



EMPOWER: Empowering Partner Organizations Working on Emergency Responses

CARIBBEAN AND SOUTH AMERICA ZONES



EMPOWER South American and Caribbean partners and CRS technical advisors at the Protection Mainstreaming and Psychological First Aid Training in Bogota, Colombia, in October 2019. *Photo by CRS staff*

OVERVIEW

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

Launched in July 2018, the CRS EMPOWER project 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 (MEAL); finance; supply chain; and protection and safeguarding.

With a focus on countries where CRS does not have a country program (except Haiti), CRS is supporting 13 partners in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, Antilles, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

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EMPOWER EXPANDS TO CENTRAL AMERICA

As of January 2020, the EMPOWER project was looking to expand into Central America to invite local partners from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico. It will continue for an additional two years, extending through FY22 with a total of 18 partners from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The CRS Humanitarian Response Department will continue to manage EMPOWER, with the close collaboration and support of the CRS Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) leadership structure.

YEAR 1 EVALUATION

Key recommendations:

1. Ensure communication with partners related to the EMPOWER capacity assessment emphasizes that it is a self-assessment, and not a CRS evaluation of partners. Promote consensus within the partner organization for the scoring chosen by key partner staff interviewed, to ensure that the directors of partner organizations—and concerned stakeholders—agree on the chosen scores.
2. Notify the partners of the purpose, objectives and expected results of the assessment, and share recommended agendas and tools at least two weeks before the capacity assessment. This information should include materials on the scoring criteria and the context in which the assessment tools were developed. Use multiple communication methods (email, phone, WhatsApp) when orienting partners on the assessment to ensure their access to and clear understanding of the information.
3. Create more opportunities to share lessons learned among EMPOWER partners via trainings, virtual meetings, communities of practice platforms and webinars. Priorities should focus on developing virtual structures that can aid partners in cross-learning, especially for use long after the EMPOWER program has ended. EMPOWER partners have demonstrated an appreciation for learning, capacity building, continuous communication, and face-to-face interactions.
4. Conduct ongoing, consistent evaluations of the EMPOWER project and EMPOWER trainings to gain timely feedback and insights that allow adjustment to program activities as relevant and needed.

COUNTRY PARTNERS SERVED BY EMPOWER

Central America: El Salvador |
Guatemala | Honduras |
Nicaragua | Mexico

Caribbean: Antilles (St Lucia,
Grenada, Dominica) | Cuba |
Dominican Republic | Grenada |
Haiti | Jamaica | Trinidad and
Tobago

South America: Brazil |
Colombia | Ecuador | Peru |
Venezuela



TRAININGS

When possible, EMPOWER brings together partners for trainings on common issues. During a recent training on Protection Mainstreaming and Psychological First Aid in Bogota in October 2019, EMPOWER partners shared their appreciation of the meeting opportunities, which allowed them to better understand the ongoing emergency response activities taking place in the region. The trainings also provide the opportunity for local organizations to network and learn from each other. Partners have cited the relevance of these trainings to their institutions, and requested support to replicate them internally. Also, following the Protection Mainstreaming workshop, many partners requested follow-up support on safeguarding, particularly on training staff, developing feedback-and-response mechanisms, and adapting their code of conduct and safeguarding policies.

FY20 trainings

(Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, new dates will be proposed when feasible)

- Protection Mainstreaming and Psychological First Aid | October 21-25, 2019
- Emergency Preparedness Workshop and Simulation Exercise (Caritas Antilles)
- MEAL Workshop
- Safeguarding Workshop (Caritas Antilles and St Patrick Rangers) | March 9-12, 2020
- Cash in Emergencies (Misión Scalabriniana)

PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION (VENEZUELAN CRISIS)

The EMPOWER project team is part of the steering committee of the Caritas Internationalis Working Group on the Venezuelan Crisis, along with Caritas Venezuela, Caritas Brasileira, Caritas Spain and the Caritas Internationalis Humanitarian Response Department. Caritas Venezuela, which is an EMPOWER project partner, has played an active role in the United Nations thematic clusters, as well as in the development of the Humanitarian Response Plan.

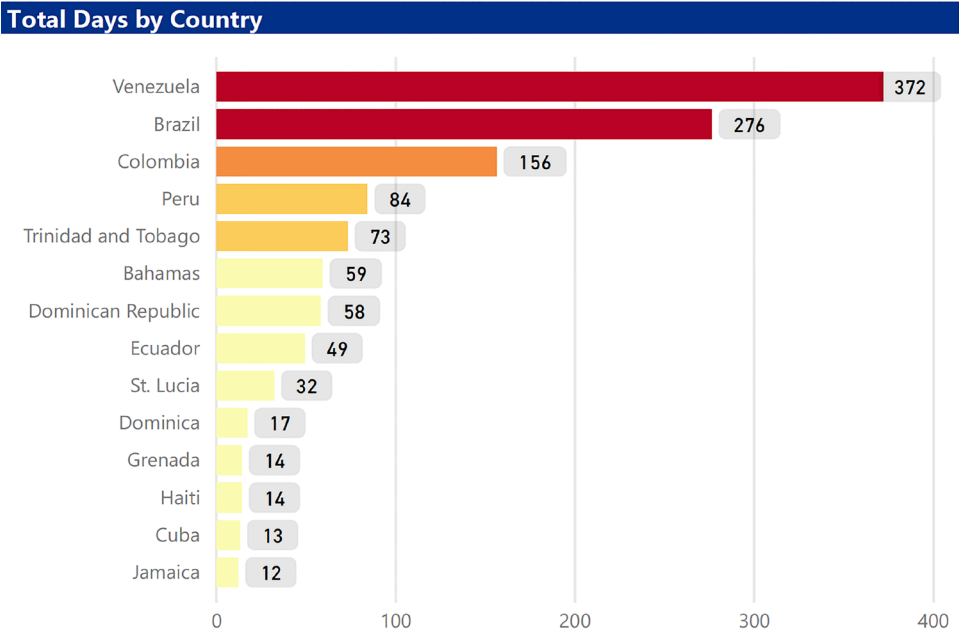


Children receive nutritional checkups and support at Caritas Venezuela centers. Caritas Venezuela is an EMPOWER project partner.

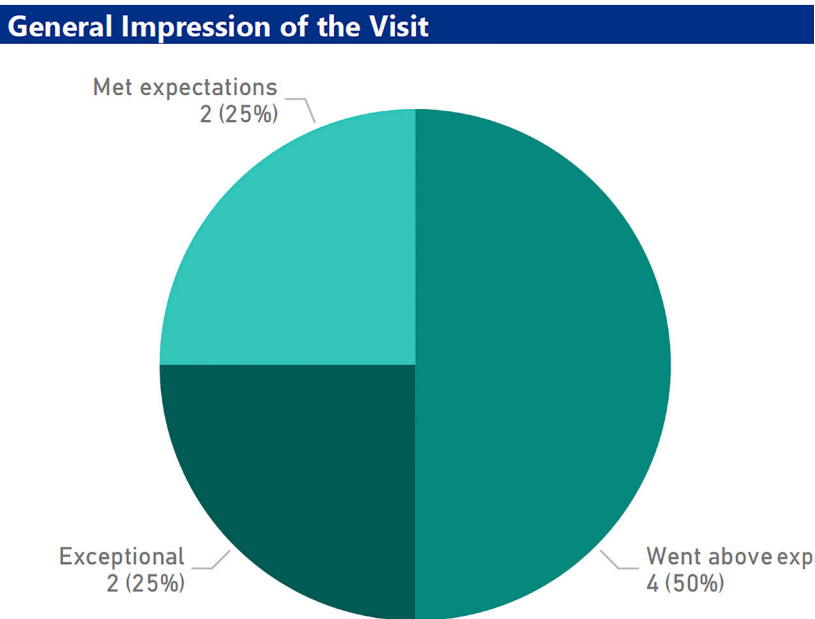
Photo courtesy of Caritas Venezuela

EMPOWER RESULTS

To ensure the EMPOWER project meets its established targets, an indicator performance tracking table (IPTT) was developed to keep track of key targets to facilitate a timely evaluation of project progress and any needed adjustment to the approaches used. Highlighted below are a few of the key indicators of the EMPOWER project.

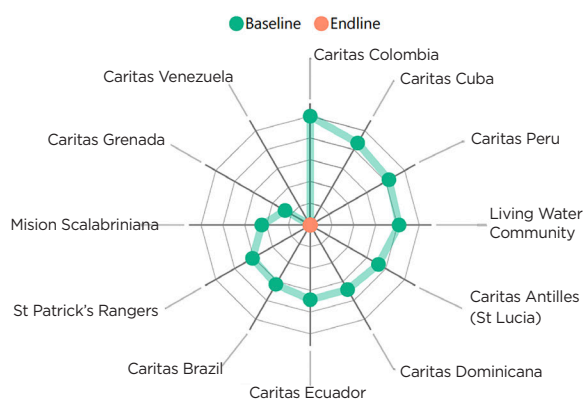


Indicator 4: EMPOWER total temporary duty travel, or TDY, days Since the beginning of the EMPOWER project, 104 TDYs have provided support to partners on a range of sectors, particularly on business development, MEAL, finance and cash programming.

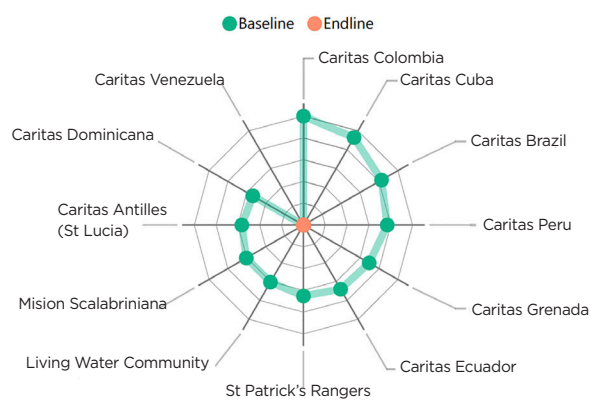


Indicator 5: Partner TDY satisfaction After each TDY, a survey/questionnaire was shared with partners to gather feedback on the support that was given. Half of the TDYs conducted were above expectations, 25% exceptional and 25% met expectations.

Law and Ethical Codes



Governance and Organization



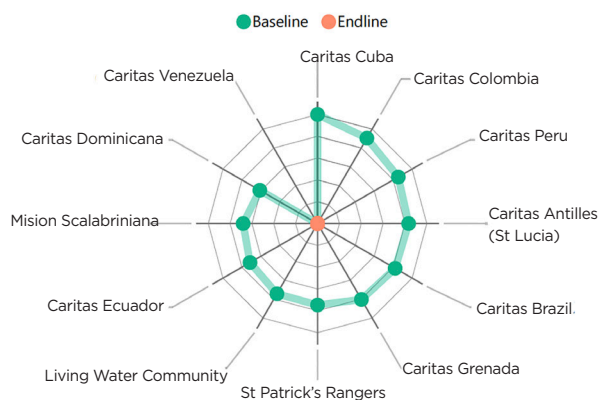
Stakeholder Involvement



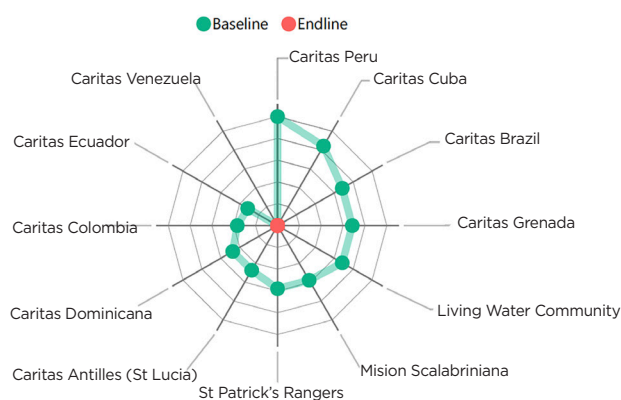
Cash Preparedness



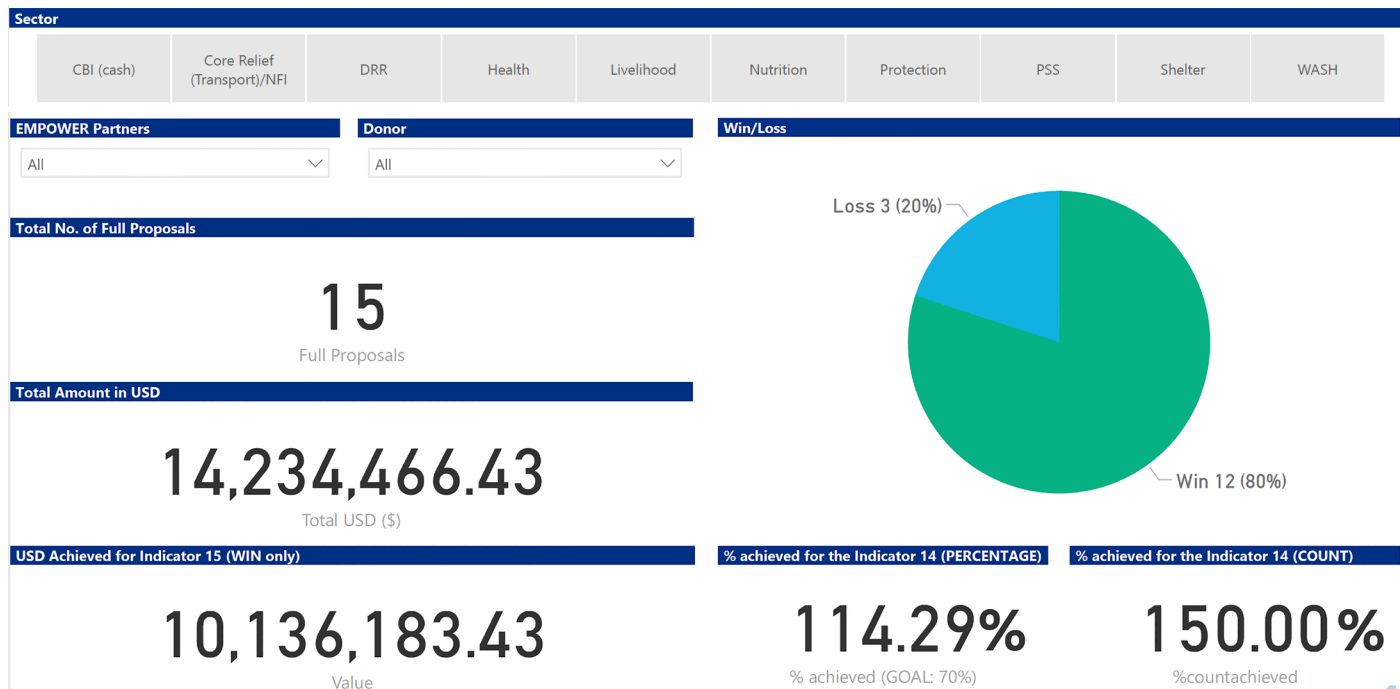
Finance and Accountability



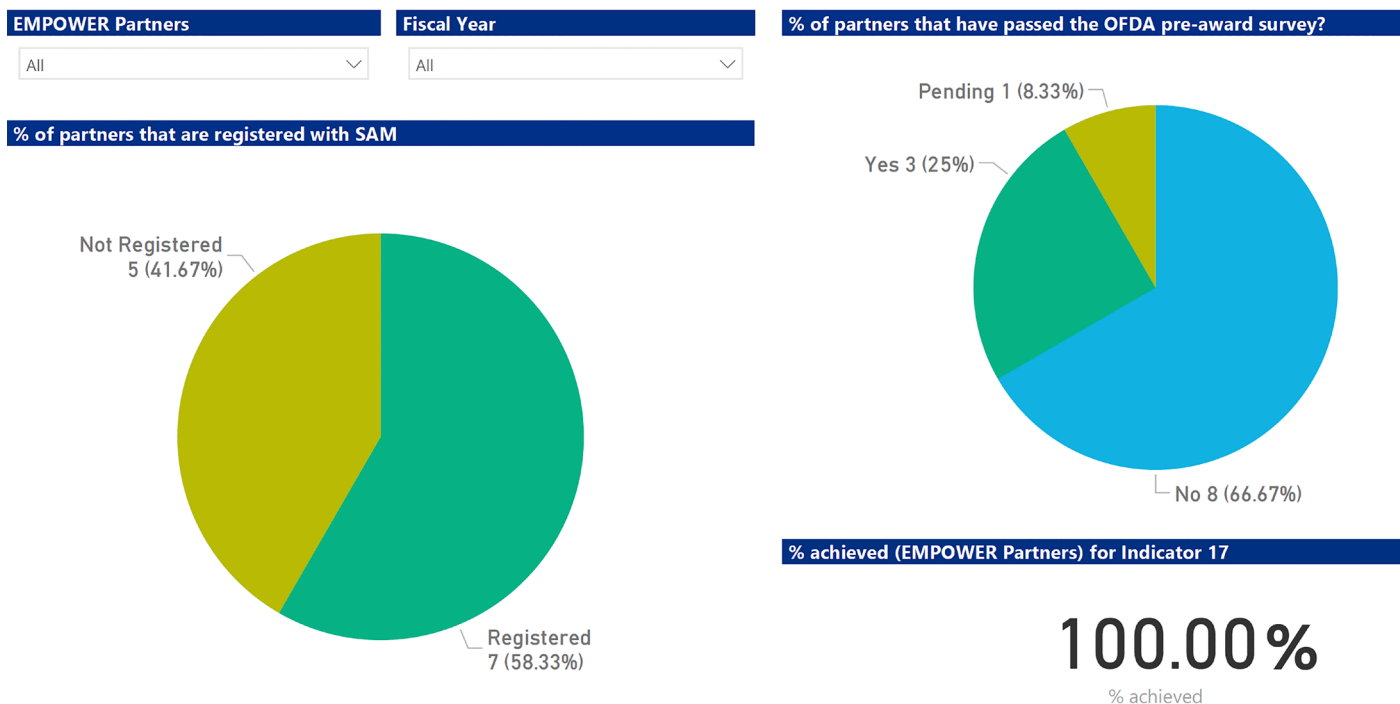
Gender (HOCAI)



Indicator 10: EMPOWER CAT results The Spider graphs show the scoring of EMPOWER partners on the six sectors assessed during the initial assessment conducted using the EMPOWER Capacity Assessment Tool (CAT) which is based on the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards (CIMS) tool.



Indicator 14, 15: Win rate This chart demonstrates the win/loss rate on business development support provided to EMPOWER partners. The sectors covered during these proposal development opportunities are highlighted at the top. The win rate was 80%, with 12 successful proposals and 3 unsuccessful proposals submitted to different donors.



Indicator 17: Pre-award survey The charts highlight the number of EMPOWER partners who have gone through the United States Government pre-award survey process. Seven EMPOWER partners are registered with SAM (USG System for Award Management) and three have passed the OFDA pre-award survey process.