

EMPOWER

EMPOWERING LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON EMERGENCY RESPONSES IN THE CARIBBEAN AND SOUTH AMERICA

OVERVIEW

With the uptick in the frequency of emergencies affecting the Caribbean and South America in recent years—hurricanes, earthquakes, flooding, as well as refugees and health impacts resulting from the crisis in Venezuela—CRS is committed to working with local organizations in these zones to strengthen their capacity to respond. After an emergency, faith-based and local non-governmental organizations are often the first places people turn to for help. This project aims to strengthen the capacity of these local first responders to meet acute needs.

CRS is working with organizations from the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Cuba, Antilles, Jamaica, Grenada, Trinidad & Tobago) and South America (Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru). Most are national-level Caritas organizations who are well-positioned to replicate tools and trainings in the smaller Diocesan-level Caritas who are often on the front lines of an emergency response.

The goal of the EMPOWER program is that local organizations in the Caribbean and South America are able to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters.

CRS accompanies local partner organizations during emergency responses by providing surge capacity, or staff who can be seconded¹ to local organizations for a period of time both in-country and remotely.

In-country support is typically provided through secondment of CRS staff to local partner staff with specific Scopes of Work, such as:

- Designing, planning and carrying out needs assessments to inform technical designs of proposals;
- Supporting partners to position themselves for emergency donor funding from USG, the Caritas Internationalis (CI) network², and others;



CRS and Caritas Peru staff jointly conduct an assessment. Photo credit: Anna Hrybyk.

¹ Secondment refers to embedding CRS staff within a partner organization. Normally CRS bears the cost of seconding staff to a partner.

² Caritas Internationalis – Emergency Appeal process. This is an internal process that allows multiple Caritas members to support the response of the Caritas a crisis affected country. Members can provide funding, second technical support or accompaniment for response leadership.

- Supporting technical design and proposal writing to capture resources to scale up emergency responses;
- Improving internal controls to support partner eligibility for funding;
- Strengthening partner participation in emergency coordination platforms, and linking partners to other NGO/INGOs to promote joint, coordinated efforts. For example, in FY18, CRS supported both field level “activation” of the Collaborative Cash Delivery (CCD) platform, as well as promoted and facilitated the participation of our local partners in Colombia and Peru. Activities included joint assessments, joint cash programming strategy development, and access to technical support.

Remote support is also provided to partners in a variety of ways, including:

- Preparing for or following up on the TDY secondments;
- Supporting proposal finalization – e.g., responses to issues letters, packaging, pre-award letters, certifications and assurances;
- Coordinating with partners and other actors via Skype;
- Reviewing documents, such as job descriptions, policies and procedures, and concept notes.

During the EMPOWER Project Design workshop in July 2018, local partner organizations in the region jointly designed a Strategic Objective for the program – *Partners seek and garner funds and resources to respond to emergencies* – supported by the following Intermediate Results: 1) *Staff are competent in proposal writing and researching funding opportunities* and 2) *Partners have improved internal controls making them more eligible for funding*. These objectives indicate how supporting local partners to access funding is central to the EMPOWER program.

SUMMARY OF SUPPORT PROVIDED

The following table provides a summary of the accompaniment and capacity strengthening support CRS has provided to partners in the Caribbean and South America **from October 2017 to September 2018**.

FY 18 CRS Accompaniment and Capacity Strengthening				
Partner	Response	Donor/Amount	Total Cost of CRS Accompaniment ³	Type of Support
Caritas Antilles (covers the Lesser Antilles, including the British Virgin Islands and Dominica)	Hurricanes Irma and Maria Response	Caritas Internationalis (CI) Emergency Appeal - \$2,100,000	\$400,000	Technical assistance (TA) and secondment of Emergency Coordinators, Head of Operations, Shelter, WASH, Psychosocial Support, MEAL, Financial Management
		OFDA DRR – \$600,000 (Agreement Stage 11/18)	\$50,000	TA and secondment of Needs Assessment Coordinator, Technical Design and Proposal Writing

³ Accompaniment costs can be defined as TDY TA salary, hotel, per diem, and travel as well as some equipment purchases on behalf of partners. These costs do not include funds provided to partners by CRS to implement emergency programming. These cost also do not include remote support – consistent availability by skype for ongoing remote accompaniment.

Caritas Colombiana (SNPS)	Venezuela (VZ) Response	PRM - \$1,500,000 (approved 09/18) OFDA - \$2,900,000 (agrément stage 11/18)	\$200,000	Mix of secondment and remote support for Needs Assessment Coordinator, Proposal Writer, Technical Writers, Markets, WASH
Caritas de Venezuela	VZ Response	CI Emergency Appeal – \$2,000,000 LDSC - \$600,000		Secondment of Operations (Supply Chain) and MEAL
Caritas Brasileira	VZ Response	CI Emergency Appeal/LDSC - \$550,000 OFDA - \$1,600,000 (Submission to Washington pending 11/18)		Mix of secondment and remote support of Needs Assessment Coordinators, Shelter, WASH, Technical Writers, Proposal Writer, OFDA Pre Award Survey Coordinator, MEAL
Living Water Community, Trinidad and Tobago	VZ Response	CRS - \$200,000 PRM - \$1,500,000 (submitted 08/18)		Mix of secondment and remote support of Markets & Shelter Technical Coordinators, Emergency Fellow, MEAL, Protection, Education
Caritas del Peru	VZ Response	CI Emergency Appeal - \$100,000 OFDA - \$1,700,000 (Concept Note stage)	\$15,000	Mix of secondment and remote support of Needs Assessment Coordinators, MEAL, Markets
Caritas Ecuador	VZ Response	CI Emergency Appeal - \$100,000	\$15,000 (projected for FY19)	Mix of secondment and remote support of Needs Assessment Coordinators, MEAL, Markets

Several significant factors determine how much capacity strengthening support CRS provides to a partner:

- Self-identification by partner of need for support and formal request;
- Assessment of partner capacity prior to CRS accompaniment;
- The size of donor funding and scale of the response that the partner is managing.

Partner-led hurricane responses can benefit from multi-year accompaniment to meet basic Shelter/WASH needs as well as integrate DRR programming in preparation for the next hurricane season. Multi-year partnerships also build an essential level of trust and lead to greater efficiencies. The type of support and focus of accompaniment evolves over time based on ongoing regular review, assessment of progress made, and in response to any changes in programmatic focus. For example, in Venezuela, due to the increased reliance on an external supply of RUF/RUTF, CRS and Caritas Venezuela have identified the need for working together to improve warehousing practices.

Partner-led responses to the Venezuela crisis will likely be a multi-year response due to the protracted nature of nationwide economic collapse, therefore longer-term accompaniment through the next years of a primarily USG

funded response will be necessary. For Colombia and Brazil, accompaniment support has been primarily in the areas of business development and technical sectors of Markets and WASH.

As identified in CRS' recent research focused on the role of local organizations in refugee responses (see [The Missing Link](#)), multi-year partnerships are not only for capacity strengthening, but ensure critical trust-building and create efficiencies. Within the growing Venezuela crisis, CRS is committed to continuing with the support outlined above, but is also well-positioned to expand to include a wider range of local partners through a process in which local organizations who meet participation criteria may express interest. However, to both sustain critical partnerships with our current partners and/or expand to a wider group, CRS would require additional resources.

CRS' Global Commitment to Localization

The dynamic nature of the development and humanitarian environment has increased the urgency of local ownership of programming for greater effectiveness and sustainability. For international organizations like CRS to play a part in strengthening local institutions, we must shift from the role of implementer to supporter, from donor to partner. To build strong, diverse partnerships—the foundation of effective capacity strengthening—NGOs need people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to help their partners flourish. This requires a long-term commitment.

At the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016, CRS pledged the following commitments on behalf of our staff and local partners across 100 countries:

- Only go where needed and respond with local partners as a default. Invest at least US\$8 million in increasing readiness of local partners in 20 countries by 2020.
- Prioritize local partner leadership in coordination mechanisms, at the expense of our direct role, where possible. Provide a global platform, the [Institute for Capacity Strengthening \(ICS\)](#), for learning and access to tested guidance and tools for our partners.

CRS is also a signatory to the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change, and serves as the Inter Action Co-Champion for the Grand Bargain Localization Work Stream.

In FY 2017, CRS' commitment was concretized in the following ways:

- Direct sub-granting of approx. \$57 million to local organizations in 62 different countries for humanitarian response activities, totaling 13% of CRS' total humanitarian response funding.
- Partnered with 339 local and national organizations worldwide for humanitarian response.
- CRS has a partnership focal point in each region to lead the Partnership Capacity Building agenda.
- Promoted use of CRS' Institute for Capacity Strengthening among partners.