

# United States

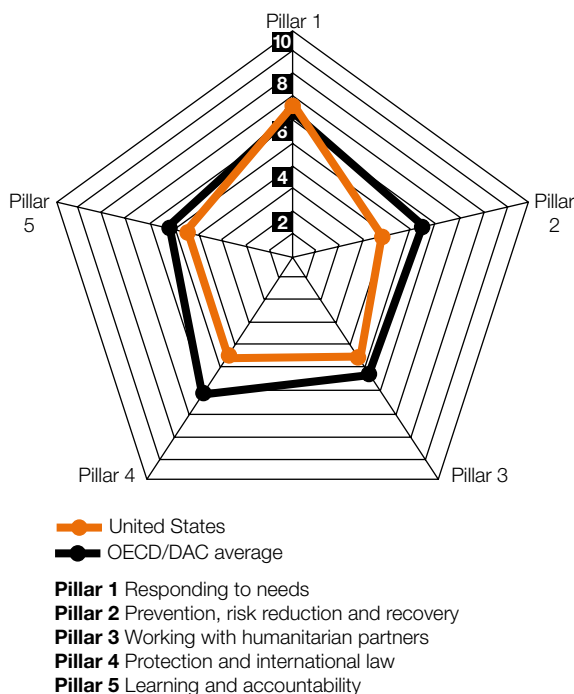
HRI 2010 ranking: 19th

## Policy framework

The United States (US) provides humanitarian assistance through the USAID Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), the Food for Peace Program (FFP) and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). OFDA coordinates disaster relief, operating with the smallest budget of the three departments and working mostly through NGOs. FFP handles nearly half of the humanitarian budget, while PRM is responsible for assistance to refugees and others affected by conflict. In addition, the Department of Defense established a Commander Emergency Response Program (CERP) to support US military commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan to "respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements".<sup>1</sup> Its budget now surpasses OFDA's. With its last White Paper dating back to 2004 and no single policy strategy currently existing, OFDA has been tasked with reforming the US approach to humanitarian aid to more effectively meet broad foreign policy priorities. The reform will build on the 2006 *Strategic Framework for U.S. Foreign Assistance*, which reoriented US humanitarian action towards a stronger integration of relief and development. In 2010, the US released a new development policy, but the humanitarian policy remains under review. An inter-departmental Working Group on

<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office. 23 June 2009. Available from: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08736r.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2010]

## HRI 2010 scores by pillar



\* The OECD/DAC average does not include scores for Austria, Greece or Portugal.

Preventing and Responding to Crises and Conflicts reviews the capacity needed for effective crisis prevention and response mechanisms. Although the US is the largest donor for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in terms of volume, in 2009 its ODA/GNI ratio was at a low 0.2%. This represented a slight increase over 2008 but was still far below the OECD/DAC donor average and the UN target of 0.7%. Humanitarian assistance allocations amounted to 17.7% of its ODA, or 0.031% of GNI.

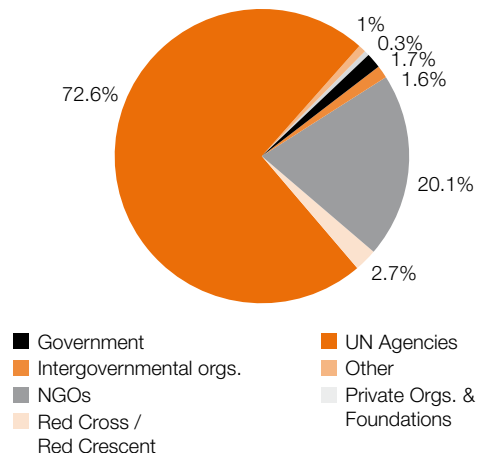
The US is actively involved in the *Good Humanitarian Donorship* (GHD) initiative and co-chaired the GHD group with Sweden in 2007-2008. The US has not yet developed a GHD implementation plan, although it pays considerable attention to the application of the *GHD Principles* in its training of refugee coordinators and other humanitarian staff at headquarter and field levels. Initiatives are also underway aimed at simplifying the reporting requirements for humanitarian agencies receiving US funds.

## Performance

The United States ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the HRI 2010. Based on the patterns of its scores, the US is classified as a Group 2 donor. Donors in this group tend to perform better overall in Pillar 1 (Responding to needs) and Pillar 5 (Learning and accountability), but poorer overall in the other pillars. Other donors in this group are Australia, Canada, European Commission, Germany, Greece (based on quantitative scores only), Ireland and the United Kingdom.

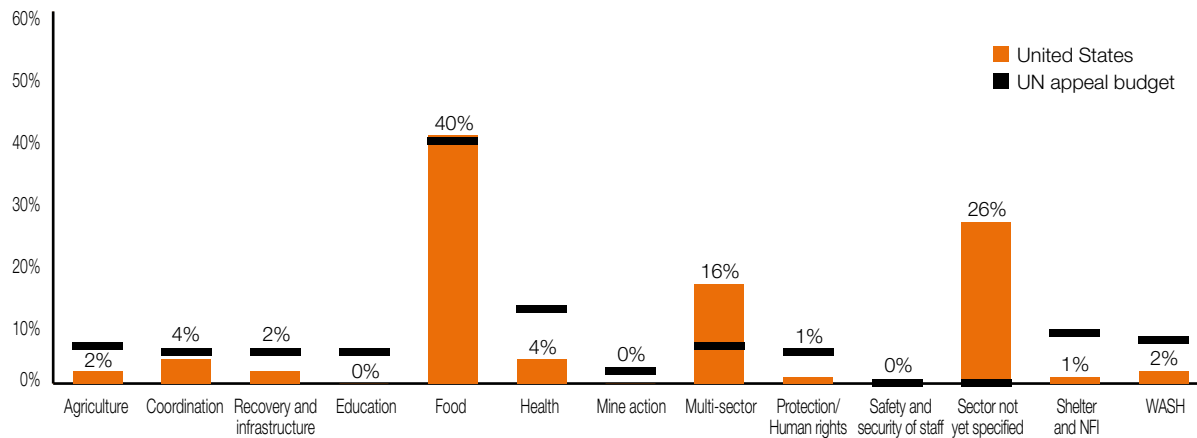
The US overall score was below the OECD/DAC and the Group 2 averages. However, it scored above the OECD/DAC and slightly above the Group 2 average in Pillar 1 where it reached its highest score. It scored below the OECD/DAC and group's average in the other four pillars. Its lowest score was in Pillar 2 (Prevention, risk reduction and recovery), with higher scores in Pillar 3 (Working with humanitarian partners), Pillar 4 (Protection and international law) and Pillar 5.

## Aid distribution by type of organisation



Source: OCHA/FTS October 2010.

## Sectoral distribution of funding to UN appeals, 2009 (%)



\* Distribution of donor funding to these sectors includes flows within and outside an appeal that has been reported to OCHA/FTS. This is compared to the “distribution of needs” based on the 2009 UN appeal budget allocation.  
Source: OCHA/FTS October 2010.

The US did best compared to its OECD/DAC peers in the indicators on *Participation in accountability initiatives*, *Timely funding to complex emergencies*, *Funding to NGOs*, *Funding based on level of vulnerability and to forgotten crises* and *Timely funding to sudden onset disasters*. Its scores were relatively the lowest in the indicators on *Un-earmarked funding*, *Funding and commissioning evaluations*, *Human rights law*, *Funding for reconstruction and prevention* and *Reducing climate-related vulnerability*.

### Recommendations

The US’ partners generally consider it to be performing well in Pillar 1 (Responding to needs). It also does well in the quantitative indicators that comprise Pillar 1. The exception is the qualitative indicator for *Impartiality and Independence of aid*, where the US receives below average scores.

- The US should engage with its partners to discuss their perceptions regarding the impartiality and independence of US humanitarian aid.

Flexibility of US funding arises as an area that deserves greater attention. Only 1% of US funding is not earmarked, compared to OECD/DAC average of 35%. The US also scored below average on survey questions related to flexibility of funding, conditionality of funding and appropriateness of reporting requirements.

- The United States is encouraged to find ways to provide a larger share of its funding without restrictive earmarking.

The US allocated 5% of its humanitarian aid to reconstruction and prevention, while Group 2 allocated 15%, and Group 3, 25%. In addition, the US was the OECD/DAC donor that allocated the least to risk mitigation mechanisms, with 0.4% of its ODA. Most Group 2 donors’ allocations range from 0.6% to 1.3%.

- The US should consider finding ways of increasing its support for risk mitigation, prevention and reconstruction.

US partners consider it a good donor in terms of facilitating humanitarian access. However, the US scores at or below average in the other indicators that comprise Pillar 4. The US received a low score in support for *International humanitarian law*. OECD/DAC donors allocated 0.005% of every million dollars of its GDP to the ICRC, the primary guardian of international humanitarian law. The US contributed only 0.002%. Among OECD/DAC donors, the US has also signed or ratified the least number of international humanitarian treaties. The US additionally received low scores in *Human rights law* and *Refugee law*.

- The US should review its policy on the signature of international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee treaties and consider finding ways of increasing its support of the ICRC and promoting IHL.

For more information, please see [www.daraint.org](http://www.daraint.org).

### Strengths

Indicator	Donor score	OECD/DAC donor average	% over average
Participation in accountability initiatives	6.83	4.73	44%
Timely funding to complex emergencies	5.64	4.35	30%
Funding to NGOs	5.36	4.40	22%
Funding based on level of vulnerability and to forgotten crises	7.26	6.11	19%
Timely funding to sudden onset disasters	7.96	6.97	14%

### Areas for improvement

Indicator	Donor score	OECD/DAC donor average	% below average
Un-earmarked funding	0.14	3.45	-96%
Funding and commissioning evaluations	0.24	4.25	-94%
Human rights law	1.90	6.25	-70%
Funding for reconstruction and prevention	1.29	4.12	-69%
Reducing climate-related vulnerability	2.69	7.19	-63%