

SUCCESS STORY

Increasing Water Access in Ethiopia

Fiscal Year 2011, the USAID rapid response program benefited more than 400,000 people.



Photo: IRC

USAID-supported water source provides clean water in Afar Region.

USAID's strategic approach integrates traditional humanitarian activities with broader development strategies, meeting emergency WASH needs while simultaneously increasing investments to promote sustainable water access.

As a result of the Horn of Africa's worst drought in 60 years, more than 4.8 million people in Ethiopia require urgent humanitarian assistance. When rains are scarce, wells and river beds dry up, forcing inhabitants to walk to crowded water sources far from their villages. Consumption of contaminated water and a lack of sufficient water contribute to the spread of diarrhea and other waterborne diseases in drought-affected communities.

Since August 2008, USAID's flexible support to a rapid response program (RRP) in Ethiopia has enabled partners implementing ongoing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) initiatives to expand activities to meet escalating drought-related humanitarian needs as they arise. For instance, in June 2011, when an unexpected volcanic eruption on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border contaminated water sources in drought-affected Afar Region, a USAID partner provided approximately 2,400 households with 20 liters of clean water daily for 60 days in the most-affected Bidu and Kori districts.

USAID coordinates its emergency program in Ethiopia with long-term WASH interventions that improve access to safe and sustainable water sources. Through the USAID-supported RRP, partners have rehabilitated community water points and livestock watering holes, constructed rainwater harvesting systems, trained health workers in emergency hygiene promotion, and distributed water treatment chemicals to drought-prone communities. The creation of clean water sources close to villages particularly benefits women and children, who usually bear responsibility for collecting water for the family.

USAID remains committed to enhancing drought-affected local communities' water resources by providing sustainable access solutions, thereby reducing the need for emergency interventions when crisis occurs. Through the RRP, and other programs like it, USAID is promoting sustainability and enhancing populations' resiliency to withstand the effects of drought and other natural shocks endemic to the Horn of Africa region.