

**Chairman Ros-Lehtinen
Questions for the Record
USAID Assistant Administrator Alexander
HFAC MENA 4-13-2016**

QUESTION 3 AND 4:

The total amount of U.S. assistance provided in humanitarian assistance to individuals impacted by the conflict in Syria is over \$5 billion. In previous hearings, witnesses have stated that aid is often delivered using networks of volunteers in Syria and that U.S. agencies rely on managing programs remotely and cross-border operations. What requirements or specific policies do we have in place with respect to vetting volunteers or networks we rely on to deliver that assistance, and what types of monitoring activities are in place to ensure accountability of assistance delivery?

Does the U.S. government keep track of fraud or diversion in our Syrian humanitarian assistance response, and if so, what percentage of deliveries have been lost due to fraud or diversion?

ANSWER:

Diversion is never an acceptable cost of doing business. USAID takes the loss and diversion of assistance—no matter the modality—very seriously. USAID’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has reported that, of the approximately \$1.1 billion provided for the Syrian humanitarian response between FY 2015 and FY 2016 to date, roughly one-tenth of one percent has been lost to diversion.

The operating environment in Syria and the extended response to this crisis have created complexities that we have never before seen. Thus, there is acknowledged risk, but also several learning opportunities that have already been realized and improvements institutionalized into processes to prevent future occurrences.

USAID works closely with its partners to collect performance and situational data to monitor activities and gather information from different sources to verify that assistance is reaching targeted areas and beneficiaries. Agency staff closely and systematically tracks this information, and follows up promptly on any reported issues. Partners are required to provide regular program updates on the progress of their activities and any security concerns, and to report any diversions, seizures, or losses immediately. Additionally, the Agency uses a variety of approaches to verify that aid is reaching its intended beneficiaries, including geo-tagged photos and videos of distributions, multiple independent field monitors, and feedback hotlines for beneficiaries.

The USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) in Jordan and Turkey meets regularly with partners to discuss programming, issues that impede humanitarian activities, and partners’ monitoring and risk mitigation mechanisms. The DART also meets with the broader humanitarian community and communicates directly and indirectly with Syrian organizations that provide added layers of ground truth to partner reporting. The DART attends cluster and donor coordination meetings, which provide additional opportunities to triangulate information about partners’ performance.

In addition, USAID uses a third-party monitoring system to verify and provide independent confirmation of a number of USAID programs. Through independent, field-based monitoring of activities, verification of outputs and monthly progress reporting, the third party mechanisms supply USAID with an additional level of assurance – similar to the role field visits provide for USAID monitoring activities in more stable environments – while also contributing to program learning.

The U.S. Government humanitarian response inside Syria is coordinated by the Middle East Crisis Response (MECHR) Management Team, which is inclusive of both USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) and USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). USAID staff in Washington, D.C. also maintain regular contact with our humanitarian partners, including United Nations (U.N.) agencies, other international organizations, and NGOs, concerning their assistance activities in Syria. In addition, USAID leadership regularly engages with U.N. agency emergency directors and other senior U.N. staff in a variety of fora, including Emergency Directors Group meetings, Syria Top Donor Group meetings, and other events.

As with diversion, USAID has a zero tolerance policy for fraud and abuse of American taxpayer resources and will take every measure at our disposal to recover misspent funds. USAID halted several humanitarian aid activities in Turkey based on information provided by an NGO implementer and USAID’s OIG. Given that these investigations are ongoing, we refer you to the OIG for any further information on their findings.