridge for transshipment to Burma. Organized by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), the air bridge completed 185 airlifts from May 12 to June 22, transporting supplies from USAID/OFDA, DoD, the U.N., non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the Government of Thailand. The USAID/OFDA commodities, valued at more than \$4 million, benefited at least 445,000 individuals and included 38,800 hygiene kits, 6,500 rolls of plastic sheeting, 15,000 mosquito nets, 95,300 ten-liter water containers, 10 water treatment units, 12 Zodiac boats, and fourteen 10,000-liter water storage bladders.

USAID/OFDA logistics specialists played a pivotal role in coordinating the humanitarian response. A logistics officer serving on the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) travelled through flooded areas on a USAID/OFDA-provided Zodiac boat to assess conditions and humanitarian needs. Other USAID/OFDA logisticians deployed to Thailand to facilitate the shipment of relief commodities supplied by USAID/OFDA and U.N. and NGO partners and to help direct assistance where needed most.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS FOLLOWING STORMS AND HURRICANES IN HAITI

In addition to purchasing emergency relief commodities, maintaining stockpiles at the warehouse hubs, and coordinating the transport of supplies, the USAID/OFDA logistics unit provides expert technical assistance to the U.N., NGOs, and other partners. In August and September 2008, Tropical Storms Fay and Hanna and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike all moved across or in proximity to Haiti, causing floods that resulted in nearly 800 deaths and affected nearly 827,000 people in 9 of Haiti's 10 departments. In the aftermath of the storms, USAID/OFDA airlifted emergency relief commodities, valued at more than \$840,000 and benefiting tens of thousands of Haitians, from the warehouse in Miami to Port-au-Prince, the capital.



A U.N. World Food Program employee stands with USAID/OFDA-provided emergency relief commodities in Haiti (photo by Robert Demeranville, USAID/OFDA).

However, USAID/OFDA did not limit assistance only to emergency relief commodities. USAID/OFDA seconded a logistics specialist to the U.N. Logistics Cluster for 30 days to assist coordination of international logistical efforts in response to the effects of the storms. In addition, USAID/OFDA authorized and funded the deployment of a three-person Americas Support Team (AST) module, staffed by Fairfax County USAR team members, to provide logistical and operational support to the U.N. disaster assessment and coordination team. Deployable by USAID/OFDA within hours and fully self-sufficient for the first 72 hours of operation, the AST module demonstrates USAID/OFDA's commitment to a close partnership with the U.N.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL PROCUREMENT TO ASSIST CONFLICT-AFFECTED POPULATIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

In keeping with the office's mandate to reduce the economic impact of disasters, USAID/OFDA engages in local and regional procurement of emergency relief supplies. Such procurement not only helps stimulate local economies, but also reduces transportation costs. In response to conflict-induced displacement in eastern DRC beginning in August 2008, USAID/OFDA organized five flights of stockpiled emergency relief supplies from the warehouse in Dubai. Simultaneously, USAID/OFDA rapidly procured commodities not normally stockpiled—including mosquito nets and kitchen sets—from vendors in Kenya. USAID/OFDA organized transport of the commodities to the town of Goma in eastern DRC for distribution by the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF). To date in FY 2009, USAID/OFDA has provided nearly \$1.7 million for procurement and transport of emergency relief supplies to eastern DRC by air and land.