

USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)

Southern Africa Disaster Risk Reduction Plan

2012 - 2014



USAID/OFDA's Mandate

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has the responsibility to provide foreign disaster assistance and to coordinate the response of the U.S. Government (USG) to disasters abroad.

USAID/OFDA's mandate is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of disasters.

Background

USAID/OFDA serves as the lead USG agency for international disaster response for natural and human-induced emergencies and provides assistance to help vulnerable populations prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from these emergencies. USAID/OFDA recognizes the need to develop a longer-term strategic approach that helps articulate funding and program priorities to allow for comprehensive disaster programming that reduces future humanitarian needs. This plan follows on the *Southern Africa Region Three-Year Strategy for the period 2009-2011*. This plan also aligns with the priorities outlined in the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*.

Rapid rural-to-urban migration and climate variability—issues that already affect development worldwide—affect most countries in the Southern Africa region. Rapid urbanization is leading to high-risk informal settlements in urban areas that are particularly vulnerable to disasters. Climate variability adversely affects agricultural livelihoods, the dominant livelihood system in the region.

In addition, a devastating combination of food insecurity, HIV/AIDS, and weak governance is driving the decline in development indicators, decreasing the resiliency of people in Southern Africa to manage shocks.

OFDA Coordination and Leadership

USAID/OFDA will select and implement disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities in coordination with other USG agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), U.N. agencies, other donors, higher education institutions, and regional governments and inter-governmental organizations. USAID/OFDA will work with other USG agencies and USAID offices to incorporate disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness initiatives into development and other international programs, including USAID's key Feed the Future and Global Climate Change initiatives.

Disaster Risk Reduction

The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyze and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events. (U.N. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction)

USAID/OFDA will lead regional DRR efforts by supporting applied research projects that evaluate and develop innovative, adoptable, and adaptable technologies for DRR and scalable pilot programs in multiple sectors. USAID/OFDA will support expansion of proven approaches to DRR through collaboration with implementing partners, regional governments, other donors, and international organizations.

Southern Africa Regional Context

Southern Africa¹ faces the combined dangers of HIV/AIDS, weak governance, and climate extremes, which have led to increasing vulnerability and fragility in the region. Each of these threats poses a major obstacle to Southern Africa's disaster-vulnerable populations, and in combination, the threats have generated a crisis on a regional scale that demands new approaches from humanitarian and development agencies. USAID has ongoing programs aimed at strengthening governance and combating HIV/AIDS. Mitigating the negative effects of climate extremes on lives and livelihoods is the focus of USAID/OFDA's regional DRR programs, which complement the aforementioned USAID climate change and food security initiatives.

Climate extremes represent the single largest factor reducing resilience in Southern Africa, where livelihoods and economies are highly sensitive to fluctuations. Climate shocks significantly affect livelihoods, natural resources, and socio-economic conditions, and can lead to migration and negative coping strategies. Repeated shocks erode communities' ability to fully recover, leading to increased fragility and vulnerability to subsequent disasters. Activities under this plan will increase resilience to weather-induced disasters, reducing the negative impact of these events and better preparing communities to respond to future events.

Although some parts of the region have registered marked improvements in cereal crop production, due largely to government subsidies, food and vulnerability assessments indicate that rural populations continue to face critical food shortages due to reliance on rain-fed agriculture and declining soil fertility. In response to these challenges, USAID/OFDA is supporting conservation agriculture, promoting improved seed varieties and crop diversification, and improving access to irrigation. These activities reduce the impact of droughts and improve food security for disaster-prone households. Community-based disaster risk management programs empower flood-prone communities to better manage seasonal flood risks, reducing losses and lessening the impact. USAID/OFDA plans to build on these successful approaches during the period covered by this plan.

In Madagascar and Zimbabwe, continued political tensions have limited government risk reduction capacity, and poor economic conditions have undermined household resilience to disasters. Displacement from Zimbabwe to neighboring countries continues to generate tension between migrant and local communities, particularly in South Africa. In Madagascar, political tensions have undermined economic growth and contributed to unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, heightening vulnerability to a variety of natural disasters. The ongoing challenges in both countries have heightened risks for disaster-prone communities and limited USAID/OFDA's ability to fully implement risk reduction programs.

¹ The OFDA Southern Africa Region includes Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

USAID/OFDA recognizes that DRR often requires a commitment to multi-year programming. The 2012-2014 plan will prioritize multi-year interventions in geographic areas at high risk to natural hazards and where communities have limited capacity to manage these risks. Support for DRR activities will be based on project goals and objectives and the capacity of organizations to implement programs.

Regional Assumptions

- Cyclical climate shocks will perpetuate or increase food insecurity.
- Cyclical human and livestock disease outbreaks will continue.
- Rising food and fuel prices will deepen poverty, reducing household resilience, especially in densely populated urban settlements.
- Migration within the region will increase instability and social tensions.
- Support for DRR programming will be sustained or increased.

Regional Constraints

- Inadequate investments and institutional capacity limit some governments' ability to meet the needs of at-risk communities.
- The private sector remains unable to create widespread sustainable economic growth.
- HIV/AIDS and other endemic illnesses will continue to erode household and community resilience.
- Inadequate availability of skilled labor will limit DRR programming options.
- Incorporating DRR into development activities remains challenging.
- Many livelihood opportunities are based on shrinking, limited natural resources.
- Chronically vulnerable households and groups requiring social protection have increasing needs as social safety net resources decline.

Priority Program Selection

USAID/OFDA recognizes the need to build on successful DRR programs in the region and develop sustainable and integrated capabilities in disaster risk and vulnerability reduction. This plan is consistent with global disaster reduction priorities reflected in the Hyogo Framework for Action and USAID/OFDA's mandate.

In the Southern Africa region, climate-induced hazards represent the primary risk to lives and livelihoods. As a result, USAID/OFDA's DRR programming will focus on managing risk, reducing impact, and strengthening recovery from drought, floods, and cyclones. USAID/OFDA will focus on strengthening agricultural livelihoods, managing environmental health concerns, and building capacity for risk management throughout the region.

USAID/OFDA will promote a region-wide culture of risk reduction through support of advocacy, knowledge management, and innovation. USAID/OFDA will champion this approach at all levels through the activities outlined below and its leadership role in the region. USAID/OFDA understands the importance of women in increasing community resilience to

disasters and will support gender-sensitive programming addressing the goal and priorities below by promoting the equitable participation of women and vulnerable groups in activities and identifying and mitigating the potential negative program impacts on these individuals.

This plan does not focus on USAID/OFDA's emergency response activities. USAID/OFDA's response to natural disasters and complex emergencies may encompass the full spectrum of its technical sectors and will be based on damage and needs assessments. If a large-scale response to a disaster is necessary, USAID/OFDA may deploy a Disaster Assistance Response Team, comprising specialists trained in a variety of disaster relief skills.

Goal

Reduce risk through enhanced institutional and community capacities to respond to and mitigate the effects of disasters, strengthen the resiliency of vulnerable communities, and reduce exposure to hazards.

Priorities

1. Ensure that DRR is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.

Activity – Promote DRR: Support high-level consideration of DRR by governments, multilateral institutions, and international organizations, by strengthening a range of institutions engaged in DRR. Support advocacy efforts by national and regional civil society groups to instill a culture of risk reduction while building grassroots demand for DRR.

2. Identify, assess, and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.

Activity – Early Warning Systems: USAID/OFDA supports the development of strong early warning systems for floods, droughts, and cyclones. USAID/OFDA will support institutions in the region to build capacity with host government counterparts to improve early warning systems and will look for additional opportunities to support programs that ensure relevant early warning information reaches at-risk communities.

Activity – Enhancing Data and Information Management Capabilities: USAID/OFDA will support the provision of management services that improve access and analysis of disaster-related data and information to support improved policy, planning, and preparedness.

3. Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.

Activity – Capacity Building: USAID/OFDA will support capacity-building efforts of Southern African organizations engaged in response management and DRR at regional, national and community levels. This activity includes support to current university-based efforts, as well as think tanks, research organizations, and training institutions.

Activity – DRR Curriculum Development: USAID/OFDA will support development of school curricula on disaster awareness, preparedness, and risk reduction, prioritizing countries with a high risk profile and commitment to integrating DRR in education systems. Curricula will include information on children’s unique vulnerabilities in disasters and measures to address them.

4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.

Activity – Agricultural Practices and Market Linkages: Given the dominant role of agriculture in the region, USAID/OFDA will promote practices that minimize the effects of disasters and lead to the reduction of crop losses and negative economic impacts resulting from droughts and floods. Reducing agricultural losses leads to greater economic gains and a stronger asset base, enhancing resilience to subsequent shocks. Basic business and marketing activities will be incorporated in agricultural programs to ensure sustainable resilience. Activities may include improving availability of and access to conservation agriculture, drought tolerant crop varieties, quality seed, crop diversification, small scale irrigation, basic business training, and livestock management practices.

Activity – Improving Drinking Water Quality: Rainwater can provide an alternative to flood-contaminated water or supplement inadequate groundwater supplies. USAID/OFDA will promote the practice of household and community rainwater catchment through scalable pilot programs. In addition, USAID/OFDA will support the adoption of water quality management procedures, which can raise the quality of water from unprotected sources to acceptable levels. Activities will include skills training, capacity building, technical support, and mentoring for point-of-use household water treatment products, vital to ensuring successful drinking-water quality management in countering the risk of water contamination.

Activity – Environmental Health Management: USAID/OFDA will support community-based activities that mitigate adverse health consequences due to flooding, with priority given to areas with a history of recurrent flooding. Activities may include promotion of Community-Led Total Sanitation, improved drainage, and good hygiene practices.

5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective responses at all levels.

Activity – Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM): Working with at-risk urban and rural communities and NGOs, USAID/OFDA will support programming using participatory methods that focus on disaster risk assessment, risk management planning, community mobilization and training, and community-managed implementation. These activities are designed to reduce losses, strengthen asset protection, and enable rapid recovery.

Activity – Training on CBDRM: USAID/OFDA will assume an active role in promoting a community-based approach to DRR by supporting training of implementing partners, lessons-learned workshops, and dissemination of best practices. USAID/OFDA will ensure that all community-based DRR programs use CBDRM to strengthen local-level adoption and sustainability.