



Regional Snapshot

EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Fiscal Year (FY) 2016

The countries in East and Central Africa (ECA)¹ are vulnerable to a range of hazards, including complex emergencies characterized by widespread violence and population displacement, as well as chronic or recurrent challenges, such as acute food insecurity, drought, floods, disease outbreaks, environmental degradation, rapid population growth, and limited government capacity. In addition to staff based in Washington, D.C., USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) maintains a regional office in Nairobi, Kenya, and sub-regional offices in DRC, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

Recent Humanitarian Events in the Region

- Fighting in South Sudan since late 2013 has displaced more than 2.7 million people, including an estimated 1.6 million internally displaced persons. South Sudan also faces one of the worst food security crises in the world, with more than 4.8 million acutely food-insecure people. Armed actors have repeatedly targeted civilians, restricted humanitarian access, and attacked relief personnel and assets. USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) for South Sudan continues to coordinate critical humanitarian assistance for vulnerable people countrywide.
- Consecutive seasons of below-average rainfall, compounded by the 2015/2016 El Niño climatic event, resulted in deteriorating agricultural, livestock, food security, and nutrition conditions in Ethiopia. Despite improved rainfall and crop production in 2016, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) estimated that 9.7 million people required relief food assistance as of August. USAID announced the activation of a DART for Ethiopia on March 3 to coordinate critical humanitarian interventions with the GoE, UN agencies, and relief organizations.
- Conflict, population displacement, flooding, and access constraints have increased humanitarian needs in Sudan, where an estimated 5.8 million people require assistance. Conflict in the Jebel Marra area of Darfur Region has displaced as many as 194,000 people during 2016, while fighting and access restrictions have limited relief operations in the Two Areas of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states.
- Persistent conflict, impediments to humanitarian access, and below-average 2016 *gu* seasonal harvests have deteriorated food security conditions in parts of northern and south-central Somalia. As of August, an estimated 300,000 children younger than five years of age were experiencing acute malnutrition, while approximately 5 million people were facing acute food insecurity or were highly vulnerable to shocks and at risk of experiencing acute food insecurity.
- Despite a relatively improved political environment, the security situation across CAR remains volatile, with continuing attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers, and peacekeeping forces. While relief agencies continue to assist conflict-affected populations, insecurity and logistics constraints impede humanitarian operations, particularly in remote areas. Approximately 452,000 Central Africans have fled to neighboring countries, while an estimated 385,000 people are internally displaced in CAR.

¹ The ECA region encompasses the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, including Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

- Persistent violence, restricted access, poor infrastructure, forced recruitment into armed groups, and reduced access to agricultural land and traditional markets have contributed to deteriorating humanitarian conditions in DRC, where approximately 7.5 million people require humanitarian assistance. Nearly 468,000 Congolese have fled to neighboring countries, while an estimated 1.7 million people are internally displaced in DRC.
- In FY 2016, USAID/OFDA responded to seven disasters declared in the ECA region, including floods and landslides in Rwanda, and complex emergencies in CAR, DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan.

USAID/OFDA Priorities for 2017

- Throughout ECA, USAID/OFDA will continue to respond to acute needs of conflict-affected populations in countries experiencing ongoing crises, as well as people impacted by sudden-onset disasters, such as flooding and landslides.
- USAID/OFDA will continue to bolster international response in countries experiencing protracted crises by supporting humanitarian architecture, including information management, logistics, and coordination. In countries facing protracted emergencies, USAID/OFDA will support humanitarian partners to implement approaches and interventions aiming to reduce dependency on relief assistance, where feasible and appropriate.
- USAID/OFDA will maintain rapid response capacities, including pre-positioned emergency relief supplies, to provide timely assistance for identified humanitarian needs. In addition, USAID/OFDA will support targeted disaster risk reduction activities to strengthen household resilience against shocks, and improve preparedness and response capacity of government and humanitarian agencies.

Challenges

- Insecurity, humanitarian access restrictions, and attacks targeting relief workers and assets continue to impede the delivery of assistance to vulnerable populations throughout ECA, particularly in South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, CAR, and DRC.
- Some governments and armed actors in the region are exploiting ongoing crises and constraining relief operations by imposing informal fees, seizing assets, and hindering staff movements.
- Persistent complex emergencies and chronic, recurrent challenges in the region continue to overwhelm vulnerable populations, resulting in sustained or increasing needs for life-saving humanitarian assistance, and support to recover and resume productive livelihoods.

Key Lessons Learned in 2016

- The humanitarian community struggled to adequately address immense needs across ECA due to competing global priorities. Sustained funding for crises in ECA is critical to avert further deterioration of regional humanitarian conditions and setbacks regarding achieved gains.
- Flexible, rapid, and targeted response capacity can be an effective tool to address urgent humanitarian needs, where feasible and appropriate. USAID/OFDA-funded rapid response programs provide critical capacity in South Sudan, Sudan, CAR, and DRC, where timely responses to population movement and spikes in acute needs proved crucial to saving lives.
- Robust early warning systems and pre-emptive action can also save lives, particularly when facing slow-onset emergencies. Early and holistic interventions by USAID/OFDA, USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP), and USAID/Ethiopia in 2015 and 2016 proved critical and contributed to preventing a catastrophic humanitarian emergency in Ethiopia.
- USAID/OFDA continues to explore new response modalities and other means to optimize resources and the positive impact on targeted beneficiaries. USAID/OFDA and the humanitarian community continue to assess and determine appropriate roles for responding to political unrest and widespread human rights violations in ECA, such as the ongoing crisis in Burundi.