



Photo Annika Hammerschlag for CRS

# A Call for Swift, Coordinated, and Locally Driven Humanitarian Action to Address the Sahel Crisis

## OVERVIEW

The Sahel Crisis demands an urgent, efficient, and robust humanitarian response to save lives, alleviate suffering, promote resilience, and foster social cohesion and peacebuilding. Conflict in the Central Sahel has escalated, leading to massive displacement and a global hunger emergency. This has created a humanitarian catastrophe in **Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger**, and beyond, affecting nations such as **Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo**, and **Benin**. The breakdown of civil society and social cohesion, as well as protracted crises intensified by shocks, indicate that humanitarian assistance in the Sahel is inadequate, ill-suited to the scale and complexity of the evolving needs.

## WHAT IS OUR APPROACH?

During times of crisis, individuals often rely on local and national organizations for assistance. These organizations are uniquely positioned to provide aid due to their proximity to affected areas and direct access to the impacted population, allowing them to understand the situation and respond accordingly. To provide timely assistance and support for long-term recovery, CRS and its local partners have developed a comprehensive program that delivers aid when and where it is most needed. This program aims to lay a foundation for a better future for affected families.

**EMPOWER\***, a CRS humanitarian partnership and capacity-building initiative, focuses on strengthening local leadership in humanitarian responses through institutional strengthening, capacity building, accompaniment, and direct funding of local humanitarian actors. By supporting local leadership, EMPOWER aims to address immediate shocks and long-term challenges, promote transformative peace, and provide life-giving solutions.



CRS Private Funds



Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea,  
Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal,  
The Gambia, and Sierra Leone



USD \$4.5 million



January 2023 to  
September 2025

\*Empowering Partner Organizations Working on Emergency Responses in West Africa

## WHAT IS THE PROCESS?



## OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

EMPOWER's mission is to bolster locally- driven emergency response in West Africa.

This initiative strives to enhance the readiness of local and national organizations to manage humanitarian crises and emergencies, while also promoting sustainable and community-driven development.

To achieve this overarching goal, EMPOWER is working towards the following objectives:

- Encouraging greater participation from partners in coordination platforms;
- Supporting partners in strengthening their organizational structures and capabilities;
- Assisting leadership in responding to emergency situations.

## ANTICIPATED RESULTS

Outlined below are the final actions to be taken:

- To cater to the immediate and long-term needs of crisis affected communities, local and national organizations are set to expand their reach to **45,000 participants**.
- To support locally-led humanitarian responses, local and national organizations will be granted **access to \$1,600,000 in small grant funding**, made available through the EMPOWER in West Africa Emergency Alert funding mechanism.

- Local organizations will be expected to participate actively in **local, national, and regional coordination mechanisms, networks, and platforms**, enabling them to coordinate their responses effectively.
- **100 staff members** from local and national organizations will receive training in self-identified priority topics.
- **At least 2 local and national organizations** will be eligible to receive funding directly from institutional donors, such as the U.S. government, United Nations, or European Union.

## EMPOWER IN WEST AFRICA: Strengthening Local Capacity and Best Practices

As the EMPOWER project expands in West Africa, it is utilizing the best practices and lessons learned from the flagship project already in place in other regions where CRS operates. CRS programs in the Sahel region have been providing emergency rapid response programs to communities affected by conflict and displacement, in collaboration with local partner organizations.

The program in West Africa aims to broaden CRS' localization capacity strengthening initiatives in the region. Its goal is to bolster local leadership in emergency responses, addressing the critical needs of vulnerable populations in the aftermath of a crisis. Moreover, it seeks to enable local and national organizations to qualify for direct funding from institutional donors, rather than through an intermediary organization like CRS.