USAID/OFDA FY 2018 WASH sector funding supported activities in 39 countries, including Burma, Haiti, Nigeria, and Yemen.
USAID/OFDA also provided emergency WASH assistance to populations affected by Hurricane Irma in Saint-Martin. The hurricane, which made landfall as a Category 5 storm on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, caused at least 12 fatalities, more than 110 injuries, and widespread, catastrophic damage to property and critical infrastructure. The storm also rendered the island’s sole water desalination plant inoperable, leaving Saint-Martin’s estimated 40,000 residents without a reliable source of safe drinking water. After establishing temporary water treatment plants on the island, USAID/OFDA partnered with the French Red Cross in Saint-Martin to establish water distribution points, as well as procure and distribute emergency hygiene kits, ensuring access to safe drinking water and basic hygiene supplies for many vulnerable communities.

**Delivering Emergency Water Assistance to Ar Raqqah City**

Following the recapture of Syria’s Ar Raqqah city from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in late October 2017, civilians returning to Ar Raqqah found severe damage to the city’s infrastructure, including Ar Raqqah’s water treatment stations, water distribution network, and electrical grid. In the absence of an operational public water system, privately operated water tankers began supplying returnees to Ar Raqqah with untreated water from the Euphrates River, increasing the risk of waterborne illness transmission. To improve access to safe drinking water, USAID/OFDA partnered with an organization to post technicians at strategic points along the Euphrates River to disinfect river water carried by the tankers. By mid-March 2018, USAID/OFDA was supporting the treatment of an average of 2,800 cubic meters of river water per day—sufficient to provide approximately 70,000 people with 40 liters of safe drinking water per person each day.

USAID/OFDA partners also prioritized the rehabilitation of one of Ar Raqqah’s main water stations, including repairing the station’s electrical control panels, generator, pumps, valves, and other infrastructure damaged by conflict. In addition to repairs, USAID/OFDA partners installed new equipment to chlorinate and disinfect water and provided local station managers with long-term supplies of chlorine, fuel, and oil. By January 2018, the rehabilitated station was providing 6,000 cubic meters of safe drinking water per day to residents of eastern Ar Raqqah, as well as to six water collection points used by public and private water tankers, reaching an estimated 75,000 people with 40 liters of safe drinking water per person per day.

**USAID/OFDA Support for Hygiene Behavior Change Research**

Poor hygiene behaviors increase the risk of diarrheal diseases—a major cause of morbidity and mortality in humanitarian emergencies. While there has been considerable research on motivations to change hygiene behaviors in development contexts, similar research has been limited in humanitarian settings. Since FY 2016, USAID/OFDA has funded the NGO Action Against Hunger, the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to implement WASH ‘Em—a program that adapts evidence-based research on handwashing from the development sector to emergency contexts. For example, USAID/OFDA-funded research in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Iraq identified changes to handwashing behaviors as populations experienced different phases of displacement—important evidence to support the design of more effective humanitarian WASH programs. Using findings like these, WASH ‘Em researchers are providing evidence-based tools and recommendations to support the design of more effective behavior change programs to promote handwashing.

USAID/OFDA CONTACT: USAID/OFDA WASH Team, OFDAwatsan@usaid.gov