



USAID/BHA Emergency Application Guidelines

For-Work Guidance

USAID/BHA 2024

Introduction

This document is supplementary guidance to BHA’s Emergency Application Guidelines and provides guidance on BHA’s intervention-specific guidance for commonly proposed for-work interventions.

This guidance indicates the type of work projects that BHA will consider using cash-for-work (CFW), vouchers-for-work, and food-for-work (hereafter, “for-work”) interventions for USAID/BHA funding in humanitarian contexts. For further guidance please see the For-Work keyword, and the Temporary Employment and Conditional Food Assistance sub-sectors, in the BHA Emergency Application Guidelines Sector Requirements.

The below is **not** an exhaustive list; BHA will review all for-work interventions individually upon application submission. (As noted in the Emergency Application Guidelines, partners must submit final lists of for-work interventions for BHA concurrence prior to beginning implementation if they were not already listed in the application.)

Broadly, for-work interventions are designed to provide short-term cash, vouchers, or food to disaster-affected populations. For-work interventions aim to establish or rehabilitate communal infrastructure that can be sustainably maintained after the program ends. USAID/BHA-funded for-work interventions should (1) Benefit the community as a whole; (2) Have a demonstrated link to the identified humanitarian need; (3) Not complete work that people would normally do on their own, such as repair their own shelters; (4) Not complete tasks that are recurring responsibilities of the community, such as trash pick-up; (5) Have a realistic plan in place for sustainable maintenance.

In general, USAID/BHA prefers low-cost, simple, and rehabilitation-focused for-work interventions reliant on unskilled labor over larger, more structurally complex, or new construction interventions that require skilled labor. Construction/rehabilitation interventions need proper engineering oversight, from design to building. If skilled or contract labor will be used alongside for-work participants, applicants are requested to clearly describe which tasks will be performed by for-work participants and which will be performed by other laborers.

Examples of for-work interventions, and accompanying guidance:

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
Animal carcass removal	Generally acceptable; see Issues	If needed; and if design and relevant worker safety/hygiene requirements are met. The application will be reviewed by the Agriculture Team in terms of the technical plan and public health

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
		and environment protection measures. Intervention should be included in the Livestock subsector.
Communal farming (e.g. clearing / preparing private or communal land specifically for farming; establishing or maintaining nutrition gardens)	Not typically acceptable	For-work farming may be acceptable under limited circumstances; for example, supporting joined-up watershed structures on farmland may be allowable as for-work. Assistance to communal farming can be considered under the Agriculture sector, but not as a for-work intervention.
Drainage repair/rehabilitation	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Requires technical oversight. Sustainability and appropriate maintenance must be addressed. Creation of new drainage systems may be considered but would require strong justification and engineering oversight (may also require use of skilled labor depending on proposed structure).
Fencing existing structures; rehabilitation of fencing (e.g. fencing for water points, schools, communal areas)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Must be for a genuinely communal asset. For example, for-work to fence a garden that only some people share is not appropriate.
Hygiene promotion	Not acceptable	While BHA does support incentives for volunteers, hygiene promotion is considered a skilled task and the selection criteria for volunteers should be different than those for for-work participants. Hygiene promotion interventions should be included separately under the relevant WASH sub-sector.
Irrigation Systems - New	Depends heavily on context	Requires engineering, climate, and needs justification, including results of relevant hydrological studies or other technical assessments, to demonstrate sufficient water supply. May also require involvement of other labor sources. The provision of irrigation materials and training, if needed, should be enough for farmers to provide unpaid labor, and all construction activities from design to building must be overseen by professional engineers and environmental compliance officers.

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
Irrigation Systems - Repairs to existing systems (e.g. cleaning out canals)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Only communal parts of canals (e.g. primary canal; not the tertiary canals that go to individual farms) can be targeted with for-work. Depends on the reason the canals need rehabilitation; plans for future maintenance; and the percentage of the community who benefits (if only the better-off farmers have access to canals, then it does not really benefit the whole community).
Markets - Building new market stalls	Depends heavily on context	Depends on the objective and justification, what percentage of market actors will benefit, as well as the size and scale of structure proposed. Brand-new marketplaces often do not work out. Repairing existing marketplace infrastructure may be appropriate, but building brand new stalls will only be considered on a case-by-case basis. If individual vendors will benefit (e.g. by getting their own stall or storage) they should contribute their own, unpaid, labor as well.
Markets - Repairing existing market or public infrastructure (e.g. market stalls, community spaces)	Depends heavily on context	Depends on the objective and justification, what percentage of market actors will benefit, as well as the size and scale of structure proposed. Regular, recurring market cleanup is not acceptable. Major repairs/upgrades may be approved on a case-by-case basis, but will require technical oversight and designs, as well as contracting of skilled labor in addition to for-work participation.
Natural Resource Management - Building land stabilizing structures, e.g. rock filled gabions, gully rehabilitation	Depends heavily on context	Designs should consider local availability of materials for sustained maintenance. May also be considered as a post-wildfire rehabilitation measure. Note that gabions are not generally supported as a flood-control/management measure. Masonry retaining walls may also not be generally appropriate as a for-work intervention as they require detailed engineering oversight in design and construction.
Natural Resource Management - Pasture reclamation and greening (bunds, zai holes, demi-lunes, invasive species removal, planting of species for greening, fire lines)	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Must be on communal land not used for crop production. Reseeding is not acceptable. Planting species that require significant follow-on care (such as tree seedlings) is not usually supported through for-work, as it is impossible to ensure appropriate care once the payments end.

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
Natural Resource Management - Hillside stabilization on degraded hillsides used for farming (bunds, swales, contour trenches, SALT, etc.)	Depends heavily on context	Joined-up watershed structures (swales, bunds, stone walls, etc.) on farmland may be allowed as for-work intervention as typically sloped / hillsides are erosion-prone, and may be inherently unstable. Oversight of work must be in conjunction with relevant authorities; and partners must consider how the users of the land will benefit from, and sustain, the structures.
Natural Resource Management - Riverbank reinforcements, 'dams,' flood walls, dikes, levees	Not typically acceptable	Please see Natural Hazards and Technological Risks (NHTR)/Hydrometeorological Hazards sub-sector requirements. If done incorrectly, such interventions may actually increase risks to people. Discussion with BHA technical experts would be needed. New construction of flood mitigation structures is rarely supported as a for-work intervention. Repair of existing structures may be considered on a case-by-case basis, but these interventions are generally not supportive for BHA humanitarian assistance activities.
Piecework / manufacturing items (e.g. NFIs)	Depends heavily on context	Only when there is an assessed humanitarian need for the items in question, and they will be distributed as part of the interventions. Not frequently supported. May be considered in contexts where cultural norms prohibit women from participating in for-work interventions outside of the home.
Plant Nurseries	Not typically acceptable	This is not a good fit for for-work. See "Pasture reclamation and greening" for further detail on tree seedlings.
School repair	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Generally acceptable as a for-work intervention, so long as proposed repairs do not require major structural or electrical work and can be performed without skilled labor.
Shelter construction or rehabilitation	Not typically acceptable	Generally not supported, whether on one's own shelter or on someone else's (creates a disincentive for people to repair their own homes, can undermine traditional labor-sharing arrangements, may not provide quality control). Vulnerable households with no access to labor can receive cash to hire qualified labor, accompanied by technical oversight for quality control and quality assurance. Light repair of buildings to be used as community spaces or for evacuation centers/emergency shelter may be considered, with technical oversight for quality control and quality assurance.
Training - vocational	Not typically acceptable	Vocational training typically should target those who wish to practice that vocation for a living; while meals or transport stipends are acceptable, paying 'sitting fees' is generally avoided. However, this is occasionally supported in rare contexts.

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
Transportation systems - Bridge construction (new)	Not typically acceptable	Generally not supported through for-work, due to technical requirements. See Issues under bridge and culvert repairs.
Transportation systems - Bridge and culvert repair or rehabilitation	Depends heavily on context	Depends on the work proposed but requires strong justification and will require involvement of skilled labor (not only for-work). May not be conducted using only for-work labor. New culvert construction may be considered depending on scale of work proposed. Proper engineering design and oversight and clear operations/maintenance plans must be ensured. Results of technical analysis or feasibility studies may be requested. Bridge repairs via for-work are not encouraged.
Transportation systems - Major road rehabilitation	Depends heavily on context	Requires strong justification and trained engineering oversight, as well as other labor mechanisms. See Issues for bridge/culvert repairs. Depends on context and objective; cost/scale; possible drainage, watershed, and related environmental impacts; plans for maintenance; and appropriateness of for-work (unskilled labor). May not be consistent with BHA emergency/humanitarian mandate if the project entails upgrading an unpaved road or other major construction activities.
Transportation systems - Minor road rehabilitation	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Depends on context and objective; cost/scale; possible drainage, watershed, and environmental impacts; and plans for maintenance. The sector in which road repair or rehabilitation is proposed should relate to the main objective for repairing the road (e.g. restoring market access, providing access in or to settlements). Typically can be performed without skilled labor.
Trash/garbage removal	Depends heavily on context and duration	Not typically acceptable for ongoing solid waste management but one-time community cleanup may be acceptable post-disaster.
Water source development - (including borehole or dug-well construction or rehabilitation)	Not acceptable	Not supported through for-work due to technical requirements.
Water systems - Desilting water pans or ponds (water catchment system rehabilitation)	Depends heavily on context	Depends on the reason that desilting is needed, the scope of the work (whether manual labor is appropriate), design requirements, and intended use. USAID/BHA does not generally support surface water runoff for household water supply.

Intervention	Suitability	Issues to Consider
WASH Infrastructure (drinking water supply, sanitation, and environmental health infrastructure)	Not acceptable	Not supported through for-work due to technical requirements. Interventions for drinking water supply, sanitation (including latrines), and environmental health infrastructure must be included separately under the relevant WASH sub-sector.
Wildfires - Preparedness & Suppression	Depends heavily on context	Requires strong justification and professional firefighter oversight and adherence to FAO's " Fire Management Guidelines " or ITTO's Guidelines on Fire Management in Tropical Forests . Depends on context and objective; cost/scale; possible personal protective equipment needs/maintenance plan, equipment training, and related wildfire prevention programming; plans for overall program maintenance; and appropriateness of for-work (unskilled labor) in highly dangerous settings. Best done as part of a wholistic fire management program; CFW for standalone fire-suppression activities can unintentionally incentivize the creation of more fires.
Wildfires - Post-Fire Rehabilitation	Generally acceptable; see Issues	Most rehabilitation work consists of areas addressed in other sections above; i.e. building gabions, vegetation replanting, berm construction, road clearing. Requires oversight that corresponds to the type of rehabilitation being addressed (e.g. NRM/erosion control must be coordinated with relevant authorities; gabions/berms/built infrastructure construction must receive relevant engineering oversight). Sustainability and appropriate maintenance must be addressed.

For Further Guidance:

Please refer to the BHA Emergency Application Guidelines Sector Requirements, in particular the For-Work keyword, for other requirements regarding for-work interventions (e.g. payment rate, protection concerns, delivery mechanism, beneficiary selection, etc.). Additional guidance is found in individual sectors, and in the cross-sectoral guidance and Climate, Natural Resource Management, Structures, and Water Resource Management keywords, among others. For specific payment modalities, please see the Cash, Voucher, and In-Kind Food keywords.