



WASH RESPONSE HELPS STABILIZE FRAGILE REGIONS IN AFRICA

Emergency WASH Response in Africa with the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

Duration: Ongoing

Challenge

In times of crisis, whether natural or conflict-induced, affected communities are more susceptible to illness and death from waterborne diseases, such as diarrhea and cholera, caused by a lack of safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), which responds to slow- and rapid-onset disasters and complex emergencies, invested more than \$103 million in FY 2016 for WASH programs aimed at helping vulnerable populations in 23 countries worldwide, the majority of which are in Africa.

Opportunity

Prolonged conflict in South Sudan has resulted in large settlements of internally displaced people. WASH interventions implemented by USAID/OFDA partners, such as Samaritan's Purse and UNICEF, are helping to alleviate public health risks in these settlements by improving access to safe drinking water, promoting better sanitation and hygiene, and building much needed waste management facilities. Many of USAID/OFDA's partners integrate WASH and nutrition activities to more effectively treat malnourished children. In

A female pump mechanic helps repair a borehole in Jebel, South Sudan. The borehole was brought to her community through the USAID PROPEL project. Photo credit: USAID PROPEL Project

addition to aiding those living in settlement camps, USAID is supporting WASH activities designed to stop the spread of cholera in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

USAID/OFDA partners also implement emergency WASH activities in response to drought. Below-average rainfall, exacerbated by the 2015–2016 El Niño climatic event, resulted in drought conditions throughout much of southern Africa beginning in 2015, causing poor harvests, food insecurity, livestock deaths, severe shortages of safe drinking water, and significant sanitation and hygiene problems. In 2016, USAID/OFDA partners responded to drought in Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe. WASH interventions included increasing access to safe drinking water for vulnerable households and livestock through the rehabilitation of boreholes, installation of community water tanks, and restoration of other water sources. USAID/OFDA partners also promoted health and hygiene education campaigns and distributed critical WASH items, including water treatment tablets, water storage containers, and soap.

"No matter what the cause of a disaster or crisis, responding to the water, sanitation, and hygiene needs of those affected is critical to saving lives," said USAID/OFDA Senior WASH Sector Advisor Melissa Opryszko.