

EMPOWER

PHASE 2 | SIX-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT | JANUARY TO JUNE 2021



“The technical advisor took time to review all the proposed commitments, providing suggestions to our local and national teams. Communications around the planned activities were very clear, as was the technical analysis. Their availability to support the whole process was great.

EMPOWER partner, 2021



BACKGROUND

With the increased frequency of emergencies across South America and the Caribbean, Catholic Relief Services is providing critical support to local partners as they strengthen their capacity to assist the most vulnerable communities affected by crisis.

Launched in July 2018, the CRS EMPOWER project—for Empowering Partner Organizations Working on Emergency Responses—seeks to strengthen the humanitarian response capacity of local partners by providing accompaniment and support in diverse areas, including business development; program management; monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning; finance; supply chain management; and protection and safeguarding.

With a focus on countries in which CRS does not have a country program (except Haiti), CRS is working with 20 local and national partners in 44 countries, providing them with technical support and accompaniment to strengthen institutional capacity for humanitarian response programming.

Destruction caused by Hurricane Eta in Nicaragua in November 2020. EMPOWER supported Caritas Nicaragua in a rapid emergency shelter and WASH response to the Category 4 hurricane.

Photo by Katlyn Holland/CRS

“The TA provided direction and guidance to organize the management of the response, including prioritizing actions, for example, the sitreps, joining the clusters, organizing needs assessments, and data collection.”

EMPOWER partner, 2021

EMPOWER PHASES

Through EMPOWER, CRS staff accompany local organizations in institutional capacity self-assessments. Based on the results—as well as on institutional mission, vision and strategy—the participating organizations develop institutional capacity strengthening plans. CRS then supports them based on their expressed priorities and requests, and provides technical resources, support, training and accompaniment. Workshops organized by CRS at the local and regional levels help to facilitate shared learning and the strengthening of peer networks among local and national humanitarian response organizations.

The first phase of the EMPOWER project was implemented from 2018 to 2020. The second phase, which began in January 2021, is being implemented until 2023. In this phase, EMPOWER has new funding from the ELMA Caribbean Foundation. This report presents the progress made on program indicators during the first six months of Phase 2 (January to June 2021).

Further details can also be found in the regularly updated [EMPOWER PowerBI Report](#).¹



EMPOWER GOAL

CRS and partners effectively prepare for and respond to disasters.



EMPOWER STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Partners strengthen their participation in coordination platforms.
2. Partner staff strengthen their organizational structures and institutional capacities.
3. Partners access and implement a larger percentage of humanitarian funding.

“The TAs were very assertive and welcoming of our ideas and needs. They provided timely and relevant support. They were available and showed great technical capacity and adaptability to the new conditions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

EMPOWER partner, 2021

EMPOWER PARTNERS

SOUTH AMERICA	CARIBBEAN	CENTRAL AMERICA
Caritas Venezuela	Caritas Antilles	Caritas Nicaragua
Secretariado Nacional de Pastoral Social Cáritas Colombiana	Living Water Community (Trinidad and Tobago)	Caritas Guatemala
Caritas Brasileira	Caritas Willemstad	Caritas Mexico
Caritas Ecuador	Caritas Dominica	Caritas Honduras
Misión Scalabriniana (Ecuador)	Saint Patrick's Rangers (Jamaica)	Caritas El Salvador
Caritas Peru	Caritas Dominicana	
Caritas Chile	Caritas Haiti	
	Caritas Grenada	

1. To request access, please contact Alejandra Gaviria (alejandra.gaviria@crs.org) or Carlos Garafulic (carlos.garafulic@crs.org).

After the La Soufriere volcano erupted in May 2021 on the island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, EMPOWER supported Caritas Antilles to use digital tools to register participants for cash assistance. Photo by Cassandra Bissainthe/CRS



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: PARTNERS STRENGTHEN THEIR PARTICIPATION IN COORDINATION PLATFORMS

1.1 Partners manage a platform for facilitating networking among stakeholders.

Indicator 1: Number of coordination platforms in which EMPOWER partners are participants or cofacilitators (Phase 2 to date: 3/target 4)

EMPOWER partners have increased their institutional presence in several coordination platforms across the region. Currently, five Caritas partners in South America are members of the Caritas Internationalis Venezuela Working Group, which brings together Caritas national partners working on the Venezuelan response. Two of the five—Caritas Venezuela and Brazil—are on the steering committee along with CRS, Caritas Spain and Caritas Internationalis.

In May 2021, after the La Soufriere volcano erupted on the island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), a coordination mechanism for the emergency response was created by Caritas Antilles, Caritas Dominica, Caritas Grenada and Caritas SVG. This resulted in the partners receiving grants for two projects in SVG, including one funded by UNICEF and another by the ELMA Rapid Response Fund. Caritas Antilles (St Lucia) participated in the WASH Latin America and Caribbean regional coordination platform led by UNICEF, with representatives from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the United States

Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the World Food Programme, Water Mission, Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid, Plan International, Oxfam, Solidarite Internationale, Central Water and Sewage Administration of SVG (CWSA) and others. This coordination mechanism is now led by the Ministry of Environmental Health. Caritas Antilles is an active member in the platforms, and has participated in regional hurricane preparedness and WASH meetings at the regional level.

In 2021, Caritas Antilles is participating in the WASH and Shelter Latin America and the Caribbean Region Clusters, as well as the regional platform for LAC Hurricane Preparedness planning by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Caritas Grenada and Caritas Dominica are also participating in the latter.

Caritas Venezuela continues to co-chair the Nutrition cluster in Venezuela, and a member of Caritas Venezuela's team has been accepted to join the Inter-Agency Standing Committee subgroup on Localization.

“ We received support for the preparation of the concept note and proposal. We received all the support we needed, with the TA always available and providing high-quality technical assistance.

EMPOWER partner, 2021

**Indicator 2: Number of temporary duty (TDY) days to support partners.
(Phase 2 to date: 746/target 500)**

258

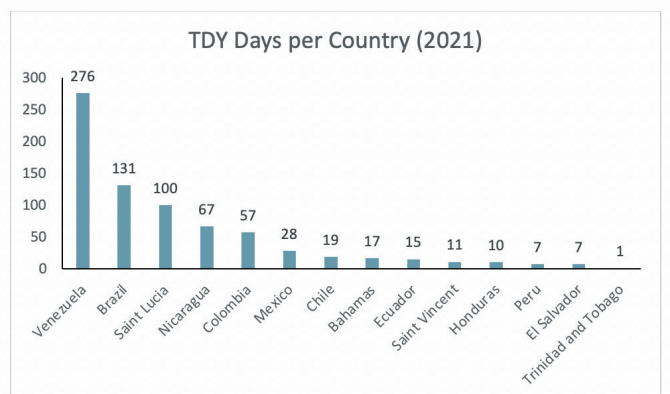
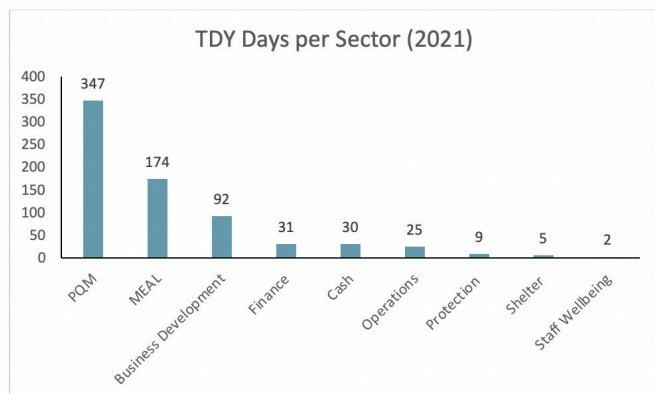
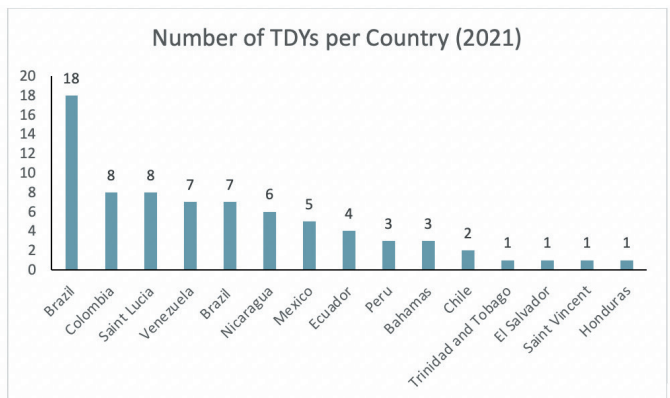
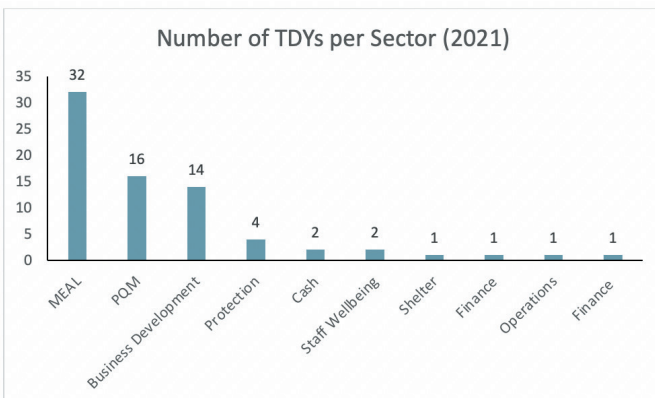
TEMPORARY DUTY DEPLOYMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO LOCAL PARTNERS SINCE THE START OF THE EMPOWER PROJECT

Since 2018, the EMPOWER team has completed 258 temporary duty deployments with local partners, both in person and remotely. The three sectors with the greatest number of TDYs have been MEAL (30.86%), program quality (19.92%) and business development (16.80%).

The three countries that have received the most TDY support thus far are Brazil (30.23%), Colombia (12.76%) and Venezuela (11.24%). Our partner Caritas Brazil is managing three

USAID awards in which CRS is contracted as a consultant for technical assistance.

In the first six months of 2021, EMPOWER completed 75 TDY deployments. The three sectors with the greatest number of TDYs have been MEAL (43.24%), program quality (21.62%) and business development (19.92%). The three countries that have received the most TDY support are Brazil (33.33%), Colombia and Saint Lucia (10.67% each), and Venezuela (9.33%).



2,360

DAYS OF DEDICATED TECHNICAL SUPPORT TO PARTNERS HAS BEEN PROVIDED SINCE 2018

Analyzing the data by days, since the start of the project, EMPOWER has provided 2,360 days of dedicated technical support to partners. The sectors with the most days of support have been program quality (30.33%), MEAL (23.70%) and operations (11.66%). The average number of days per TDY was 9.14. Venezuela had the most TDY days with 28.63% of the support, followed by Brazil (22.18%) and Colombia (10.90%).

In the first six months of 2021, EMPOWER provided 746 days of support. The sectors with most days were program quality (48.53%), MEAL (24.34%) and business development (12.87%).

Again, Venezuela had the most TDY days with 37% of the support, followed by Brazil (17.56%) and Saint Lucia (13.40%).



Indicator 3: Number of TDY days TAs support partners to coordinate and strengthen their networks (Phase 2 to date: 87/target 96)

In the first six months of 2021, EMPOWER supported partners to strengthen their networks and networking capacities by committing 87 days of support.

At least 32.28% of the days supported the coordination of four partners for the La Soufriere volcano emergency response in Saint Vincent, and 67.81% to coordinate the regional MigraSegura project in Brazil and Ecuador.

MigraSegura is a mobile application and website funded by USAID/Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) that focuses on providing migrants travelling through Brazil and Ecuador with easy access to key information on humanitarian services, migration policies and COVID-19. Caritas Brazil is the prime recipient for the award funded through the USAID/IDB Lab's Better Together Challenge, with Caritas Ecuador and CRS as subs.

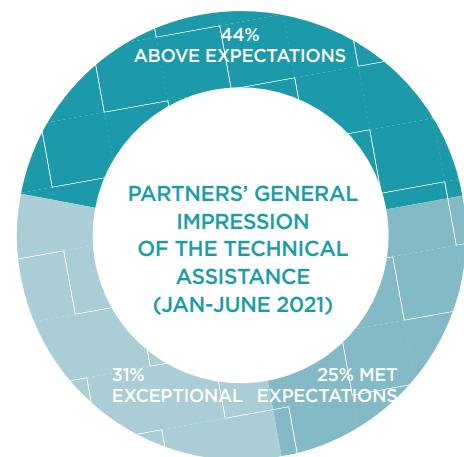
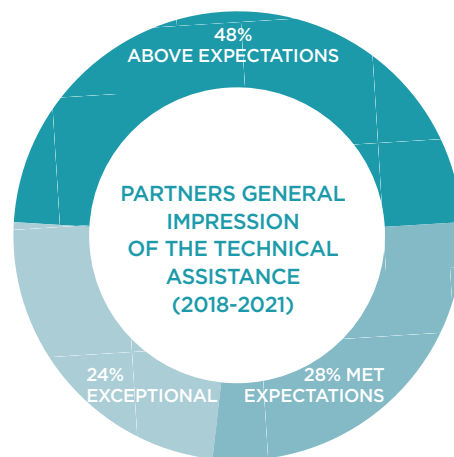
75%

OF PARTNERS REPORTED THAT EMPOWER TECHNICAL SUPPORT WAS ABOVE THEIR EXPECTATIONS OR EXCEPTIONAL.

Indicator 4: Percentage of TDYs that receive a favorable satisfaction rating from partners. (Phase 2 to date: 100%/target 90%)

Each time a technical advisor is deployed to provide assistance (virtually or in person) to an EMPOWER partner, the partner has the opportunity to provide feedback through a mission satisfaction form. Results of the deployments conducted in EMPOWER Phase 2 (January to June 2021) show that

100% of partners reported satisfaction with the technical assistance received from EMPOWER, with an increase to 31% (from 24%) of partners reporting that the support or visit was exceptional. This is compared to a global average of 24% for the program.



1.2: Partners exchange skills, capacity and knowledge for responding to emergencies.

Indicator 1: Number of opportunities created that facilitate partner exchanges. (Phase 2 to date: 1/target 6)

In 2020, EMPOWER supported Caritas Brasileira and Caritas Ecuador to design and submit a proposal for the MigraSegura project. Throughout 2021, EMPOWER has continued to facilitate the exchange of skills and capacities

between these two partners to develop the design and content of the online platform, as well as to establish a robust MEAL system. This will be a continued area of focus for EMPOWER throughout Phase 2.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: PARTNER STAFF STRENGTHEN THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

2.1: Partners incorporate stronger organizational structure with clear roles and responsibilities for emergency response.

Indicator 1: Number of Caribbean partners with open agreements signed with local or regional financial service providers. (Only for ELMA partners)
(Phase 2 to date: 1/target 4)

In July 2021, Caritas Antilles signed an agreement with the Bank of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to become

a financial service provider (FSP) for the UNICEF-funded portion of the La Soufriere Volcano cash response.

Indicator 2: Number of Caribbean partners with memoranda of understanding signed with national or regional emergency response actors. (Only for ELMA partners)
(Phase 2 to date: 0/target 4)

Currently, Caritas Antilles, Grenada and Dominica and St. Patrick's Rangers have MOUs with the Red Cross in their respective countries. The MOUs are specific to the

USAID-funded Youth Emergency Action Committees project but may be expanded in the coming year to include all hurricane preparedness and response activities.



Four EMPOWER partners in the Caribbean have begun developing their hurricane preparedness plans.

Indicator 3: Number of emergency partners with developed emergency contingency plans with rosters. (Only for ELMA partners) (Phase 2 to date: 3 /target 3)

Indicator 4: Percentage of EMPOWER partners that test their contingency plan. (Only for ELMA partners) (Phase 2 to date: 2 /target 3)

Four partners in the Caribbean have begun developing their hurricane preparedness plans and three—Caritas Grenada, Caritas Haiti and Caritas Dominica—have full plans in place.

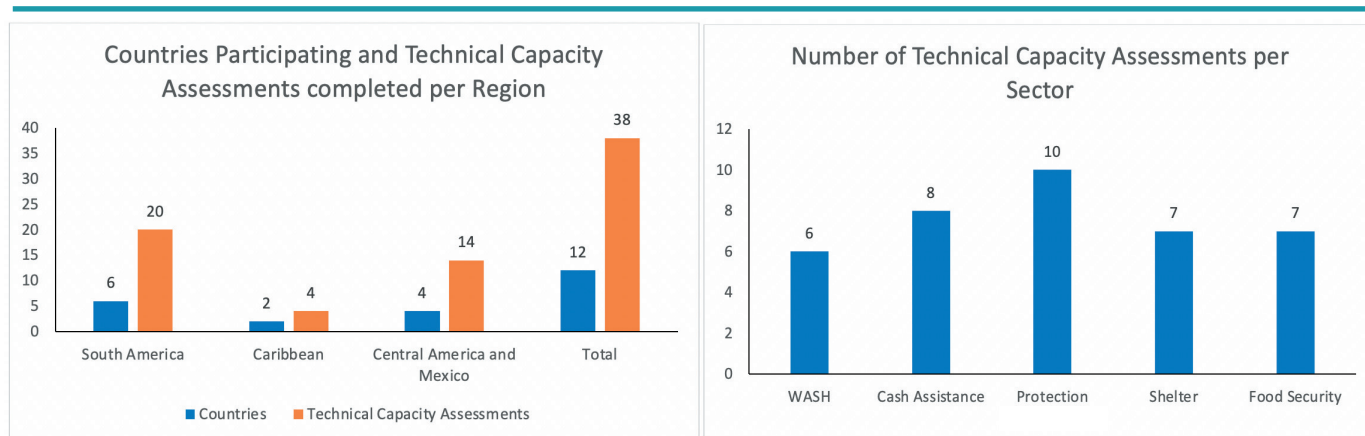
During Tropical Storm Elsa in July 2021, Caritas Grenada and Caritas Haiti were able to use these plans. In July 2021, a virtual simulation exercise was held with partners to test these plans.

Indicator 5: Percentage of partners reporting an improvement in their adherence to Caritas Internationalis management standards and international standards for humanitarian responses. (Phase 2 to date: 0/target 80%)

From January to June 2021, seven EMPOWER partners took the baseline EMPOWER organizational capacity self-assessment (now including a new section on safeguarding) as well as EMPOWER's new technical capacity self-assessments. Results of these assessments are being analyzed, and partners are establishing their priorities for organizational development and capacity

strengthening, including priority areas for CRS technical assistance.

To date, 12 partners have completed organizational self-assessments. The majority of technical capacity self-assessments selected by partners have been in the areas of protection mainstreaming and cash assistance, followed by shelter, food security and WASH.



2.2: Partners have a plan for capacity strengthening in emergencies.

Indicator 1: Number of partners with a capacity strengthening plan for the fiscal year. (Phase 2 to date: 0/target 12)

The capacity strengthening plans are designed with each EMPOWER partner and guided by the results of the capacity self-assessments that they are undertaking.

The plans are being finalized in the coming months and prioritize areas in which partners would like EMPOWER support.

2.3: Staff receive and replicate trainings and tools for improved emergency responses.

Indicator 1: Number of EMPOWER partner staff trained. (Phase 2 to date: 146 /target 250)

Indicator 2: Number of EMPOWER partner staff trained through partner training replications. (Phase 2 to date: 0/target 50)

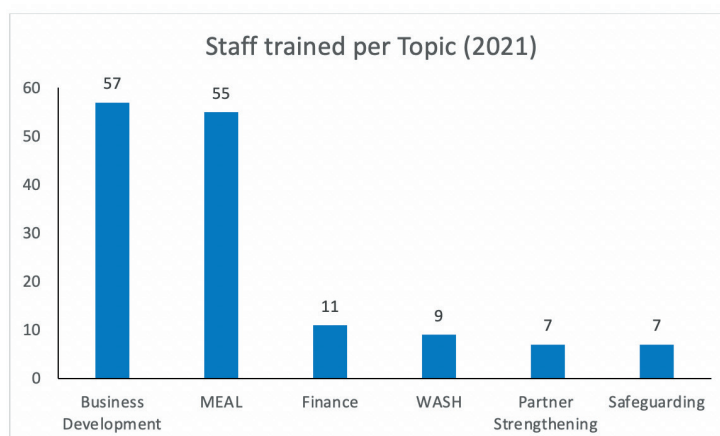
785

STAFF FROM
PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS
HAVE BEEN
TRAINED BY
EMPOWER
SINCE 2018

EMPOWER conducts regular trainings with partners on identified and requested sectors or skills, based on the capacity self-assessment results, or in the context of the implementation of new or ongoing projects. In Phase 2, trainings have been conducted on MEAL, psychological first aid and protection mainstreaming, feedback and

response mechanisms, finance, safeguarding and resource mobilization/business development.

Since 2018, EMPOWER has trained 785 staff from partner organizations, including 146 partner staff trained in nine topics since January 2021.²



2. This indicator shows the total number of participants in the trainings carried out, thus those who have participated in several trainings will be counted multiple times.

Rapid needs assessment orientation and training in KoBo data collection software for the La Soufriere volcano response.



6

EMPOWER PARTNERS HAVE BEGUN IMPLEMENTING NEW INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY FOR MEAL AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Indicator 3: Number of projects successfully adopting and implementing information and communications technologies tools by partners as a result of EMPOWER's technical support. (To date Phase: 6/ target 5)

From January to June 2021, six partners have begun implementing new information and communications technology for MEAL and program management. These include new adoptions of the KoBoToolbox data collection tools by Caritas Peru, Caritas Antilles, Caritas Mexicana and Caritas Nicaragua; implementation of CommCare for program management and MEAL by

Mision Scalabriniana in Ecuador; and the implementation of CommCare by Caritas Brasileira in its emergency appeal project. This adds to those partners already using many of these tools (Commcare, KoBoToolbox, RedRose, PowerBI), and who have continued to receive support from EMPOWER for setup, roll-out and troubleshooting.

Indicator 4: Percentage of partners who adopted a new policy or procedure with EMPOWER support. (Phase 2 to date: 20%/target 70%)

From January to June 2021, two partners established new policies and procedures: Caritas Venezuela implemented a new financial accounting system to improve its internal financial management procedures for all projects, and Caritas Chile implemented new supply chain procedures to be "prime ready" for the application for a BHA-funded project in disaster risk reduction. Also, the newly formed Caritas St. Vincent, with support from Caritas

Antilles, has implemented new standard operating procedures to use a prepaid card for cash transfers to people affected by the La Soufriere volcano eruption, and Caritas Antilles has developed SOPs for its feedback and response mechanism to be used in the La Soufriere response.

EMPOWER is supporting Caritas Peru and Caritas Ecuador to set up new safeguarding policies and procedures.

Indicator 5: Number of new approaches that partners try as a result of EMPOWER support. (Phase 2 to date: 20%/target 40%)

From January to June 2021, four partners used new approaches to programming, three of them in their first implementation of cash responses (Caritas Antilles, Caritas Ecuador

and the Scalabrini Mission), staff well-being (Caritas Ecuador) and the implementation of digital cards to improve MEAL and program delivery (Caritas Brasileira).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: PARTNERS IMPLEMENT A LARGER PERCENTAGE OF HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

3.1: Staff are competent in successful proposal writing and researching funding opportunities.

Indicator 1: Number and percentage of proposals submitted and awarded.
(Current: 1 and 100% / target 15 and 70%)

Indicator 2: Total value (USD) directly secured from donors or government by local NGO partners as a result of significant contributions by CRS.
(Current: \$374,729/target \$10 million)

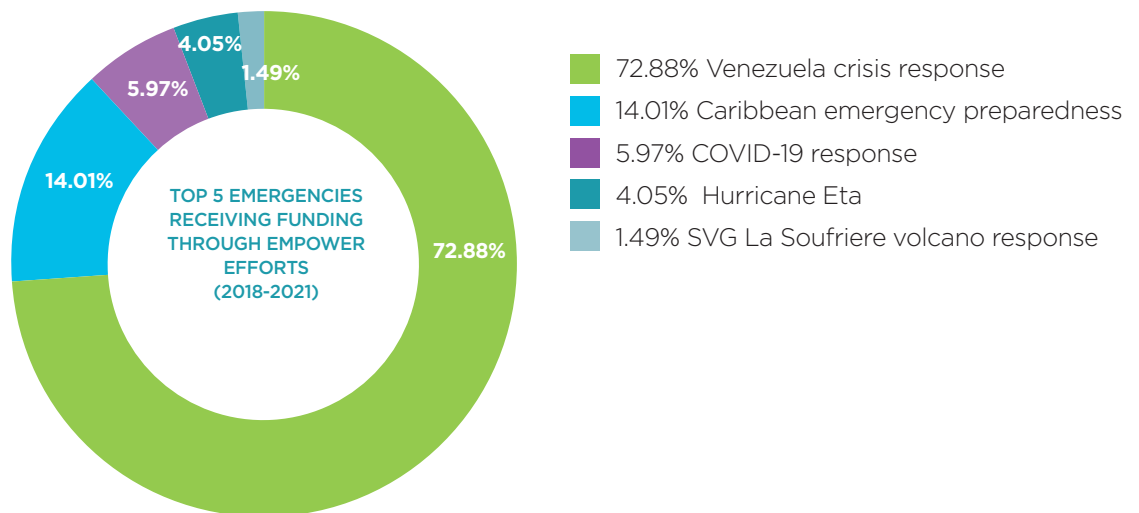
86%

**OF PROPOSALS
SUBMITTED
BY EMPOWER
PARTNERS SINCE
2018 HAVE
BEEN WON**

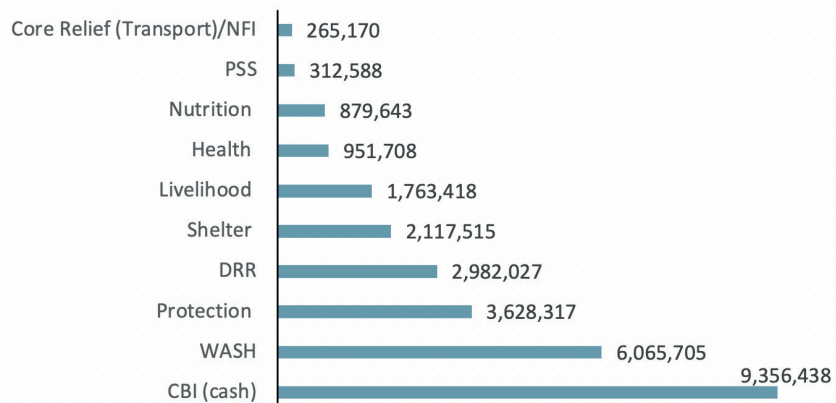
Since 2018, with the support of EMPOWER, partners have submitted 49 proposals for a total of \$48.01 million and 86.05% of the submitted proposals have been won, totaling \$27.66 million raised for partner-led emergency responses. In 44.44% of the winning proposals, local partners were the prime recipient, totaling \$14.03 million.

Since January 2021, EMPOWER partners have submitted seven proposals for a total of \$8.43 million; \$402,329 has been awarded; and \$8.03 million is pending. For this period, in 85.71% of the proposals, local partners were the prime recipient.

Top 5 emergencies receiving funding through EMPOWER efforts



Total USD Awarded by Sector (2018 -2021)



3.2: Partners are eligible for and access funding for their humanitarian responses.

Indicator 1: Number of partners who have passed a donor pre-award survey. (Phase 2 to date: 0/target 3)

Since the start of the program, EMPOWER has provided support to four partners to successfully pass the U.S. Government Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey (NUPAS) required by donors such as the United States Agency for International Development, the Bureau

for Humanitarian Assistance and the U.S. Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration. Currently, no partners are involved in eligibility processes with external donors but this is expected to change in the next reporting period.

Indicator 2: Percentage of awarded proposals in which EMPOWER partners are prime recipients. (Phase 2 to date: 100%/target 40%)

Since 2018, partners have primed in 22 proposals, 44.89% of the total submitted proposals, with Caritas Brazil the partner with most primed proposals (7) submitted, followed by Caritas Colombia (4) and Caritas Antilles (1). USAID/BHA has funded the greatest number of partner-primed proposals. Donors of partner-primed

proposals have funded most often in WASH (9), health (4), nutrition (3) and cash assistance (3). Since January 2021, EMPOWER partners have primed in six proposals for a total of \$7.86 million; a total of \$402,329 has been awarded and \$7.46 million is pending. In the first six months of 2021, partners primed in 85.71% of the proposals and 100% were won.

Indicator 3: Total value of disbursements for ELMA Caribbean Foundation Rapid Response Funding to partners for disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities.

In 2021, a total of \$125,042 has been granted in rapid response fund grants for partners for disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities in the Caribbean.

With ELMA Caribbean Foundation Rapid Response Funding, the first grant went to Caritas Antilles in collaboration with the Diocese of Kingstown for a three-month

rapid response in St Vincent and the Grenadines following the eruption of La Soufriere Volcano in April and May 2021. With this funding, Caritas Antilles is assisting 200 affected households with one-time unrestricted multipurpose cash assistance to support them to buy items to meet their most immediate needs. These families will also receive hygiene kits and participate in hygiene promotion activities.

Indicator 4: Total value (USD) of emergency food and nonfood items procured by partners with EMPOWER support.

Since 2018, EMPOWER has supported partners to procure food and nonfood items to the value of \$379,915.

Ready-to-use therapeutic foods for Venezuela made up 91% of the total number of items EMPOWER supported partners to procure.

Indicator 5: Number of new donor relationships established by EMPOWER partners and facilitated by CRS. (Phase 2 to date: 4/target 10)

EMPOWER has also been facilitating the process of partner positioning and eligibility for international donor funding and has contributed to the establishment

of new or renewed donor relationships with donors such as PRM, UNICEF, REACH and the Raskob Foundation.

\$125,042

HAS BEEN GRANTED IN RAPID RESPONSE FUND GRANTS FOR PARTNERS FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY ACTIVITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN IN 2021

EMPOWER IMPACT INDICATORS

Indicator 1: Number of external stakeholders reached with messaging on localization (Phase 2 to date: 317/target 200)

In line with its goal, EMPOWER also looks at influencing global and regional conversations and actions around localization. As an indication of the efforts undertaken by the program and its partners, EMPOWER has in Phase 2 begun to measure the number of external stakeholders reached with messaging on localization in high-level

events at the regional and global levels. Since January 2021, EMPOWER partners and CRS have reached 317 people mainly from the donor community, international development agencies and national NGOs in various events organized around local leadership and the USAID New Partnerships Initiative, among others.

Indicator 2: Number of direct and indirect participants of local organizations in Latin America. (Phase 2 to date: TBC/Target 500,000 direct and 1 million indirect)

Since 2018, EMPOWER's support to partners has benefited 46,603 direct participants and 59,629 indirect

participants. 2021 data will be available in October.

Indicator 3: Percentage of partners that reported that EMPOWER support met key partnership principles(Phase 2 to date: 0/Target 80%)

Also in line with localization and principled partnership, EMPOWER monitors the percentage of partners that reported that EMPOWER (CRS) met the key partnership principles as outlined in the memorandum

of understanding that CRS signs with each partner at the beginning of each phase. EMPOWER only measures this indicator at the end of each phase so results will only be reported at the end of Phase 2.

“The TA provided the technical support needed for the submission of proposals, and guidance in developing MEAL plans. They assisted in facilitating the process for SMILER and conducted a workshop on safeguarding.

EMPOWER partner, 2021

ACRONYMS

BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance	NFI	nonfood item
CBI	cash-based initiative	NGO	nongovernmental organization
CRS	Catholic Relief Services	OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
CWSA	Central Water and Sewage Administration of SVG	PRM	US Department of State Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration
DRR	disaster risk reduction	PSS	psychosocial support
EA	emergency appeal	SMILER	Simple Measurement of Indicators for Learning and Evidence based Reporting
EMPOWER	Empowering Partner Organizations Working on Emergency Responses	SOP	standard operating procedure
FSP	financial service provider	SVG	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	TA	technical assistance
ICT4D	information and communications technologies	TDY	temporary duty
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ISRAID	Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid	USD	United States dollars
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean	WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
MEAL	monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning	WFP	World Food Programme
MOU	memorandum of understanding		