

HEALTH SECTOR UPDATE



Health workers conduct a mental health community awareness activity in Briat town, Haute-Kotto Prefecture, Central African Republic. *Courtesy of International Medical Corps*

Improving Global Emergency Mental Health Care Response

Through the International Medical Corps (IMC), USAID/OFDA is supporting the development and dissemination of a mental health care toolkit for use in humanitarian settings. Mental health care gaps occur frequently in emergencies due to a confluence of common factors, such as health facility damage, limited health care staff availability, and high levels of need. In line with UN World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, the IMC toolkit facilitates the training of emergency health professionals in the frontline management of priority mental health conditions to enable the integration of mental health into primary health care.

In collaboration with other mental health care stakeholders, WHO has developed global guidelines for the integration of mental health in humanitarian settings that contain basic, evidence-based treatment protocols aimed at primary health care providers for the identification and management of priority mental health conditions. Organizations implementing humanitarian health programs are often unfamiliar with how to integrate these global mental health care guidelines into primary health care. With the development of this toolkit, humanitarian health organizations will be able to provide much-needed mental health services as part of their general package of health services in emergencies.

The USAID/OFDA-supported IMC toolkit will have easy-to-follow steps and associated resources for mental health–primary health care integration in humanitarian settings worldwide, including acute, chronic, rural, and urban disasters. The toolkit will provide essential guidance to implementing organizations, as well as donors and host government representatives. The dissemination of the mental health toolkit will improve the quality of mental health programs in emergencies and increase access to effective, holistic, and sustainable care.

Sector Overview

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) remains at the forefront of the humanitarian community's efforts to mitigate mortality and morbidity during crises by supporting a wide range of health interventions. USAID/OFDA-supported initiatives include life-saving medical assistance, immunization campaigns, disease surveillance systems, vector-control activities, and capacity-building trainings for local health workers. Recognizing the inextricable link between health and other core humanitarian sectors, particularly nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene, USAID/OFDA supports integrated programs that simultaneously address multiple determinants of health in emergencies, such as access to health facilities, food security, and the availability of safe drinking water.

In Fiscal Year 2016, USAID/OFDA provided approximately \$260 million to mitigate and prevent the adverse effects of natural and man-made crises on the health of affected populations. The total included more than \$255 million for health interventions in 25 countries and approximately \$5.4 million for global and regional health initiatives.



Health workers participate in an IAWG-TP reproductive health training in Dakar, Senegal. *Photo by USAID*

Reducing Reproductive Health Service Gaps in Crises

In addition to integrated mental health care services, effective emergency health response must include high-quality, life-saving reproductive health services integrated with primary health care services. Many practitioners and service providers operating in complex humanitarian response environments lack sufficient training, tools, and strategies to facilitate the provision of quality services, including reproductive health care. There is a critical, worldwide need for actionable data to better understand how to design effective, high-impact programs focused on improving service delivery in humanitarian settings and what level of programming is feasible in crises. Therefore, USAID/OFDA is funding the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) to support efforts led by the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises Training Partnership (IAWG-TP) to build an evidence base for shifting capacity development strategies for reproductive health training to national training institutions, and subsequently onward to field-level service providers at the onset of a crisis. The USAID/OFDA contribution is supporting impact assessments of nine IAWG-TP-supported trainings in Burkina Faso, Nepal, and South Sudan—three countries that have experienced large-scale displacement due to conflict and natural disaster. In partnership with national research bodies and training institutions in each country, the WRC program will evaluate and monitor the outreach training delivery model and build evidence-based methods to increase the quality of reproductive health service training in emergencies.

Strengthening Global Health Cluster Capacity

The 2016 Health Cluster Strategic Response Plan targets 69.5 million people for health assistance. USAID/OFDA support is strengthening the global capacity of health clusters—the coordinating bodies for humanitarian health activities, comprising UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders—to ensure that emergency health assistance delivery is effective and accountable. The USAID/OFDA contribution, which targets WHO and approximately 300 other cluster members, will bolster emergency health action in countries with officially activated health clusters or cluster-like coordination mechanisms. The project aims to address the health consequences of emergencies through responsive, effective, efficient, and accountable health cluster coordination in at least 24 countries. Outcomes will include strengthened information management capacity and practice within health clusters, increased WHO understanding and fulfillment of cluster lead agency responsibilities, and improved quality of health cluster response through systematic knowledge management.

Providing Emergency Health Care Services to Conflict-Affected People in Yemen

USAID/OFDA is supporting WHO, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration, UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and NGO partners to provide emergency health care services to conflict-affected people in Yemen, where more than 80 percent of the population require humanitarian assistance, according to the UN. Despite insecurity and other access constraints, USAID/OFDA-supported organizations are delivering health care to people in need in 19 Yemeni governorates, responding to dire health needs that are exacerbated by poor nutrition conditions and a collapsing national health care system. The USAID/OFDA partners are delivering life-saving assistance, including supporting hospitals, clinics, and mobile health teams; conducting health and nutrition education sessions; providing antenatal, post-natal, and reproductive health care for vulnerable women; providing immunizations and treatment of communicable diseases; and supporting disease surveillance to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks.