



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



COLLABORATE • LEARN • ADAPT

## CASE COMPETITION

Collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) have long been a part of USAID's work. USAID staff and implementing partners have always sought ways to better understand the development process and USAID's contribution to it, to collaborate in order to speed and deepen results, to share the successes and lessons of USAID's initiatives, and to institute improvements to programs and operations. Through this case competition, USAID and its LEARN mechanism seek to capture and share the stories of those efforts. To learn more about the CLA Case Competition, visit the USAID Learning Lab at [usaidlearninglab.org/cla-case-competition](https://usaidlearninglab.org/cla-case-competition)

# How to Achieve Strategic Integration of Humanitarian and Development Funding

*Issa Bitang, USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance*

### What is the general context in which the story takes place?

Somalia is a fragile state characterized by frequent clan conflict, recurrent drought, and a protracted war between Al Shabaab and the allied forces of the Federal Government of Somalia, assisted by the African Union Mission in Somalia. The nascent government institutions and the fragmented regional administrations have little capacity to provide services meeting basic needs. In 2011–2012, Somalia experienced severe food insecurity and famine. At the peak of the crisis, 4 million people were in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, and it is estimated that 258,000 people died due to food insecurity.

In the wake of crises in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, USAID recognized that new and innovative ways must be found to enhance the ability of individuals, households, and communities to withstand recurrent shocks and stresses and to adapt to a changing environment. The USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), together with USAID/Somalia, recognized the need for coordinated efforts around common challenges, and the potential benefits of greater collaboration in Somalia. They began talks about how to pool resources to build resilience and reverse the slow but steady erosion of assets and limited government services that left the population vulnerable when the 2010–2011 drought hit. The result was three innovative USAID programs designed and funded collaboratively between FFP, OFDA, and USAID/Somalia to enhance household and community resilience in Somalia.

### What was the main challenge/opportunity you were addressing with this CLA approach or activity?

The release of USAID's resilience policy and program guidance in December 2012 called for USAID staff to explore the possibilities for layering, integrating, and sequencing humanitarian and development efforts with the goal of building resilience. Similarly, various United Nations agencies and NGOs began examining their approaches to addressing recurrent humanitarian needs in Somalia, and formulating new approaches informed by lessons learned following the 2011–2012 crisis. Some of the new approaches crafted and later adopted were multi-year responses in place of short-term assistance, increasing coordination by breaking down institutional barriers, and blending humanitarian and development investments.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Cognizant of these innovations, and in response to encouragement from USAID leadership, a team of USAID humanitarian and development staff from the field and Washington, D.C., came together in Nairobi in mid-2013 to brainstorm. The team was comprised of representatives from the Africa Bureau, FFP, OFDA, USAID/Somalia, the Bureau of Food Security, and the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation. The group worked together to outline current humanitarian and development programs in Somalia and to identify opportunities to blend programming. Out of these productive discussions emerged the idea of jointly funding programs that would layer, integrate, and sequence USAID humanitarian and development interventions in a single award. This would allow USAID to address in a more coordinated manner the immediate short-term needs in this highly complex environment, while simultaneously over a longer time frame, working to strengthen individual, household, and community capacity to withstand shocks.

The team faced many challenges in developing this unique award. There was no model, template, or official guidance on how to develop this type of joint procurement involving three funding sources, each with its own authorities and requirements. USAID humanitarian and development funding is subject to different legal authorities in the Somalia context. As an example, only humanitarian activities are eligible for coverage under the Office of Foreign Assets Control license that allows humanitarian assistance programs to engage in certain transactions otherwise prohibited by U.S. government sanctions. As a result, the award had to focus on locations not controlled by Al Shabaab, leading to complex discussions around geographic target areas. In addition, there were concerns about whether humanitarian organizations would be interested in competing for this type of award without legal assurances, and whether development organizations would have the requisite teams to engage in a mixture of humanitarian and development activities.

Furthermore, the uniquely complex context in Somalia made it difficult to design an award addressing recurrent shocks that are cyclical and climatic, and that occur in an environment defined by conflict, insecurity, and a collapsed government. Much of Somalia remained exceedingly unstable and/or insecure, and conditions were highly variable and localized across the country. Preparing to invest in a resilience program was only logical or appropriate in select geographic areas, which required extensive discussion among the three offices.

#### **Describe the CLA approach or activity employed.**

Following the week of in-depth brainstorming session in mid-2013 among USAID humanitarian and development stakeholders, USAID/Somalia began drafting the Enhancing Resilience and Economic Growth Annual Program Statement (APS). OFDA took on a coordination role in the development of the APS, with active participation from FFP and USAID/Somalia. FFP, OFDA, and USAID/Somalia collectively decided that OFDA would manage the three resulting awards. Additionally, the three offices agreed to form a project oversight committee in the field, in support of the OFDA agreement officer's representative in Washington, to provide daily activity management, build constructive relationships, and provide ongoing feedback to implementing partners.

USAID encouraged partners to try innovative approaches to increase the ability of households and communities to adapt to recurrent and ongoing crises; build on existing ecological, economic, and social capital; and promote learning for members of the targeted communities as well as the broader community of stakeholders. FFP, OFDA, and USAID/Somalia agreed to put a combination of development and emergency funding into one solicitation, with the intention of issuing multi-year awards that would address the need for more extensive programming beyond immediate relief and recovery in areas where conventional long-term development activities would not be viable. The team consulted extensively with internal and external experts on resilience in order to develop the APS together and develop a program that would achieve the objectives of all three offices by integrating, layering, and sequencing related activities.

While FFP and OFDA had experience jointly funding humanitarian assistance programs in Somalia, the inclusion of elements to meet USAID/Somalia's development objectives and funding was a new approach. It took a significant amount of time, effort, and patience to collectively navigate internal USAID systems. The team worked — and sometimes struggled — to reach agreement or compromise on issues related to conceptual differences or office-specific preferences and expectations. Much of this debate occurred during the drafting of the APS document and during the program review stage.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



The resulting three multisectoral programs, awarded in late FY 2014, are designed to enhance the resilience of targeted households and communities in Somalia. These three-year programs, valued at \$13.5 million in total, strategically integrate USAID's humanitarian and development funding. The programs target 67 communities in four regions, representing approximately 145,000 beneficiaries. Conflict and insecurity, weak governance, and inefficient natural resource management negatively impact people's livelihoods in these communities, and increase people's vulnerability to shocks and stresses, especially among women.

**Were there any special considerations during implementation (e.g., necessary resources or enabling factors)?**

As this was the first time that all three offices had committed to jointly fund and manage programming, the logistics required in implementing joint solicitation and management became complicated at times. Application reviews involved a two-tiered approach, with each office designating one scoring member to the selection committee and other technical experts from each office providing comments and recommendations. At least 40 people signed non-disclosure agreements related to the APS, and at least 17 reviewers provided substantive feedback at the concept paper stage. Reviewers included field staff; agriculture, markets, and gender experts; and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialists. Moreover, each office used a funding stream with different authorities. The teams from each office had to develop a common frame of reference regarding how budgets would be allocated, which office should formally manage the award, and how the designated agreement officer's representative would communicate with the other offices when decisions were required.

Another challenge was building consensus. It likely took longer to complete the joint design, solicitation, and procurement stages than it would have for each office on its own, particularly compared with OFDA and FFP emergency programs. Together, the three offices took six months to mobilize and draft the APS document, and another eight months to review submissions and issue awards. Protracted debates were often due to conceptual differences or office-specific preferences and expectations — and sometimes due to the sheer number of people involved. Ultimately, the final products (the APS document and the approved awards) reflect consensus, but there was a cost, in time and energy that could have been spent elsewhere.

One crucial factor in the success of this collaborative effort was the relationship that existed among core team members in the three offices in Washington and in Nairobi. The core team members had established relationships based on information sharing prior to this effort, and they were able to build on and strengthen those relationships over the course of the collaboration. Since the outset, some of the core team members have changed and more will likely change before the end of the awards in 2017. It will be important for the three offices to continue to reinforce the importance of collaboration and a sense of being part of a team.

Another success factor was a strong sense of ownership. At the outset, it was USAID leadership, up to the Assistant Administrator level, that encouraged OFDA, FFP, and USAID/Somalia to explore the possibility of doing resilience programming. But following the brainstorming session in mid-2013, the push to pursue joint procurements came from working-level staff who saw the effort through. Within the APS team, all three offices felt a sense of ownership over the process and the resulting awards. USAID and the implementing partners understand that even though the awards list an OFDA award number, all three offices are equal stakeholders.

**What have been the outcomes, results, or impacts of the activity or approach to date?**

Since FFP, OFDA, and USAID/Somalia collaborated to jointly fund the resilience awards, the humanitarian- and development-funded activities are intentionally layered, integrated, and sequenced in the same communities, and often the same households.

The three jointly funded Somalia APS awards are nearly one year into implementation. They have conducted participatory risk assessments in target communities, provided leadership and governance training to community groups, and supported target communities in the creation of community-owned development plans. These community-led planning efforts will serve as the foundation for a range of multisectoral interventions over the next two years of implementation, including livelihood strengthening and diversification, natural resource management, savings groups, nutrition messaging, community-led early warning, and community dialogue around local sources



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



of conflict. The resilience awards will use cash-for-work or provision of assets to affected households as a recovery measure during lean seasons or in response to localized shocks.

The team has made a concerted effort to set itself up for robust learning that focuses on resilience measurement to better understand and support households' capacity to recover from natural and human-induced shocks; to augment the evidence base of what works and delivers results; to complement early warning systems; and to provide an idea of the scale of responses required to be effective in building resilience. To inform potential future USAID resilience programming, each award has a strategic objective related to learning; each awardee worked with M&E specialists from FFP, OFDA, and USAID/Somalia to develop robust M&E plans and learn best practices during an eight-day M&E workshop; each award will be included in a FFP-funded external baseline evaluation of the program; and each award is monitored by a third-party monitoring program funded by USAID/Somalia.

### **What were the most important lessons learned?**

Other USAID staff considering a joint procurement that blends humanitarian and development funding should:

- Evaluate *the strength of the relationships among the staff involved* and maintain constant and open lines of communication between offices.
- Foster *a sense of ownership among the staff involved*. Buy-in from working level staff can lead to a meaningful sharing of responsibilities in the design and management of joint awards.
- Ensure that the staff involved have *sufficient time to pursue consensus-building*. For example, it is not suitable for a rapid procurement given the time required to jointly develop the scope, objective, technical design, and appropriate geographic targeting, and to work through the procedural intricacies of combining such different funding streams.
- Ensure *technical resources are available* to help the team follow all funding and reporting requirements.
- Focus on *enhancing synergies and cross-sectoral approaches* among implementing partners.
- Establish *a strong coordination mechanism at the working level* by leveraging the comparative advantages of humanitarian and development offices, including sectoral expertise, field presence, and institutional capacity. The experience of the three offices under this APS demonstrates that it takes leadership, resources, time, expertise, and a strong willingness to compromise to set up a strong basis for joint collaboration.
- Establish *a collaborative framework at the outset* and prioritize the *agreement of participating offices on strategic outcomes*. At the outset of a joint initiative, all offices (leadership and working-level staff) should agree and develop an overarching strategic framework — namely, a joint results framework — and program M&E framework. This requires the articulation of the various elements and components of resilience into a coherent, flexible strategy that builds on a solid analytical framework and the comparative advantages of the collaborating offices. Doing so has the potential to rapidly enhance joint accountability among participating offices. It also enables a rapid move from strategy to implementation.

### **Any other critical information you'd like to share?**

Our hope is that this initiative and others like it will help the agency put action behind the words in its "Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis" policy guidance. Our Somalia Resilience initiative attempts to channel the core components of the resilience policy through joint problem analysis; strategic coordination; layered, integrated, and sequenced programming; and robust learning. It is important to focus on multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approaches that sequence and layer humanitarian and development efforts by establishing a common ground between various sectoral interventions. Effective integration requires more than simply combining cross-sectoral interventions to achieve expected synergies and outcomes from programming in one sector that interacts with—and depends on— interventions in another sector. Intentional and strategic integration can address both emergency needs and longer-term development issues at the same time in places where shocks are frequently recurring rather than assuming that emergency and development activities must take place on a chronological continuum as was typical in past relief to development or transitional programming.