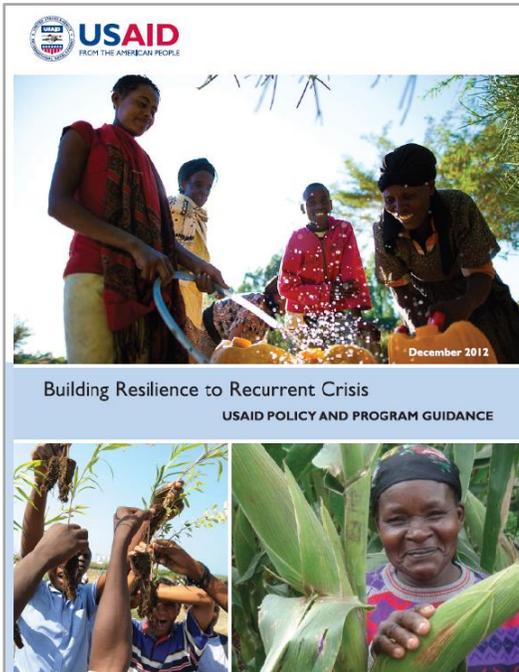




**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning  
**BRIEFER**

## USAID POLICY AND PROGRAM GUIDANCE: Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis



While we cannot stop shocks from happening, USAID can – and is committed to – do more to help people withstand them. The Agency has been at the vanguard of international efforts to build resilience to recurrent crisis in support of effective country-led plans and in partnership with the international community. This policy and program guidance draws on decades of experience providing humanitarian relief and development assistance to identify:

- *A conceptual framework to inform resilience programming;*
- *The operational changes we seek*, including operational changes to better coordinate our humanitarian and relief and development teams around resilience; and
- *The impact we seek.* Through these efforts, we aim to reduce chronic vulnerability and promote more inclusive growth in areas of recurrent crisis.

**Ultimately, we seek to save and improve lives and decrease the need for repeated infusions of humanitarian assistance in targeted areas where this approach is applied.**

**What is resilience?** For USAID, resilience to recurrent crisis is the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2011, the worst drought in 60 years plunged 13.3 million people into crisis in the Horn of Africa. Only a few months later, another crisis emerged in the Sahel, where millions of people have suffered from the devastating impacts of drought, conflict, and other pressures. The widespread need seen in these two regions reflects similar difficulties facing communities across the globe. In far too many places, families rely on humanitarian assistance, year after year, just to survive. In response, the international community provides significant levels of life-saving humanitarian relief, largely concentrated in just a few countries. Over the past decade, U.S. \$90 billion was spent by international donors in just nine countries – accounting for almost 50% of all humanitarian assistance during this period.<sup>1</sup> With this level of humanitarian need projected to continue or even increase in some areas, communities face an ongoing cycle of crisis they cannot escape. **We cannot stop shocks from happening, but we can and must increase our focus on helping societies withstand and recover from them.** USAID is working closely with international partners, through efforts such as the Global Alliance for Action for Drought Resilience and Growth in the Horn of Africa and the Global Alliance for Resilience in the Sahel (AGIR-Sahel), to advance this goal.

<sup>1</sup> Kellett, J. and Sweeney, H. (2011) Analysis of financing mechanisms and funding streams to enhance emergency preparedness.

## THE KEY COMPONENTS OF RESILIENCE

While the concept of resilience has broad applicability to many of the environments in which we work, this guidance is specifically focused on areas where chronic poverty intersects with shocks and stresses to produce recurrent crises and undermine development gains. In these areas, we must increase adaptive capacity – the ability to respond quickly and effectively to new circumstances – and improve the ability to address and reduce risk. Multisectoral considerations must be taken into account, and our efforts to build resilience should be based on local context and need and work hand-in-hand with U.S. Government initiatives across a broad range of sectors, including food security, global health, and climate change.

We will emphasize approaches that empower women and more effectively reduce gaps between males and females. Functioning institutions of good governance and democratic accountability are also essential, as building resilient countries and systems requires effective and inclusive governments that hold themselves accountable for results. Working closely with partners, including other U.S. Government Agencies, we will elevate and support inclusive, country-led plans that lead to sustainable reductions in vulnerability and promote inclusive growth.

## THE RESULTS WE SEEK

Our efforts to build resilience will contribute to a sustainable reduction in vulnerability and more inclusive growth. In the areas where we apply this policy and program guidance, we intend our efforts to result in:

- increased adaptive capacity
- improved ability to address and reduce risk
- improved social and economic conditions of vulnerable populations

Over the long-term, we envision these results will collectively contribute to reduced humanitarian need. In the Horn of Africa, for example, we aim to benefit directly 10 million people and reduce the region's emergency caseload by one million people within five years. We are defining a comparable expectation for impact in the Sahel, based on local conditions, and will likewise develop metrics for impact in other focus countries and regions moving forward.

## AN AGENDA FOR OPERATIONAL CHANGE

While we are maintaining the life-saving speed of humanitarian assistance and the long-term focus of development programs, we are also identifying additional opportunities to layer, integrate, and sequence these efforts to achieve long-term resilience. Under this guidance, USAID is establishing operational change by ensuring that integrated teams of humanitarian and development experts work together to better understand each other's strengths and constraints and undertake:



At the heart of this policy and program guidance is USAID's commitment to empower solution-holders close to the problem; leadership at every level will remain committed to addressing unnecessary roadblocks that stand in the way of meeting our objectives.