

Using Cash for Shelter: An Overview of CRS Programs

- FLOOD EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN SERBIA | SERBIA
- WINDOWS OF SLOVYANSK | UKRAINE
- WINTER RESILIENCE FOR IDPs IN EASTERN UKRAINE | UKRAINE
- RENT ASSISTANCE FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES | JORDAN
- DISPLACED AND RECENT RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS INVITE RECOVERY IN EASTERN DRC (DRIVE) | DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
- MALAWI FLOODS AND RAINS RECOVERY PROGRAM | MALAWI
- CASH TRANSFER FOR TRANSITIONAL SHELTER | INDONESIA
- PROJECT DAIJOK | PHILIPPINES



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Introduction

Cash continues to gain prevalence as a modality for humanitarian agencies to help people meet multiple and diverse needs in the wake of a crisis. It provides people with the dignity of choice, and is often significantly more cost-efficient than the delivery of in-kind aid. In programs with a shelter focus, cash may be given to project participants to access rental homes; to buy shelter materials; or to pay for labor, technical advice, or other services.

Is cash appropriate for every shelter program? When does it provide benefits to project participants, communities and local economies, and when doesn't it? What do we, as humanitarian aid practitioners, need to do to make cash more effective in achieving shelter outcomes?

To start to gain a better understanding of when cash works, why it works, and what factors contribute to its success or failure, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) conducted a review of eight recent CRS programs wherein cash was considered as a response modality to achieve shelter outcomes. CRS used cash in six of the countries, and project participants were able to meet Sphere and other building standards. In one country, CRS decided against using cash. In another country, CRS used mixed modalities.

These case studies are intended to serve as a platform for more discussion and review on promising and best practices in how and when to utilize cash to achieve shelter outcomes.

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Cash provides people with the dignity of choice, and is often significantly more cost-efficient than the delivery of in-kind aid.
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Evacuees from Obrenovac, Serbia, shelter in a hall in Belgrade. Photo by Marko Djurica/Reuters, courtesy Trust.org.

Serbia

FLOOD EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN SERBIA FLOODS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Disaster/conflict date: | May 2014 |
| Project timescale: | June 2014 – October 2014 (5 months) |
| Houses damaged: | 19,000 homes partially damaged, over 420 destroyed |
| Affected population: | 1.6 million people (22% of Serbian population) |
| Target population: | 1,772 vulnerable households in Western and Central Serbia |
| Modality: | Cash transfer through post office |
| Value of cash grant: | US\$330 (shelter); US\$345 (agriculture) |
| Project budget: | US\$899,999 from the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and US\$100,000 in private funds from Catholic Relief Services |



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

The devastating floods that affected the Balkans in May 2014 affected 1.6 million people, 22 percent of Serbia's population, and have set the country's economic development back decades. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) conducted rapid assessments on May 24 and 25 in 13 villages in the municipalities of Šabac, Valjevo, Ub, Kraljevo and Smederevska Palanka, finding significant damage to homes (including mud in houses), loss of furniture and destruction of household assets. Many families had lost their houses and land to flooding and related landslides. The level of damage varied and contamination was a major concern.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose a cash-based response.

Shelter needs

Through community solidarity, government aid and humanitarian assistance, people were able to meet their immediate needs for water, food and shelter, but these were short-term solutions. Families whose houses had withstood the flooding without structural damage were eager to return home and start rebuilding their lives, but needed support to do so. This included essential information on how to clean, dry and disinfect homes following flooding, as well as basic furnishings and household goods.

The Serbian Government was expected to prioritize reconstruction of the country's infrastructure, but the scale of needs exceeded its capacity to respond. Many flood-affected households, especially in rural areas, were largely left to recover without government support. Central and South Serbia are the poorest

1.6 million

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE FLOODS

areas of the country; Kraljevo was particularly vulnerable as it included a large number of returnees from Kosovo who had settled on inhospitable land with little agricultural value and suffered disproportionately in the flood. Many families were also still recovering from the earthquake of 2010.

Market context

Extensive agricultural losses were sustained in rural areas, including the loss of animals and standing crops. The flood came in the middle of the vegetable, corn and wheat season, on which agricultural households depended to meet winter food and income needs. Farmers reported a small window of time within which some vegetables and potentially corn could be cultivated for animal feed over the following two months, and they were eager to plant before winter. The government was expected to offer some support to agriculture, but it would focus on larger commercial farmers.

CRS assessments indicated that agricultural inputs were still widely available in local markets, despite the flooding. Supply markets for household items and shelter supplies had been largely unaffected by the floods, or vendors were able to return quickly to their trade in spite of flood damage. Assessment results indicated that these goods were available at normal and stable prices, and supply chains remained stable.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

CRS and its partners focused on poor rural villages to fill the gap left by the government response, building on existing emergency relief committee structures in most locations to ensure continued effective coordination of efforts at the local level. The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance provided funding to implement both shelter and agricultural recovery interventions through cash grants. This was to enable affected households to start the process of rebuilding their livelihoods and to prepare for the cold Balkans winter by ensuring that shelters were in compliance with the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#), the Sphere Handbook:

- **Safe:** Resilient to multiple disasters including earthquakes, typhoons and landslides.

- **Adequate:** With good ventilation and drainage, of a good size and gender-sensitive with appropriate privacy.
- **Durable:** Materials are strong and durable enough to last 18 to 24 months.

The program provided assistance in cleaning and drying the structure of damaged but structurally sound homes. CRS provided cash grants to replace essential household items (especially bedding materials) that could not be salvaged and to ensure that families were able to winterize their homes as needed. CRS incorporated disaster risk reduction measures through verbal instruction and advice to everyone the project team interacted with; they also distributed brochures and flyers to beneficiary households on disaster risk reduction strategies relating to best flood mitigation practices and the adequate drying, cleaning and disinfecting of homes.

Program goals and objectives

1. Flood-affected households live in safe and dignified shelters (1,360 households):
 - Households and communities clean, dry and disinfect affected homes.
 - Households replace priority household items to restore dignified and safe living conditions.
 - Municipalities implement locally appropriate solutions for those permanently displaced by flooding or related landslides.
2. Flood-affected households resume agriculture-based livelihood activities (500 households):
 - Households rehabilitate their fields and productive infrastructure.
 - Households redeem vouchers for priority agricultural inputs.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS worked with local partners Philanthropy (a charitable foundation of the Serbian Orthodox Church that implemented 80 percent of the project over 10 municipalities) and Caritas Serbia (in Valjevo and Lajkovac).

Beneficiary selection

CRS targeted the most severely flood-affected households in Central Serbia for shelter cash grant assistance through an open call for flood-affected households, based on vulnerability criteria including damage levels (according to government certificates), low-income households (below a set amount of 25,000 Serbian dinars or US\$270), and households with disabled members. Cash benefits or child support were an ideal proxy indicator of the vulnerability of applicant families due to strict restrictions on eligibility for government entitlements and because their monetary amounts were very low. Priority households were those living in single-story housing, elderly households, single-headed households, and those with three or more children.

CRS used community panels to select beneficiaries for agricultural livelihoods support and rural communities formed representative panels to select the most vulnerable in their communities. Beneficiaries received agricultural cash grants for properties of up to 3 hectares that had lost crops or experienced damage to croplands.

Value of cash grant

The value of the cash grant for shelter was set at US\$330 in coordination with Mercy Corps, the other OFDA recipient working in the country,

which paid the same amount for similar types of cash grants to avoid differences between communities covered by each organization. The value of cash grants for agriculture was either US\$175 or US\$345, depending on land size.

Cash distribution

CRS transferred funds to beneficiaries through the post office, which has branches even in the smallest and most remote villages and towns of Serbia. After extensive negotiations between the post office, local government ministries, CRS and partners, the usual charge of 700 dinars in taxes and transfer fees for any given transfer amount was waived for humanitarian aid.

Disaster risk reduction

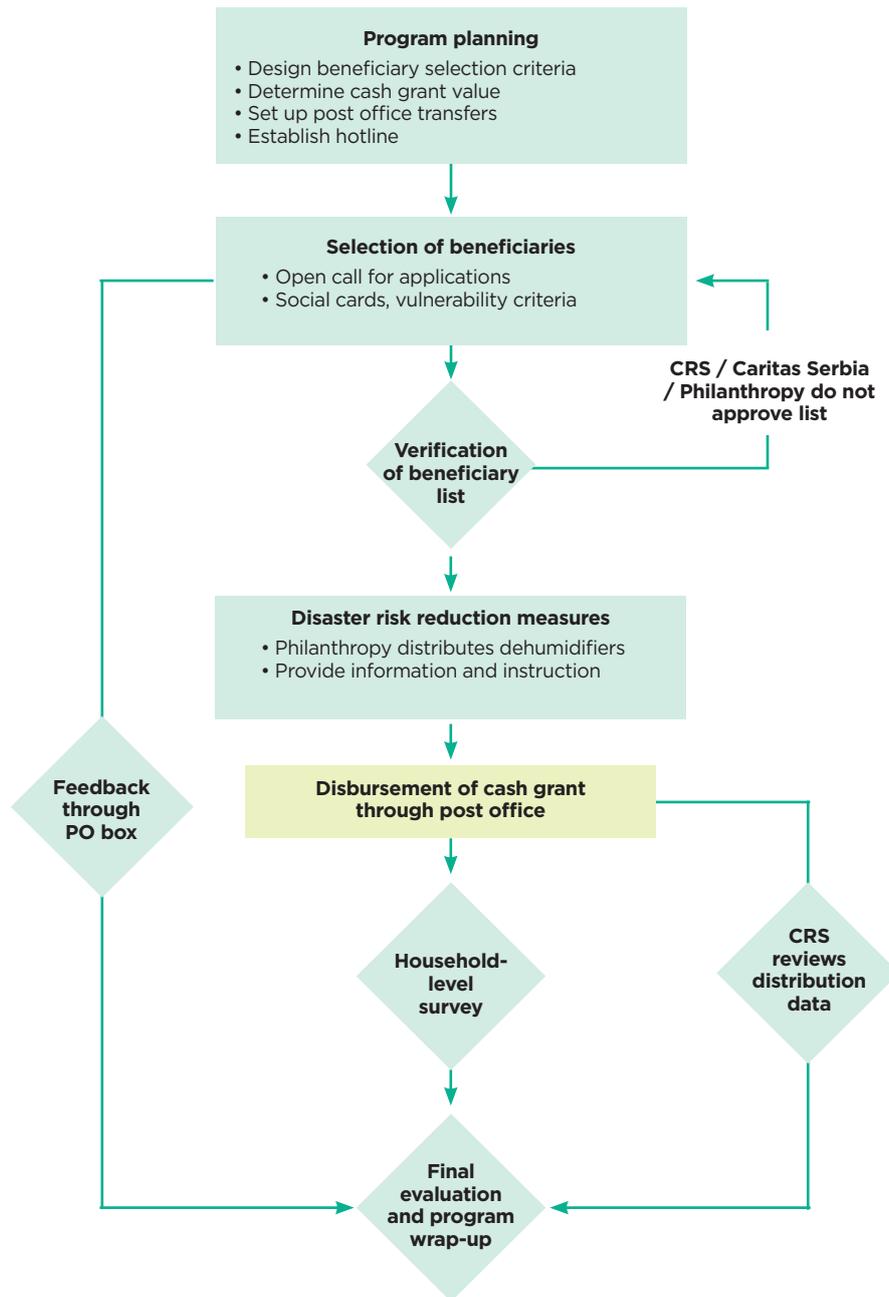
Philanthropy distributed dehumidifiers to beneficiaries to assist them in the drying and repair of damaged homes. The program distributed flyers and brochures to beneficiaries with information about how to use dehumidifiers and how to make home repairs.

Protection

The program targeted the most vulnerable, and approximately 50 percent of beneficiaries were women. CRS introduced a post office box address as a channel of communication for beneficiaries for suggestions and grievances, alongside existing phone hotlines. CRS encouraged feedback related to specific cases as well as aspects of project design. CRS and partners reviewed the feedback and partners responded to each sender.

Process

The chart below illustrates the process of implementation.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CRS used the following monitoring and evaluation mechanisms:

- Reviewed distribution logs, vendor receipts, registration lists and cash transfer receipts after every distribution.
- Reviewed cash transfer receipts at every distribution, looking at the total number and value of cash grants distributed.
- Counted the total U.S. dollar amount transferred to beneficiaries at every distribution.
- Conducted reviews of distribution logs after every distribution to monitor the number of shelters incorporating disaster risk reduction measures.
- Actively tracked progress via weekly activity and progress reports.
- Conducted a pretest of beneficiaries at every distribution, with a posttest two months later, to monitor the percentage of people retaining shelter and settlement disaster risk reduction knowledge.
- Conducted a household-level survey at the end of the project to establish the percentage of households that replaced damaged assets or bedding materials, and the relevance and appropriateness of assistance.

RESULTS

CRS conducted a household-level survey at the end of the project, which found that a total of 1,913 households had received cash grants for shelter or agriculture. Of the individuals directly served by cash grants, 52 percent were female, 16 percent were children, 14 percent were elderly, 5 percent were people with disabilities and 7 percent were refugees or displaced people.

CRS and partners distributed 1,241 cash grants for shelter improvements, reaching 3,681 individuals—of these, 1,745 were male (47 percent) and 1,936 were female (53 percent). The survey found that households allocated 40 percent of funds to fixing flood damaged houses, 9 percent to replacing damaged household assets, and 28 percent to everyday expenses; 23 percent remained unspent as of September 30, 2014.

At the end of the project, 120 households had been disinfected, dehumidified and had received

instructional brochures on cleaning, disinfecting and drying; 1,380 households had received information and instructions on cleaning, disinfecting and drying.

There were 2,128 individuals (677 households) who benefited from seed systems or agricultural input activities; 1,050 were male (49 percent) and 1,078 were female (51 percent).

The household-level survey showed that 62 percent of beneficiaries found the assistance relevant, 83 percent found it appropriate, and 52 percent found assistance both relevant and appropriate; Ninety percent of beneficiaries preferred cash assistance to in-kind assistance. On a scale of 1 (least satisfied) to 5 (most satisfied), beneficiaries rated the project at 3.7 for availability of information, 3.9 for clarity of selection criteria, 4.9 for speed of decision on their application and 4.9 for ease of accessing the cash.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|--|--|
| The partners cooperated with local crisis committees to obtain information on potential beneficiaries, levels of vulnerability and the extent to which the disaster had affected them. | Initial data collection was difficult. Local crisis committees formed in every municipality lacked comprehensive and accurate data and generally underperformed. | Partners triangulated data from primary and secondary sources, such as traditional and social media announcements, police reports, crisis committee data and anecdotal evidence. |
| | The government certificate for damage assessment did not use common standards across municipalities. There was concern that lists of potential beneficiaries would not be comprehensive. | CRS defined the applicable levels of damage for eligibility for assistance, and worked closely with the government to ensure that selected households received relevant documentation. |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|---|---|
| <p>The partners cooperated with local crisis committees to obtain information on potential beneficiaries, levels of vulnerability and the extent to which the disaster had affected them.</p> | <p>Partners had no access to reliable data, and specific beneficiary households were difficult to identify.</p> | <p>Caritas suggested that crisis committees should consolidate data using clear procedures, linking local and national data more easily. Caritas created beneficiary profiles to clarify eligibility for assistance.</p> |
| | <p>Local officials did not immediately embrace household targeting; they were in favor of blanket assistance.</p> | <p>CRS developed targeting criteria in less-than-ideal circumstances. Despite initial frustration with imperfections, they were operational, transparent and just.</p> |
| <p>Cash grants provided flexibility for beneficiaries to meet specific needs.</p> | <p>Beneficiaries could spend the cash as they desired, which could include expenditures unintended by the project.</p> | <p>Monitoring data showed that beneficiaries used the cash grants as intended.</p> |
| | <p>An initial assumption was that households needed mattresses, bedding and other household items. By the time assistance was deployed, needs had changed.</p> | <p>Project partners did their best to accommodate changing needs. The cost of anticipated items served as a basis for the cash grant amount; however, beneficiaries could use the cash grant as they wished.</p> |
| | <p>Grant levels were fixed and communicated to the public in the local currency. The dinar had a rapid decline against the dollar, one of the most significant devaluations in years. For example, a US\$330 grant decreased in value to US\$300 by the end of project.</p> | <p>The currency devaluation had a negligible effect on the real value of the grants because the project was short in duration. However, the expectation of inflation may have affected spending habits of recipients, some of whom chose to convert the cash to hard currency (such as euros) or spend the grants rapidly.</p> |
| | <p>Premature rehabilitation activities damaged floors and walls. Beneficiaries started work before homes were dry, often declining to use dehumidifiers due to fear of increased electricity bills.</p> | <p>Disaster risk reduction standards were in place, and partners distributed brochures and flyers to beneficiary households on the best flood mitigation practices and the cleaning, disinfecting and drying of homes. However, this did not serve the intended purpose, as few households implemented the recommended strategies.</p> |
| <p>Social cards, like beneficiary profiles, allowed Caritas to clearly identify vulnerable people in need of assistance and establish beneficiary lists.</p> | <p>Domestic law required the erasure of beneficiary databases as soon as they had served their humanitarian purposes. However, OFDA requested that beneficiary data remain available for three years for reporting and accountability.</p> | <p>Philanthropy secured the cooperation of the Serbian Freedom of Information Act Commissioner and adjusted its own procedures. Future programs should establish a policy on personal data archiving and eventual deletion.</p> |
| | <p>In most municipalities, the program posted personal information on a community board where everyone could see it.</p> | <p>CRS is committed to only posting the most necessary information with beneficiaries' approval for transparency purposes. The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), Electronic voucher Learning Action Network (ELAN) and other actors are working to develop operating procedures for use and sharing of personal data in emergencies. However, this is still ongoing and is not yet well implemented. Guidance should include verification mechanisms to destroy data once it has fulfilled its purpose.</p> |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|--|--|
| The usual post office charge of 700 dinars in taxes and transfer fees for any given transfer amount was waived for humanitarian aid. | There were delays and difficulties working with the post office. It took a long time to authorize the waiver. | In the meantime, Philanthropy made payments to individuals who already had a bank account in order to minimize delays. |
| | To claim tax exemption, beneficiaries needed a government certificate proving they had suffered damage in the flood. The government issued almost no certificates for flooded land or destroyed crops, and it was almost impossible to obtain these later because of the difficulty of verifying damage on land. | CRS and partners convinced local governments to issue certificates to everyone on the beneficiary lists. Because representative community panels selected beneficiaries for livelihood grants, local governments were confident the lists accurately represented flood damage in affected communities. |
| The project addressed beneficiary needs where there were gaps in government assistance. | There was a lack of clarity on prospective government assistance. Potential beneficiaries were uncertain and apprehensive that this project might become subject to deductions from future government assistance. | International nongovernmental organizations asked the Serbian government's Flood Coordination Office to clarify and communicate their plans better. CRS' local partners also worked with local governments in the flood-affected areas to further the same goal. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

Cash grants are well suited to emergency relief, as local officials and mechanisms may be willing but unable to deliver assistance. Cash grants ensure flexibility in circumstances such as flood relief when people need basic household items but may be receiving assistance from other sources.

A streamlined approach can be sufficient for targeting. Partners were accustomed to working in development contexts, where there is usually sufficient time to design a project and verify beneficiary needs. It was therefore challenging to adopt a “good enough” approach in this emergency context. Clear and transparent target criteria can relieve tensions, but coordinating and achieving consensus about the target criteria among partners and other OFDA grantees may have caused delays and skewed beneficiary selection. The program could ensure timeliness by decreasing over-reliance on formal criteria, improving skills for rapid assessment, and continuing engagement with communities to ensure solidarity and coherence.

Pre-positioning relationships with partners can make response more efficient. Continued engagement with national and local actors is important, but it may also be helpful to establish principles of cooperation before the outbreak of a disaster. CRS was open and inclusive throughout the process, soliciting and valuing partners' views and inputs, and implementing a partner-

led monitoring and evaluation system—this empowered partners and enabled them to improve their emergency response capacities. In the future, CRS could consider other investments in partner capacity building, such as working with information systems and managing large amounts of data, which could be very useful in emergencies.

Minimized staff turnover maximizes program effectiveness. Less turnover of leadership during the project would maintain momentum and increase the timeliness of assistance. Setting aside time for reflection and appreciation of good effort and results through a formal reflection event was seen as a positive development.

Communication with beneficiaries is key. Communication with households on the implementation of projects in emergencies is very important, especially when there are few reliable sources, and access to media is limited. Beneficiaries may have faced uncertainty about the aims of the project, as well as its effect on future government assistance.

Cash transfers must take into account fluctuations in the exchange rate. The devaluation of the dinar led to changes in the value of the cash grant offered to beneficiaries. The effect was negligible because the project was short, but the effects or expectation of inflation could affect the spending habits of beneficiaries.



CRS/Caritas bank transfers enabled households to make vital window repairs in preparation for winter. Photo by Volodymyr Nechaiev/CRS

Ukraine

WINDOWS OF SLOVYANSK CONFLICT

- Location:** Slovyansk, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine
- Disaster/conflict date:** February 2014; ongoing
- Project timescale:** August 2014 - January 2015 (6 months)
- Houses damaged:** 1,147 damaged; 169 houses and 290 apartments destroyed
- Affected population:** 129,600 people affected in Slovyansk
- Target population:** 1,000 households and up to five schools
- Modality:** Bank transfer to beneficiaries
- Material cost per shelter:** Varied
- Project budget:** US\$240,081



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

After pro-Russian separatists declared republics in Eastern Ukraine in April 2014, Slovyansk became a focal point of fighting between government forces and rebels until the Ukrainian military retook the city in early July. Slovyansk saw the heaviest fighting of any urban area and many city dwellers fled. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported 101,617 internally displaced people in Ukraine as of July 2014, with more than 86 percent from Eastern Ukraine. However, a large number of the resident population, estimated in the tens of thousands, remained in or around the city because they lacked the resources or ability to leave.

The government of Ukraine did not declare a state of emergency or make any request for external humanitarian assistance, which prevented the United Nations and other agencies from being directly or substantially involved. Local and regional government offices were responsible for assistance and the coordination of repairs and renovation activities, but their support was limited due to lack of budget allocation. Some humanitarian agencies experienced administrative and customs difficulties, resulting in delays or cancellations of assistance. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partner Caritas Ukraine concluded that all assistance, including the procurement of necessary goods, had to be provided locally.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose a cash-based response.

Shelter needs

The continued fighting had caused damage to housing, leaving many households vulnerable to approaching winter temperatures. Caritas Ukraine

47,500 m²

AMOUNT OF GLASS NEEDED TO
REPAIR DAMAGED WINDOWS

conducted assessments with the City Bureau of Housing and Communal Services to establish ways to improve households' resilience during the winter. Findings showed that 1,300 vulnerable families had no windows in their homes or apartments as a result of percussion from explosions, which further damaged heating systems due to freezing. Households that could not repair their windows with glass used any material they could find, such as plastic, cardboard, carpets and wood.

The program estimated that the total amount of glass needed for window replacement was approximately 47,500 square meters, of which 67.5 percent was for residential purposes. By the time the program started, approximately 40 percent of windows had already been repaired or replaced—all schools had full or temporary repairs, but many low-income households, a number of kindergartens, and an orphanage still needed assistance.

Market context

A rapid market assessment indicated that there were sufficient local vendors and contractors of windows and building supplies. Shelter services and supply markets were functional and could meet the needs of local people.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

The program aimed to repair and replace windows damaged during the conflict to ensure that living accommodation would be warm during the winter; this assistance focused on dwellings, with a smaller component for schools and other child-support facilities. CRS and Caritas Ukraine implemented the project in Slovyansk and surrounding communities.

Due to the rate of self-recovery and the risks associated with procurement and logistics, CRS and Caritas Ukraine revised the initial proposal, which consisted of buying glass and having it cut and delivered to households or collected by beneficiaries. Instead, they decided that electronic cash transfers were quicker, safer, more

appropriate, and would enable the program to use existing vendors and contractors.

CRS and Caritas Ukraine employed local contractors to supply and fit glass, repair windows and replace whole frames where required. Different activities were required for the repair or replacement of different types of window (timber, plastic and metal); CRS negotiated an agreement with participating contractors that set standard rates for each type of work. The program used existing standard base rates to negotiate and agree on costs and verified them against costs for similar work by the government, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

Program goals and objectives

Households will be safe and warm during freezing winter temperatures:

- The most vulnerable populations will receive glass and insulating glass units, and have broken windows repaired or replaced.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS partnered with Caritas Ukraine to implement the project.

Beneficiary selection

The Slovyansk city administration prepared the beneficiary list using government data and individual requests from households; however, government data were out of date. CRS performed outreach to communities through a help desk in the city library and verified the beneficiary list through preliminary interviews and household visits. Beneficiary criteria were based on the government of Ukraine's definition of vulnerability—whether beneficiaries were registered for social assistance, which covered age, income, health, handicap and social situation. Caritas Ukraine reviewed and approved the beneficiary list and limited direct assistance to the most vulnerable people on the basis of existing Caritas criteria. The program used a spreadsheet to register beneficiaries in a shared database and kept individual files for each beneficiary, including copies of surveys, agreements, photographs, GPS coordinates, bank payments and other information.

Value of cash grant

CRS engaged local contractors through a framework agreement with suppliers, and agreed on standard common rates for repairs through a series of meetings. The value of repairs varied depending on the type of work:

- Single-pane replacement (materials and labor): 160 Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH) per square meter
- Double-glazed unit (materials and labor): 320 UAH per square meter
- Replacement uPVC frame and glass (materials and labor): 700 UAH per square meter
- Timber-framed windows repairs (materials and labor): 250 UAH per piece

There was no set cash grant value; CRS determined the value on a case-by-case basis depending on the level and type of window repairs required by each household.

Cash distribution

CRS paid beneficiaries directly through new bank accounts created specifically for this payment,

which were restricted to specific contractors registered to that account. This approach prevented any tax liability on the part of CRS and provided assurance that beneficiaries could use the funds for repairs only. It also reduced the administration required to pay vendors or contractors directly and assured vendors that funds were available for payment. CRS made an assessment of different banks prior to selection; banks were very helpful and opened accounts within 24 hours. Electronic banking technology enabled quick disbursement of cash to beneficiaries.

Repair

The program requested expressions of interest from contractors for prequalification. Expressions of interest included details that would help the program to select contractors. CRS interviewed each contractor and visited their offices and workshops. Once the contractors were prequalified, beneficiaries could procure replacement windows by requests for quotations to these contractors. To increase efficiency, smaller jobs were combined into single contracts, with the contractor selected based on experience, tax and company status.

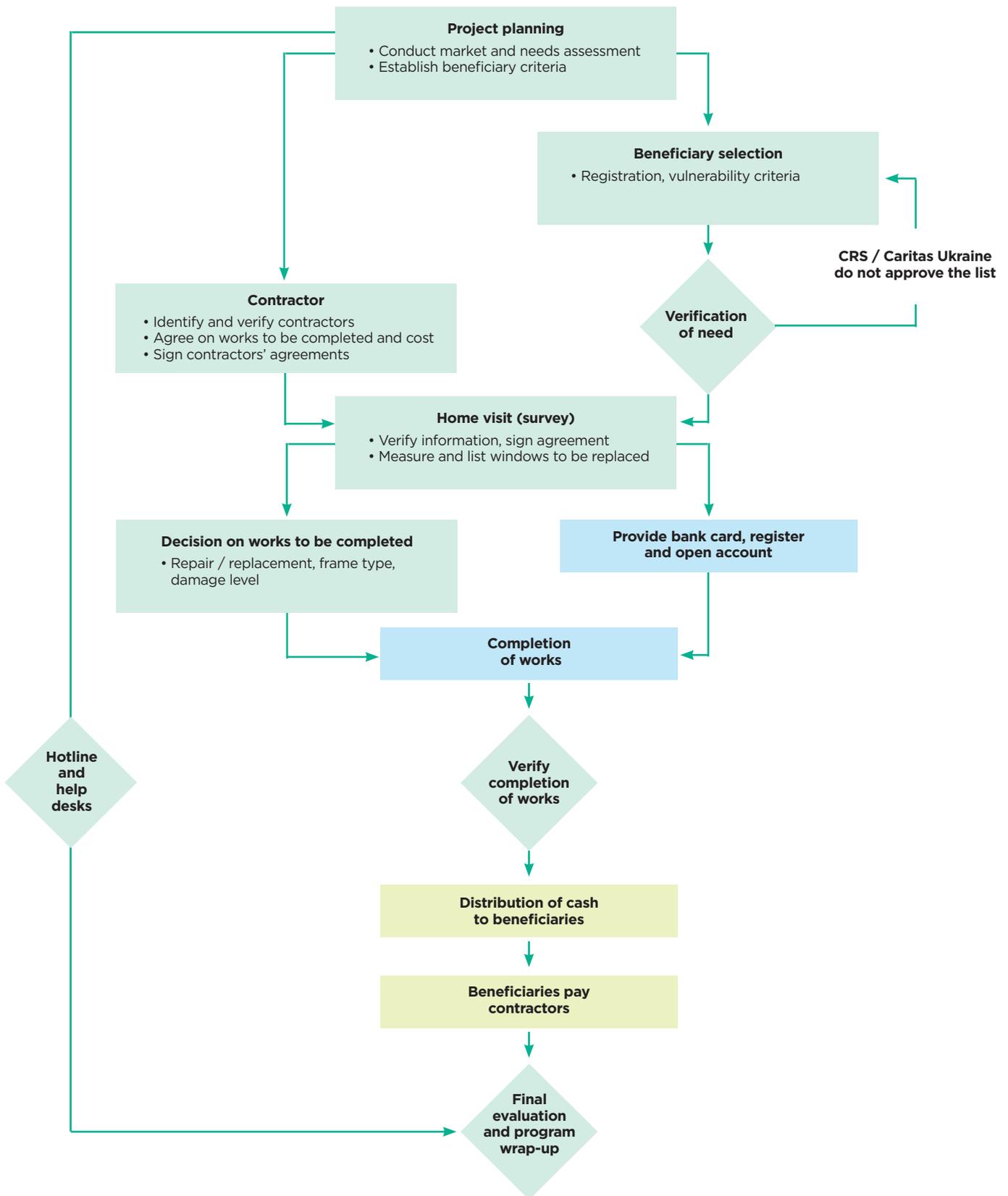
The repairs required depended on the type and condition of existing windows. The program repaired timber frames if possible, sometimes with the help of a carpenter, or replaced them with plastic frames and double glazing. If the frames were adequate or could be fixed, the program installed 4mm glass with mastic and new beading. The program replaced plastic and metal window frames if damaged; otherwise, the program fitted new double-glazed units into the existing frames. The supplier took all measurements and supplied and installed the windows.

Protection

Project activities focused on the elderly, low-income families and those with young children to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. Decisions around repair and replacement took into account the capacity of households, particularly elderly households, to maintain and repair windows in the future, ensuring that the project provided more than a temporary solution.

Process

The chart below illustrates the process of implementation.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CRS used the following monitoring and accountability mechanisms:

- Conducted preliminary interviews and household visits to ensure that those seeking assistance complied with the vulnerability criteria.
- Provided evidence with photographs and GPS coordinates and met program reporting requirements.
- Documented and collated rates, agreements and prequalification forms to ensure availability for audits or inspection.
- Maintained the database and methods of reporting and provided the documents and pictures required by the agreement.
- Set up a help desk in the town library to respond to queries and a hotline to provide information and address complaints.
- Used SMS text messages to inform beneficiaries about the program and update them on progress.

RESULTS

By the end of the project, the program had installed 1,204 windows in 379 households. The program also supported the businesses of small, local vendors of shelter materials and contractors of shelter services.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|--|---|
| Repaired windows protect vulnerable families from cold winter weather and reduce damage to heating systems due to freezing. | Households had already begun simple repairs, leading to a need for CRS to focus on the more costly and time-consuming repairs that households required assistance for. | CRS modified the original design of the program to accommodate varying needs for assistance. |
| | Government data were incomplete and out-of-date. CRS had to verify every household and check registration information | CRS set up a help desk in the town library to help people register for support and respond to queries. They also set up a hotline for complaints and information. |
| | There was pre-existing damage to property due to poverty, especially among the elderly. | CRS found ways to provide repairs for pre-existing damage to reduce their vulnerability. |
| Providing cash to beneficiaries to pay vendors enabled CRS to avoid tax liabilities from paying suppliers directly. | Some contractors needed payment in advance as they did not have credit with suppliers. | CRS provided these suppliers with assurances that assisted with this. |
| | Bureaucratic procedures avoided tax liabilities but created a substantial workload and limited progress. | The team had fairly robust systems in place for dealing with bureaucratic procedures, and was able to handle the increased workload efficiently. |
| Providing windows ensured that beneficiaries had sufficient warm living space before winter. | Because of time constraints due to the approach of winter, the program was unable to complete all activities on time. | A temporary windows team visited beneficiary households with plastic sheeting and tape to ensure that households had at least some protection from winter temperatures, with average temperatures of approximately -13°F (-25°C). |
| | There were delays due to internal administration and communication between Caritas offices and the donor. Delays meant the program could not be completed within the proposed timescale. | The program hired more contractors to increase output and ensured good relations with existing contractors. The program ensured adequate monitoring and supervision to ensure quality work. |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|---|--|
| CRS and Caritas Ukraine worked with local government offices to implement the program. | There was a complicated situation with the local power structure. Many former representatives who had openly supported pro-Russian separatists had been displaced or disappeared; others who had not openly supported separatists were not friendly to Kyiv officials either. Newly appointed representatives had no experience in disaster assistance. | CRS and Caritas Ukraine regularly disseminated information about project activities through all available and appropriate means of communication while making all activities visible to the public, media and authorities. The program also held regular coordination meetings of stakeholders in every region regarding program activities and timely solution of problems. |
| Cash transfers ensured a flexible approach to the project. | A tense security situation with varied security risk could limit access to target areas—the conflict changed daily. Security was always an issue, especially where there had been fighting and there was a risk of unexploded ordnance. | Security assessments were an ongoing part of operational plans. The head of the Caritas Ukraine office in Kharkiv had primary responsibility for staying abreast of security and access issues in all areas of operations. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

The implementing agency can reduce the tax burden to beneficiaries for financial transactions. It is important to understand tax exemption mechanisms and whether tax may be charged to beneficiaries. Financial transactions through beneficiaries in this project avoided tax liability on the part of CRS, but it may have put beneficiaries at risk of being charged VAT or income tax.

Technological infrastructure can facilitate quick and safe cash transfers but can be vulnerable in conflict zones. Ukraine had electronic banking methods in place, including debit cards, which facilitated the transfer of funds to beneficiaries. Completely digitized systems, such as the one used in this project, may be vulnerable to failure as a result of power cuts or Internet failure, especially in conflict areas.

Bulk payments, where feasible, can reduce time and resources needed. Systems should be in place at banks to make mass or bulk payments to large numbers of beneficiaries; in Ukraine, banks had to process beneficiary payments individually.

It would be helpful if banks could provide a system to monitor payments. It would have been useful to have a system in place through the

banks to verify when beneficiaries had received payments and to ensure that individuals were able to access their funds when required.

Documentation can be challenging, especially in conflict areas where protection is key.

Ukraine has a high level of bureaucracy, which could cause problems in conflict situations where beneficiaries may have missing documents or identification (which may be required to open bank accounts), or where people may not want to provide identification. Many people in conflict situations may not want to volunteer information, provide identification or appear on lists. Secure data protection measures should be in place.

Supporting local service providers can ensure quality, timely response. By facilitating direct links to local vendors and contractors, CRS and Caritas enabled beneficiaries to choose their service provider and customize their repairs. The strategy also supported local livelihoods.



CRS developed tablet-based electronic registration forms for efficient registration of beneficiaries by social workers. *Photo by CRS staff*

Ukraine

WINTER RESILIENCE FOR IDPS IN EASTERN UKRAINE CONFLICT

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Disaster/conflict date: | March 2014 - ongoing |
| Project timescale: | October 2014 - September 2015 (6 months) |
| Affected population: | 450,000 in November 2014, 1.3 million in July 2015 |
| Target population: | 3,100 households |
| Modality: | Bank transfer |
| Value of cash grant: | US\$300 per household |
| Project budget: | US\$1,750,000 |



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Continued conflict in Eastern Ukraine during 2014 caused internal displacement of over 1.46 million people by September 2015, and another 1,123,800 fled to other countries, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Rapid assessments carried out by Catholic Relief Services found that the majority of internally displaced people, or IDPs, fled their homes with few belongings and faced limited employment opportunities or difficulty re-registering for pensions and other social payments; people from the hardest hit areas had exhausted financial coping mechanisms. Over half of the IDPs are women, with significant numbers of children, elderly and disabled people.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose a cash-based response.

Shelter needs

With winter temperatures dropping to an average low of -10°F, the immediate needs for IDPs were accessing adequate shelter; nonfood items for coping with the cold; and food and hygiene supplies. Social services departments and volunteers supported IDPs where they could, but needed supplemental assistance.

IDPs with some financial capacity rented accommodation in urban areas, but they needed a regular income to support housing costs through winter. Some families stayed in rural holiday cottages, many of which needed adaptations to be suitable for winter. Many households sought alternative winter-appropriate housing or

1.46 million

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE
BY SEPTEMBER 2015

required additional funds for rent, utilities, repairs or winter items. CRS assessments showed that approximately 25 percent of families reduced their expenses by sharing accommodation with other families, despite limited space. Other IDPs stayed with host families, but struggled to contribute to costs of utilities related to their presence in households through winter.

While many IDPs stayed with friends or family, others stayed with more random acquaintances or people they did not know. Opposing views on the conflict led to possible tensions within hosting communities; some IDPs also faced discrimination when searching for accommodation, with landlords refusing to rent to tenants whose passports showed registration data from Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

Market context

CRS conducted market assessments that indicated nonfood items and rental markets could meet increased demand without further market disruption, although respondents reported increased rent in larger cities. Respondents also reported the demand for firewood exceeded the stock of seasoned timber. The interruption of coal supplies from within the conflict area was a concern for electrical generation and domestic heating.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

CRS developed a six-month winterization program designed to financially support vulnerable conflict-affected households. The program prioritized finding and ensuring winterized housing, and provided unconditional cash for the purchase of items needed to prepare for and endure winter.

The cash grant consisted of one-time cash transfers to vulnerable IDPs to support rent and utility payments, one-time cash transfers for the purchase of key winter commodities (including warm coats, clothes, heaters and blankets), and one-time cash transfers to help winterize living space. A small percentage of beneficiaries were eligible for all three types of assistance.

The program ensured that beneficiaries winterized their living space in compliance with the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum](#)

[Standards in Humanitarian Response](#), the Sphere Handbook:

- **Safe:** Resilient to multiple disasters including earthquakes, typhoons and landslides.
- **Adequate:** With good ventilation and drainage, of a good size and gender-sensitive with appropriate privacy.
- **Durable:** Materials are strong and durable enough to last 18 to 24 months.

The program used unconditional cash transfers to enable vulnerable households to identify and buy items according to their individual needs for winter, and to ensure rapid assistance before the worst of the winter season. Cash transfer flexibility also allowed families to negotiate directly with landlords and host families to make the best use of funds with limited administrative impediments.

Program goal and objectives

Conflict-affected people in Eastern Ukraine are able to live with safety and dignity:

- Conflict-affected households have access to safe and appropriate shelter.
- Conflict-affected households are able to cope with the winter conditions.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS partnered with Caritas Ukraine, and jointly managed the project from Caritas' local Kharkiv and Slovyansk offices and satellite offices in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia. Caritas Ukraine planned and implemented the project, with CRS providing overall oversight, monitoring and support.

Beneficiary selection

CRS originally targeted 3,100 households, and conducted outreach to potential beneficiaries through posters in areas frequented by IDPs, collaboration with government offices, referrals from social services organizations and visits to communities hosting large numbers of IDPs outside of urban centers. The posters explained the program and provided the list of selection criteria. Caritas social workers met with and registered IDPs or host families who believed they met the criteria; the whole project team then worked together to select participants transparently based on vulnerability criteria using the demographic information collected.

Vulnerability criteria included single- or female-headed households, those with disabled or chronically ill members, pregnant or new mothers, three or more children, or no income sources. Two additional winter-specific criteria concerned the winterization of households' living spaces, and household assessments of the need for additional heating during the winter months.

All selected households received the unconditional winter commodities cash grant. The project targeted high-needs households for visits in which staff members conducted building conditions assessments; households could then be eligible for one or two supplemental cash grants to support shelter needs.

Beneficiary registration

CRS developed tablet-based electronic registration forms to enable efficient registration of beneficiaries by social workers across the target regions. The registration process consisted of two steps: (1) initial assessment of beneficiary household need and (2) collection of the documents from each beneficiary required by Ukrainian tax law to process and disburse cash grants via bank transfer.

Value of cash grant

CRS set the value of the unconditional cash transfer for winter commodities at US\$300

by identifying likely priority items (winter coats, room heater, fuel and blankets) through discussions with displaced households and by looking at current costs in local stores. The program also set the value of the shelter winterization kit at US\$300, based on the value of an illustrative package (one door, one window, plastic sheeting, and nails, screws and small tools) that would assist households to winterize one room, ensuring they had appropriate sheltered space protected from the environment.

Caritas Ukraine assessments showed that the average cost of a two-room apartment was US\$230 per month, plus US\$60 per month for utilities if they were on the government-controlled electricity grid. For those living in summer houses or outside of major cities, rent was lower but additional substantial fuel costs for heating were expected. CRS set the shelter-related subsidies cash transfer at US\$300 to help offset the cost of housing in conjunction with the winter commodities grant.

Cash distribution

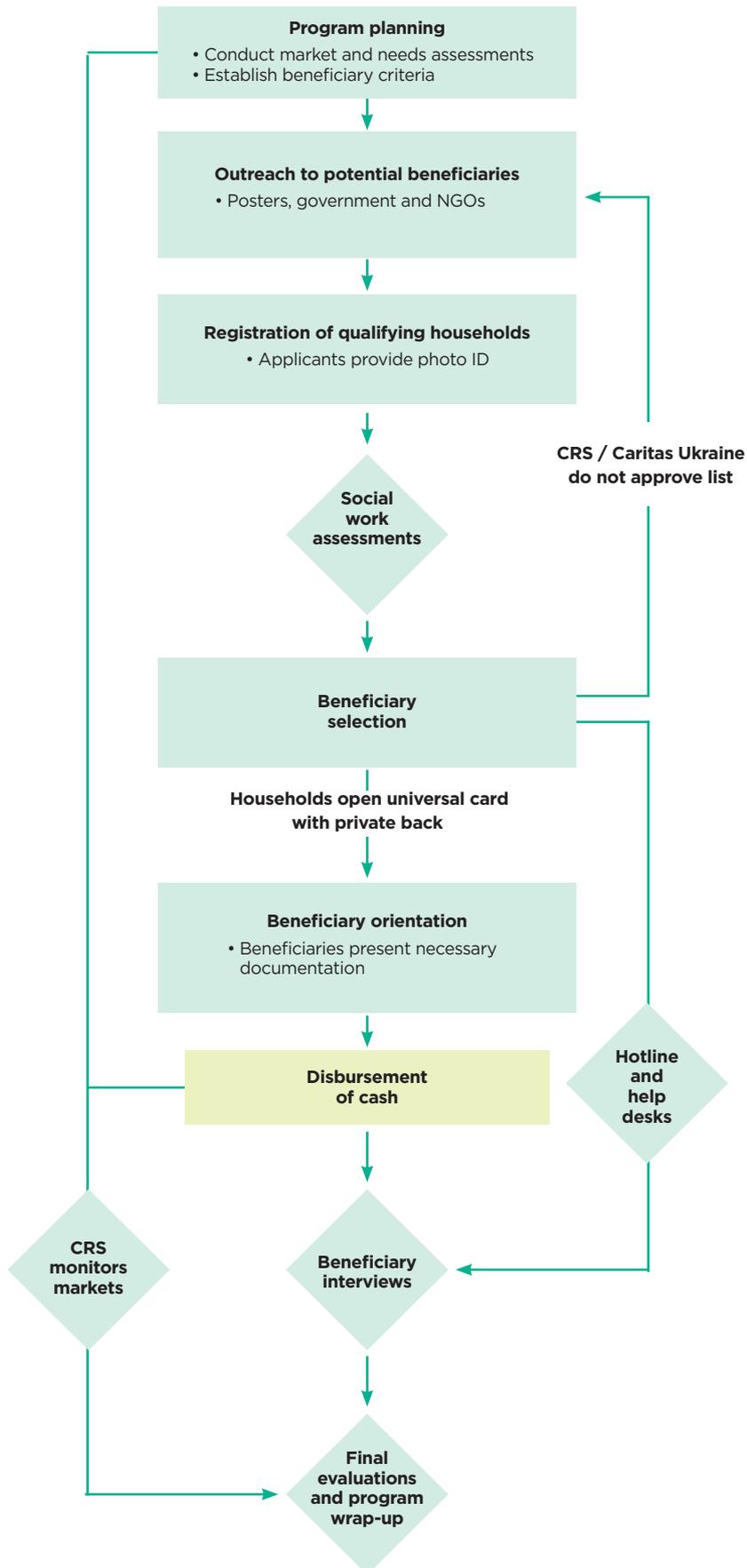
CRS distributed cash as one-time payments through bank transfers to beneficiaries; most potential beneficiaries had bank accounts and, if not, these were easy to open with proper documents. ATMs were readily available in targeted areas and were a common mechanism for accessing cash. Caritas Ukraine was already implementing programs using cash transfers to bank accounts that beneficiaries could access with locally available debit cards. This form of transfer helped avoid the stigma related to receiving handouts and ensured the privacy of beneficiaries.

Protection and security

The majority (75 percent) of beneficiaries registering were women, as adult women made up a very large portion of IDPs, and men, anecdotally, had difficulty asking for support. This encouraged greater control over resources by women and inclusive decision-making by both men and women in households. CRS solicited feedback from women and men separately to ensure the incorporation of women's assessments of winter needs into the project design, and both male and female team members conducted verification visits to ensure they captured the voices of women and men.

Process

The chart below illustrates the process of implementation.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CRS adapted field-tested surveys and real-time evaluations for this project. CRS used the following monitoring and accountability mechanisms:

- Used information and communications technology in the form of mobile devices for gathering data and to track information such as market prices, availability of goods, project indicators, beneficiary registration and information, and overall project progress.
- Regularly reviewed registration databases to check for duplication, in coordination with other actors working in or near target areas.
- Analyzed beneficiary feedback on a weekly basis. Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries could access a regional office hotline, email and office help desks to ask questions and share feedback or complaints.
- Conducted regular monitoring visits and follow-up calls to households that received subsidies to ensure they had enough space that they were able to keep warm during the winter and were accessing funds for subsidies without a problem.
- Conducted post-use surveys with a sample of beneficiaries to understand how they prioritized the use of funds, how they spent the funds, and to monitor their satisfaction with support.
- Monitored local market conditions throughout the project to ensure that cash assistance by CRS and other actors was not negatively affecting prices. CRS used this data to examine the continued viability of the approach and make adjustments as necessary.
- Monitored the market throughout the project to ensure beneficiaries were paying market prices and to identify retail units.
- Conducted a household-level survey at the end of the project, disaggregated by sex, to assess the impact of cash transfers on individuals' winter preparedness.
- Completed two after-action reviews to reflect on the activities of the project and identify areas for improvement and adjustment—one after the pilot and one at project completion.
- Carried out an internal final evaluation to determine how well the project met indicators and achieved intended results, with a focus on the appropriateness of the response impact on target populations and agency accountability to beneficiaries.

RESULTS

In total, 3,212 families received cash grants for winter commodities, exceeding the original target of 3,100—of these families, 713 received grants to support rent and utilities, and 185 received grants to support the winterization of living space; 150 households received both.

CRS and Caritas support targeted the most vulnerable IDPs. Shelter-related cash grants amounted to US\$269,100 in cash support, and winter commodities cash grants amounted to US\$963,900 and directly affected 10,778 beneficiaries—6,902 beneficiaries were female, 3,462 were children and 1,039 were elderly. Most beneficiaries were IDPs, but 324 were host family members or other conflict-affected individuals.

Cash grants provided flexibility to meet individual needs for winter. During the feedback survey, 68 percent of respondents said they were generally prepared for winter conditions after receiving cash transfers, and 8 percent were fully prepared. Seventy-one percent of respondents had sufficient space for all family members in their dwelling, and 69 percent said their dwelling was prepared for winter conditions after receiving cash transfers. Almost all (98 percent) beneficiaries had been able to access their cash transfers and 96 percent were satisfied with the timeliness of the

cash grant distribution; 97 percent of beneficiaries knew how to report problems with the program via the regional office hotline.

Beneficiaries did not use cash grants exclusively to meet shelter needs. There was a wide variety of needs among the IDP population during the winter months; nearly 20 percent of respondents said they rarely or never had enough to eat, and approximately 20 percent said their living space was rarely or never warm enough after receiving a cash grant. Similarly, 30 percent said they had little or none of the warm clothing they needed. The ways beneficiaries spent cash transfers in conjunction with existing resources varied widely, with households making a diversity of purchases including clothing, blankets, heaters, medication, food, fuel, rent and utilities. Twenty percent of all cash distributed was spent on rent, 20 percent was spent on medicine, 18 percent was spent on food, 10 percent was spent on jackets and 7 percent was spent on boots. Utilities accounted for 7 percent of cash use, 3 percent for wood, 1 percent for electric heaters and 1 percent for blankets; beneficiaries spent the rest of the cash on other miscellaneous expenses or debt.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Cash transfers provided beneficiaries with the flexibility to meet their individual needs for winter.</p> | <p>The possibility of beneficiaries using money to buy restricted items such as pharmaceuticals, alcohol, tobacco and firearms.</p> | <p>CRS and Caritas Ukraine oriented beneficiaries on the intended purpose of the cash grants and provided a short list of items the project did not support to discourage purchases of these items.</p> |
| | <p>Delayed cash transfers. The project had scheduled the majority of transfers to start in December 2014 but, due to the amount of documentation to verify manually, the project rescheduled transfers until January and February.</p> | <p>Most (96 percent) of beneficiaries said they were satisfied with the timeliness of cash distribution.</p> |
| <p>The program targeted the most vulnerable IDPs.</p> | <p>During the course of the original six-month project some IDP households returned to their homes or no longer required assistance, and new IDPs arrived or exhausted their resources and came forward for assistance.</p> | <p>CRS was flexible and used an evolving approach to continue assisting vulnerable households who chose to return while adding additional IDPs to the support structure. Some IDP households changed status during the project; CRS re-evaluated them for benefits.</p> |
| | <p>Many more families were eligible for assistance, but the project could not meet their needs.</p> | <p>The registration questionnaire and interview with the social worker were very important in helping to decide who to select for the grants.</p> |
| | <p>Selecting beneficiaries across four oblasts on a tight time frame proved to be an inefficient strategy.</p> | <p>Initial selection was conducted by the program manager in the later stages of the project, based on an algorithm, with final selections made by social workers in groups to review key aspect of client files.</p> |
| <p>Eighty percent of beneficiaries registering were women; this encouraged a greater degree of control over resources by women and inclusive decision making by both men and women in the household.</p> | <p>Providing cash grants to women had the potential to cause intra-household tension. One percent of households reported that receiving cash grants led to conflict within their households and less than 1 percent reported that receiving cash grants led to conflict in the communities where they resettled.</p> | <p>Both men and women were eligible to receive cash transfers on behalf of their households. Given concerns by men of registering out of fear of conscription, this approach was highly appropriate and acceptable by communities in general.</p> |

WHAT WE LEARNED

A cash-based response effectively met beneficiary needs. The IDP population had a wide variety of needs during the winter months. Although cash grants enabled beneficiaries to prioritize shelter needs, the ways beneficiaries spent cash transfers varied widely, with 46 percent of cash spent on non-shelter-related items.

The fluctuating exchange rate affected the value of the cash grant. The Ukrainian Hryvnia (UAH) lost 50 percent of its value during February but as the cost of living did not shift rapidly, CRS/Caritas maintained the cash grant size at 4,753 UAH (fixed at the beginning of the project) and used the additional liquidity to pay Ukrainian government taxes on charitable donations in the stead of beneficiaries and provided additional cash transfers with registration of beneficiaries recommencing in March. By March 31, CRS had expended only 90 percent of the original budget, despite having exceeded program targets for cash grants. Future programs should carefully monitor the effect of exchange rates on the real value of cash grants.

A baseline survey would provide more data about the effects of a cash grant. A baseline survey of beneficiary material conditions would have been beneficial in order to provide a more direct assessment of the change in conditions

for IDPs following the receipt of a cash grant. However, data collected at the end of the project provided insight into conditions during the final one to two months of winter.

Tax laws prevented the use of prepaid debit cards. Originally, the program planned to disburse cash using a Swift prepaid card, a U.S.-based debit card that could be used to withdraw cash from ATMs or be used anywhere Visa products were accepted. However, this option proved impossible due to Ukraine government tax regulations regarding charitable donations. National tax laws will impact the implementation of projects; future projects should fully understand them in order to select the most suitable method of cash distribution.

Follow-up visits and monitoring can ensure Sphere standards and quality. Staff conducted follow-up visits and calls for beneficiaries to ensure their housing met Sphere standards, and to ensure they were not having problems with the cash transfers. This method of monitoring can be useful to ensure that program quality objectives are met.



Wafa, 12, sets off for school from her home in Mafrqa, Jordan. She arrived from Aleppo, Syria, with her mother in December 2012.
 Photo by Andrew McConnell/CRS

Jordan

RENT ASSISTANCE FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES SYRIAN WAR

- Location:** Amman, Madaba and Balqa
- Disaster/conflict date:** March 2011 - ongoing
- Project timescale:** November 2014 - February 2015
- Affected population:** Over 3 million people displaced
- Target population:** 298 vulnerable Syrians and Jordanians
- Modality:** Swift prepaid Visa card
- Cost per shelter:** 450 Jordanian dinars
- Project budget:** US\$282,778



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Over 600,000 Syrian refugees have arrived in Jordan since 2011; Eighty percent of these live in urban or peri-urban locations rather than in camp settings. Families in this situation must pay rent for their shelter, and are therefore subject to shifts in rental market values. Rents have inflated substantially due to massive increases in demand, which has also affected low-income Jordanians.

Due to displacement in Syria prior to exile in Jordan, most Syrian refugees have exhausted their savings or fallen into debt. There are limited income opportunities for Syrian refugees in Jordan as they are prohibited from working legally; thus, many earn money through unskilled labor practiced illegally, but wages are low and there are serious potential ramifications if caught. Cultural and practical factors preclude many female-headed households from employment opportunities, making these households particularly vulnerable.

CRS partner Caritas Jordan has been able to provide a large range of assistance measures to Syrian refugees living in host communities; increasingly, this has been coupled with market-based help. A voucher-based winterization project from May to November 2013 provided support of nonfood items for 1,600 households and rent support for 800 households of 300 Jordanian dinars (JOD) over three months, with an end-of-project household survey showing that 80 percent of respondents would have preferred cash support to adapt their spending to their specific needs.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

As refugees were unable to open bank accounts in Jordan, the program decided to work with prepaid cards. Catholic Relief Services entered into an agreement with Swift prepaid Solutions in order to better understand the unique benefits and challenges of the Swift prepaid Visa card, a U.S.-based debit card that can be used to withdraw cash from ATMs or be used anywhere Visa products are accepted. CRS also considered the possibility of using

600,000

SYRIAN REFUGEES HAVE ARRIVED
IN JORDAN SINCE 2011

Shelter needs

An assessment conducted by Caritas Jordan in July 2014 showed that the highest priority need expressed by Syrian refugee families was rent assistance. Utility bills, health care and hygiene items were also needed, while the majority of refugees were receiving food support from the World Food Programme.

Market context

Reliable banking services and ATMs are widely available across the country, but refugees were not allowed to open bank accounts in Jordan. Nongovernmental organizations in the area, including Caritas Jordan, had demonstrated past success with cash-based approaches, and the available infrastructure in the region presented the opportunity to try new and innovative interventions.

Assessment results and secondary data indicated that rental markets were functioning and rental spaces were available in urban Jordan. However, costs were high and thus out of reach of many newly arrived refugees.

it in other emergency contexts where a rapid response might be necessary. The decision was made to pilot Swift prepaid cards as part of an existing Caritas Jordan rental support project that was in the process of being implemented among newly arrived refugees and was using checks paid directly to landlords. CRS and Caritas Jordan implemented this pilot to test an electronic product to support cash response in the earliest stages of emergencies.

Program goals and objectives

1. Conflict-affected households meet their shelter needs:
 - Cash assistance intended for rent provided through monthly e-payments to prepaid debit cards in the possession of direct beneficiaries.
 - Vulnerable targeted households easily and safely use debit cards at ATMs.
2. CRS/Caritas Jordan identifies best practices around the use of cards to improve its emergency response.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS implemented this project with local partner Caritas Jordan, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Development, Jordan's official humanitarian assistance arm, and other government bodies.

Beneficiary selection

The program targeted a mix of Syrian refugees (70 percent) and poor Jordanians (30 percent) as a result of Jordanian government requirements, with additional vulnerability criteria used to determine aid recipients. Eligible beneficiaries were initially selected through the Caritas Jordan database; social workers had conducted in-depth home-based vulnerability assessments of all 400,000 Syrian refugees registered at their community centers. An outreach team then verified the list through an assessment especially designed for this project. The program prioritized newcomers (those who had arrived within the previous three or four months), as they were most likely to be facing higher rent and additional burdens of settling into the host community. Before receiving the card and PIN, beneficiaries signed a moral agreement stating they understood the intended use of the money.

Value of cash grant

CRS and Caritas Jordan drew on past experience, consultation with members of the Cash Working Group and reference to recent studies conducted in Jordan to determine the value of the cash grant. A case study conducted by CARE in April 2014 found that the average monthly expenditure for rent and utilities for Syrian respondents was 193 JOD (approximately US\$271), although this varied by location. The program chose to implement a grant of 150 JOD per month (approximately US\$211) for three months.

During implementation, CRS found that an average rent was 147 JOD (Range: 50–320 JOD) (US\$207, range US\$70–US\$450). Over one-third (111) of beneficiaries did not spend the total 150 JOD cash grant on rent. These beneficiaries made an average saving of 39 JOD (US\$55) per month. CRS chose not to modify the cash transfer value in light of these results.

Cash distribution

Cash was distributed through the Swift prepaid Visa card. CRS engaged in a contractual relationship with Swift prepaid Solutions and managed the card through an online platform, with control over the loading and activation of individual cards. A mass text service informed beneficiaries when money had been loaded on their cards and was ready for withdrawal.

Protection and security

The Swift customer service portal enabled CRS and Caritas Jordan to monitor and analyze the withdrawal of cash and the location of each card. CRS was able to block stolen or lost cards and replace them with new cards as needed. Only 5 out of 298 beneficiaries reported any security concerns using the cards.

Support focused on extremely vulnerable Syrian groups: female-headed households; refugees at risk of sexual gender-based violence; single unaccompanied women; victims of violence; women with female adolescents at risk of early forced marriage; and children at risk of child labor, child abuse, or dropping out of school.

Priority was given to Syrian women, and children under 15, who were considered at high risk of exploitation or abuse, with the next tier priority for those under standard vulnerability criteria. Caritas established a strong referral system with other organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Centre for Victims of Torture for cases needing additional support, including legal protection.

Initial needs assessments for the original project showed that refugee women often felt insecure in new communities and were hesitant to go outside without a male guardian, reporting experiencing verbal harassment when walking or on public transport. Caritas conducted home visits with teams that included male and female Syrian volunteers wearing Caritas vests and identification.

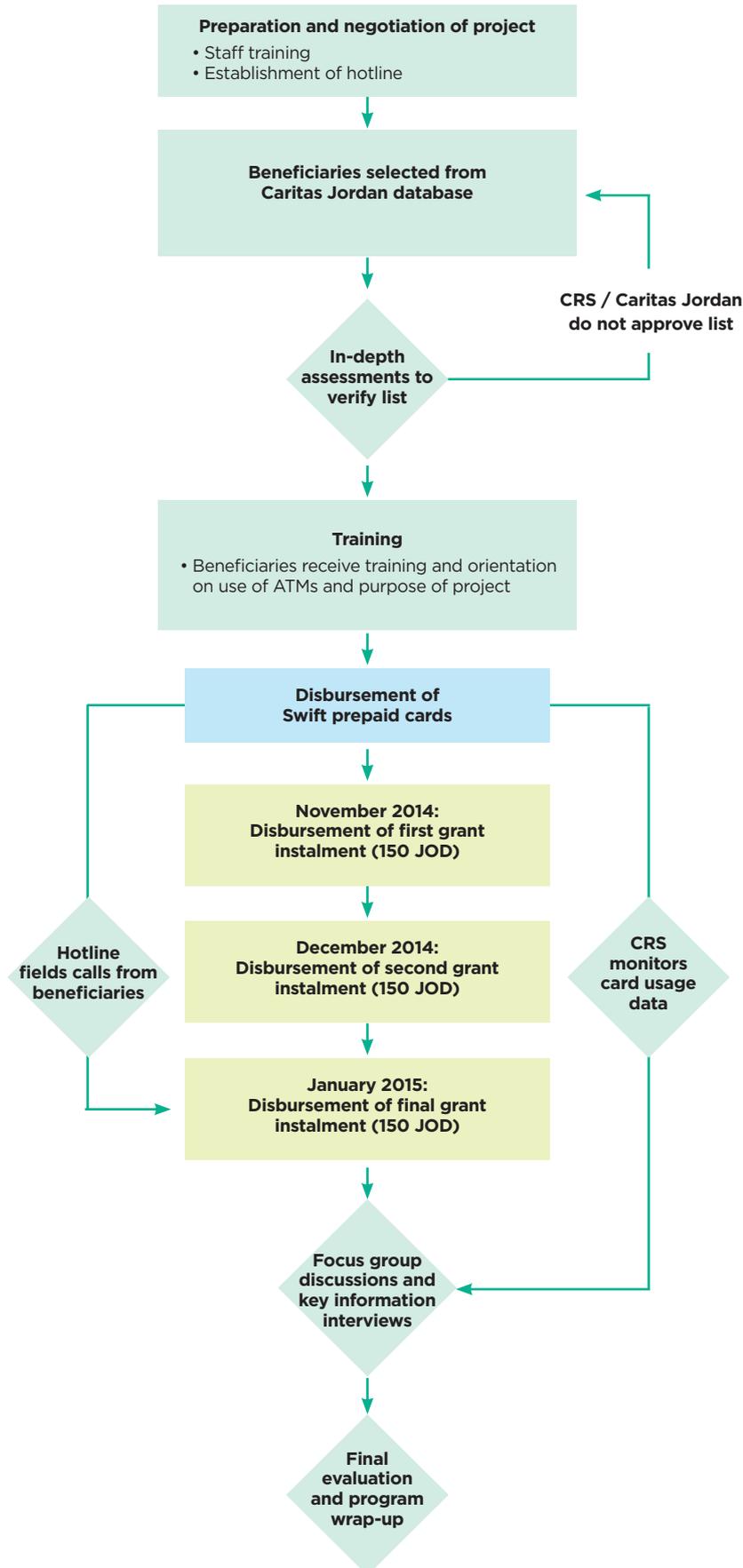
Technical assistance

As many beneficiaries in this process had no previous experience of using an ATM, Caritas provided a mandatory in-person training and orientation session before card distribution. This training included how to use the cards at ATMs, what amount would be credited monthly to cards, locations of usable ATMs, and information on how to contact Caritas Jordan should they have questions or problems with the card. Beneficiaries were also provided with a pamphlet they could carry to ATMs for reference.

Caritas Jordan asked beneficiaries to provide a copy of their agreement with their landlord, and organized a meeting during which their lawyer explained the rights and duties of landlords and tenants as well as signed an agreement with both parties.

Process

The chart below illustrates the process of implementation.



PROGRAM STRATEGY

Robust monitoring was carried out throughout the project to ensure learning was captured throughout the process of the pilot. This was provided in the following ways:

- An evaluation was conducted in February 2015 examining the extent to which project beneficiaries' shelter needs were met through use of the Swift prepaid card product, and the extent to which use of the card improved the speed and flexibility of assistance to beneficiaries compared to other models and products.
- In-depth analysis of pre-selected households was conducted by the Caritas outreach team at the start of the project to best monitor the needs and spending of each household.
- Home visits to beneficiaries ensured that shelters were Sphere-compliant.
- A hotline was set up to answer questions when people faced difficulties withdrawing funds. Hotline calls were fielded by an information technology staff person hired specifically for the project.
- Issues arising from hotline calls were dealt with by a Caritas Jordan team based at their community centers; the number of phone calls and types of questions asked by recipients were also documented.
- Post-distribution surveys were conducted over the phone by the information technology staff and two additional Caritas Jordan staff. Staff also conducted focus group discussions with project stakeholders.
- As a Special Status Project, the Jordan office and Humanitarian Response Department teams provided higher-than-normal levels of support. The same level of oversight and support would not be common in normal programming.

RESULTS

For the most part, beneficiaries spent cash grants as intended. In addition to rent, some spent money on utilities (36 beneficiaries in Month 1; 29 in Month 2; and 21 in Month 3) or food (14 in Month 1; 24 in Month 2; and 29 in Month 3). Other results include the following:

- Beneficiaries reported high levels of satisfaction.
- CRS and Caritas Jordan staff also appreciated the pilot of the Swift prepaid card product.
- Only seven or eight beneficiaries spent money on debt each month.
- Ninety percent of beneficiaries had not used a debit card prior to the pilot, but all reported a high level of comfort with the cards after the pilot.
- Most (86.6 percent) beneficiaries were able to withdraw funds themselves; 5.3 percent sought assistance from a spouse, 3.7 percent from a son, 3.7 percent from another relative and 0.7 percent from a friend.
- More than half of all beneficiaries were able to access cash within 48 hours of notification.
- Almost all (98 percent) beneficiaries were able to access the full 150 JOD benefit in Month 1, 91 percent in Month 2 and 97 percent in Month 3.
- Average households spent 2.34 JOD on travel to access cash resources; over a third reached the location on foot.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|---|--|
| The partnership with Swift allowed cards to be deployed in a matter of days, instead of starting negotiations with a local financial institution. | High fee structure and challenges with the exchange rate. | The fees were manageable in the short term by providing clear direction to beneficiaries on exactly how to withdraw the funds to get the full amount; for longer-term projects, engaging with the local banking system would be recommended. |
| | Problems importing the card and potential hold-ups in customs. | Swift directly shipped cards to country programs/offices. |
| | Different business processes between partners delayed the loading of the cards during the first distribution. | CRS should communicate and manage the need for flexibility, and plan proactively to work around small hurdles. |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|--|--|
| Cards are easily rechargeable, and there is no limit to the number of cards a project can give out. | The Swift cards were not automatically set up to be reloadable. | Swift manually loaded the cards from their system for the pilot, but this bypassed the financial controls. Swift has indicated that they can make the cards reloadable with an additional investment. |
| | The agreement with Swift did not allow partners direct access to the system and CRS could not extend access to partners. | Setting up additional individual agreements for partners could be possible but would depend on expected volume of cards. |
| | The one-year expiration date limits the reloadable options. | There is a card with a five-year expiration date, which CRS should consider. |
| Use of the hotline ensured accountability and minimized the number of people coming to the centers with questions. | There were some initial concerns about the use of a hotline, in particular the volume of calls that would be received. | The initial spike in calls around the start of the project leveled off significantly as beneficiaries became more comfortable with the use of the cards. |
| | | The project used a mobile text message system to alert people when their cash was available. |
| The financial management systems in place for Swift cards allow for transparency and accountability, as well as light, random monitoring of beneficiaries withdrawal of funds. | The ability for these systems to function depends on the segregation of duties locally and the proper training of staff. | For the pilot, these processes were put in place during the initial launch; they should be institutionalized to ensure consistent financial management. |
| | It was not possible to look at all cards at once to get an overview of the spending. | Swift can manually run a report of all cards once per quarter, but not more frequently. |
| Card recipients can use the cards when, where, and as often as they want. They also afford privacy and discreet use without others knowing where the cash comes from. | Beneficiaries may use funds for purposes other than rent. | Targeting of beneficiaries for the project through an in-depth assessment ensured that rent was a priority need. |
| | Syrians living in host communities may pay higher rent than their Jordanian neighbors. | Caritas Jordan does not engage in initial negotiations to set the rent with landlords, but experience shows that interactions with landlords can help secure longer-term leases for vulnerable households at a set rate. |
| | There is a risk of beneficiaries being evicted during the program. | Beneficiaries were informed of their rights and duties as tenants in order to prevent abuses and cases of forced eviction. |
| | There is a risk of losing track of card recipients who may move to a different area or return to Syria. | The Swift customer service portal allowed the monitoring of locations from which funds were withdrawn. End-of-project home visits to all beneficiaries also monitored the situation of targeted households. |
| Debit card management is secure. If a card is stolen, they are useless without the PIN. They can also be blocked immediately, and a new card issued to the cardholder who lost it. | During this pilot, the PIN was on the cards, which minimized security. | This could be changed but raises the challenge of people forgetting their PIN. For a single cash distribution, the impact of having the PIN on the card is minimal; changes should be considered for long-term use. |
| Debit cards are portable, and can be used as a <i>return incentive</i> in emergencies that include displacements; people who have returned to an area of origin can be rewarded by having their card credited again. | Cards are only functional in countries not on the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctions list. | All projects, especially multi-country or cross-border projects, should verify which countries are on the OFAC sanctions list. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

Program monitoring can ensure that rental homes are Sphere-compliant. In addition to information provided to beneficiaries about housing during program start-up, CRS and field staff conducted home visits to ensure that homes rented through the program were Sphere compliant.

Swift cards are appropriate for one-off cash transfers. Swift cards are an appropriate methodology for the rapid provision of assistance or where additional monitoring is essential, but they may not be appropriate for longer-term operations because of the expiration after one year, which limits options for reloading the cards. In the future, CRS should examine options for five-year reloadable cards.

Debit card distributions to large groups are easier to do if scheduled over several days. A rolling distribution may be more effective than distributing Swift cards in large groups in order to spread the work out and allow people to access cash sooner. The project should also build in time to work around holidays (at headquarters and in the country).

The use of pre-positioned scheduling to make sure that Swift, CRS and field staff are available to troubleshoot at the time of the loading and activation of the cards would ensure a smoother process. A hotline number with an answering service and established hours of operation would also help to address the large volume of calls.

Country programs should have direct communication with Swift for troubleshooting. The system for communication between the country program office and Swift should be more direct; CRS should investigate the possibility of fully managing card loading and activation from headquarters to support field operations

in constrained environments. CRS could provide more support for offices by developing a tool to determine how much money to put onto cards, taking into account the fees, and developing guidance for finance and administrative management of cards.

The use of a cloud-based database for registering hotline calls would also support sharing of information.

CRS should look into requirements for partner organizations to qualify to engage in a contract with Swift.

Using debit cards can help manage security concerns around cash. Personal security issues regarding use of the card need to be considered; alternatives to having the PIN on the card should be explored. Providing dual-branded cards and unbranded cards for different country needs would improve security and acceptance. Coordinating and establishing strong relationships with local government and banks about the use of the cards would also help to ensure there were no legal concerns and that local authorities were aware of the legality of the cards.

In conflict situations, the project should closely monitor use of money and ensure that do-no-harm principles are being followed.

A stronger gender analysis would have strengthened program design. Future projects should consider the possible effects of cash distribution on gender dynamics—who has control of the money?



CRS' study on NFI needs for women highlighted that *pagnes* (cloth) were in high demand due to their varied uses: from transporting items during displacement, as clothing for adults and children, and covers for water and food. Photo by Laura Elizabeth Pohl/CRS

Democratic Republic of Congo

DISPLACED AND RECENT RETURNEE HOUSEHOLDS
INVITE RECOVERY IN EASTERN DRC (DRIVE)
INTERNAL CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Location: | North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga provinces |
| Disaster/conflict date: | Multiple conflicts since 1996 |
| Project timescale: | May 2014 - July 2015 (14 months) |
| Affected population: | 2,506,639 individuals in targeted area |
| Target population: | 13,000 households |
| Modality: | Flexible, per market context |
| Cost: | US\$75 |
| Project budget: | US\$1.8 million for food and nonfood item needs |



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

The Democratic Republic of Congo, or DRC, has endured multiple conflicts since 1996, including armed conflict in Eastern DRC during 2012 and 2013. In December 2014, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the DRC reported that the armed conflict had internally displaced 2.72 million people. For the next few years, over 58 percent of internally displaced people (IDPs) were in North Kivu province and 14 percent in Katanga province; the majority lived with host families. Displacement was frequent, unpredictable and difficult to track, and it also affected host communities whose limited resources became further stretched.

Catholic Relief Services conducted three needs assessments between September 2013 and January 2014, identifying food and nonfood items (NFIs) as the greatest needs. More than 80 percent of the population had poor food consumption scores on the World Food Program's (WFP) food security index, and displaced and recent-returnee households lacked sufficient access to essential household items such as cookware, blankets and water storage. Most households preferred cash and in-kind assistance to meet those needs.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose a cash-based response.

Nonfood needs

The NFI score card, a tool developed by the United Nations Children's Fund in 2007, assesses household material vulnerability by measuring the quantity and quality of NFIs owned by a household—such as jerry cans, casseroles, basins, work tools, mattresses, covers and clothing. Levels of need are ranked on a scale from 0 to 5 (5 = extreme vulnerability, 0 = no needs). The program's baseline studies indicate that the average scorecard was 3.54 for areas targeted by CRS prior to interventions, highlighting high

2.72 million

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

NFI vulnerabilities. Overall, 81 percent of interviewed households were vulnerable; 26 percent were acutely vulnerable and 55 percent were moderately vulnerable. Most frequently, households lacked key NFIs such as clothing, blankets and water storage containers such as jerry cans and basins; households frequently share these items or use them for multiple purposes. CRS' study on NFI needs for women highlighted that *pagnes* (cloth) were in high demand due to their varied uses: to transport items during displacement, as clothing for adults and children, covers for water and food to avoid contamination, blankets to keep warm and for various uses during childbirth.

Market context

A rapid market assessment showed that many markets were well-integrated and able to satisfy demands in NFI and food; however, in parts of North Kivu and Katanga, markets were small, remote and unable to supply all of the needed commodities, thus hindering beneficiaries from accessing them. Since vendors in most nearby markets were able to supply the variety of NFIs and food needed by returnee and internally displaced households, CRS determined that in most places a market-based approach was feasible through voucher fairs. Beneficiaries use vouchers from CRS to buy items (such as kitchen utensils and cloth) and food from selected vendors, with vendors then exchanging vouchers for payment from CRS. However, due to the ever-changing security context and the remote nature of some of the implementation zones, CRS developed a flexible approach for the program, tailoring the type of assistance provided to each particular context.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

CRS proposed the Displaced and Recent Returnee Households Invite Recovery in Eastern DRC (DRIVE) program to address basic needs of the most vulnerable IDPs, returnees and host communities. To meet households' daily food and NFI needs, households received a comprehensive food and nonfood items assistance package through voucher fairs or direct distributions. A secondary goal was to support the local economy's recovery. Finally, the DRIVE response integrated cash-for-work interventions to reinforce intra-community linkages, strengthen community assets and avoid further depletion of host community and host family assets.

Flexible approach

CRS' flexible approach required a continual cycle of market assessment and market monitoring to select a strategy that was most appropriate for each geographic area. DRIVE worked in phases:

1. Staff would first conduct a market assessment in the market of intervention, and other nearby markets, to determine the most appropriate response modality for food and NFI assistance in the particular market and security context (in-kind assistance, cash, shop-based vouchers or voucher fairs).

2. CRS and partner organization Caritas would implement the program for 3 to 4 months in one geographic zone, and then move to another vulnerable and affected zone. Staff would then repeat Step 1.
3. Staff would continue to monitor NFI and food prices in key markets during the course of implementation and prepare to make changes to the program if markets or security contexts shifted.

- Provide a diversity of supplies by organizing vendors from a variety of nearby markets.
- Work through local markets, thus contributing to economic recovery.
- Lessen the risk of inflation or stock ruptures in local markets by drawing vendors from nearby markets and increasing competition.
- Enable beneficiaries the flexibility to choose the NFIs and foods they needed most.

Voucher fairs

CRS and Caritas determined that a voucher fair was the most appropriate strategy in four of the five targeted geographic zones. Markets were functioning in project areas, but not all markets supplied all necessary goods. However, vendors in nearby markets often supplied those goods not available in local markets. In this context, CRS determined that organized fairs would:

Program adaptations

CRS retained the possibility for direct distribution when voucher-based assistance was not possible. Over the course of the programs, CRS made a few program adaptations based on local context; these included adding new vendors to ensure competition, and to increase the diversity of products based on beneficiaries' preferences.

Program goal and objectives

Vulnerable households in conflict-affected communities in Eastern DRC have improved quality of life:

- IDP and returnee households in Eastern DRC have restored essential nonfood household assets.
- Returnee and host family households in Eastern DRC have increased economic capacity.
- IDPs and returnee households in Eastern DRC have increased food security.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS implemented the program in partnership with Caritas Kilwa-Kasenga, Caritas Goma and Caritas Manono, with funding to CRS from the U.S. Agency for International Development's Food for Peace program and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.

Beneficiary selection

The DRIVE program identified the most vulnerable communities through a multisectoral needs assessment, and then carried out household targeting to identify families most in need of NFIs and food to receive vouchers or in-kind assistance. Staff used an innovative NFI scorecard to assess material vulnerability: the resources available to households to cope with a threat and meet their basic needs. Using the scorecard, project staff quantified possessions of key NFIs (weighted on a scale of 0 to 5, with a score of 5 signifying extreme vulnerability) and food security levels (using the WFP's Food Consumption Score and Coping Strategies Index). They linked the score with food vulnerability criteria using an intangible value assessment methodology, which determined household food security, NFI needs, social vulnerability and household status. The program

prioritized women and children because they were most likely to be vulnerable.

The DRIVE program committed to serving a general geographic region rather than specific communities due to the volatile security context and changing needs; areas that were stable and safe could quickly become violent as military and rebel group operations continued in Eastern DRC, resulting in frequent and large displacement and returnee movements. The program identified villages based on the following criteria:

- Affected by a recent crisis or armed conflict.
- Comprised of at least 500 to 1,000 displaced and/or returnee households in the past 12 months.
- An average NFI scorecard of 3.5 or higher.
- Limited accessibility due to surrounding conflict and/or poor road infrastructure.
- Poor food security (food consumption score of 28 or lower).
- The geographic area receives assistance from another humanitarian actor, and a support gap remains for at least 1,000 households.

Value of cash grant

CRS and Caritas consulted beneficiaries in focus group discussions to assess the types of NFIs needed. Each household received a US\$75 voucher to buy NFIs and a US\$45 voucher to buy food commodities at organized fairs. In the event of direct distribution of goods, they would have a cash value equal to the vouchers.

Cash distribution

CRS and Caritas used a flexible approach to NFI and food delivery, depending on market conditions, beneficiary preferences and the feasibility of holding voucher fairs. Where feasible, CRS prioritized a market-based approach to support the local economy through local vendors and goods. Suitable vendors set up stalls at the venue and received payment for the vouchers at the completion of the fair through checks, mobile money or money transfer agencies depending on the local context and security level. Items available for purchase with NFI vouchers included wool blankets, tarpaulins, warm clothing, emergency shelter materials, hygiene items and kitchen supplies. Fairs also promoted access to specific shelter equipment to allow for construction of additional temporary shelters and/or the expansion of existing shelters to allow for larger, partitioned sleeping quarters. During food fairs, beneficiaries could buy key staples such as maize, cassava, rice, beans, oil and salt.

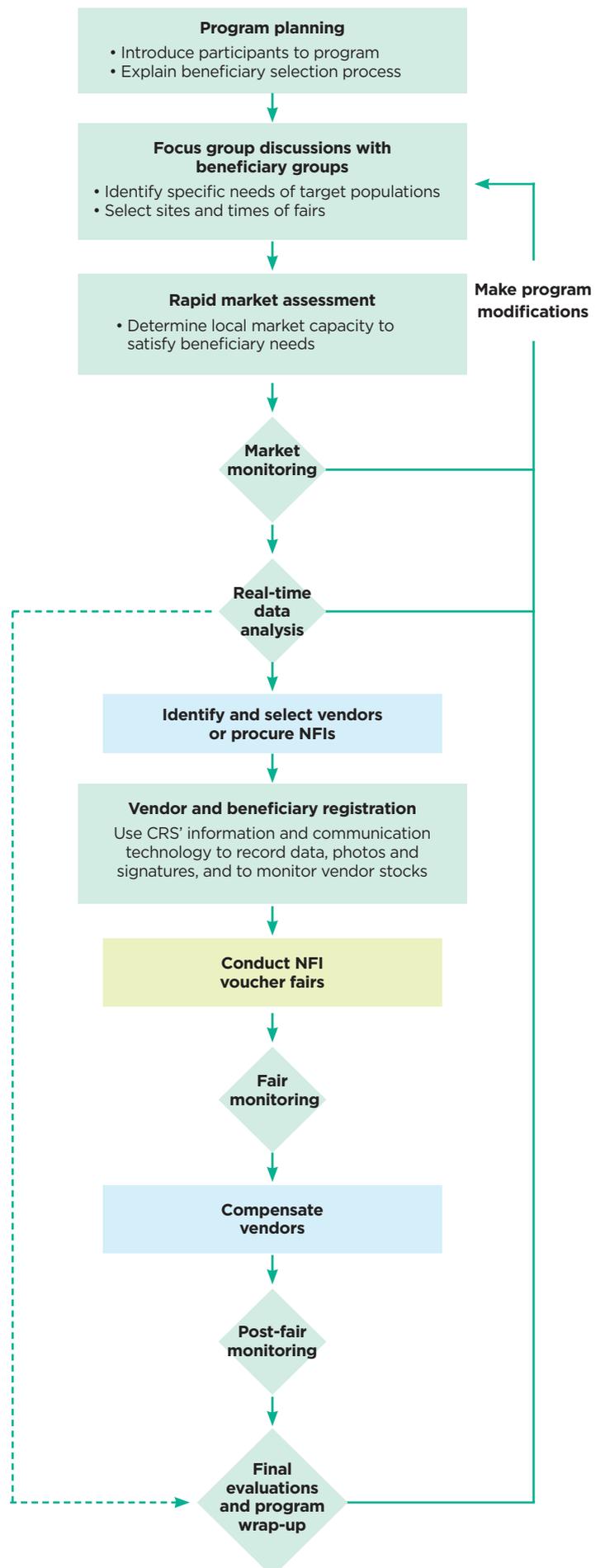
Protection and security

CRS and Caritas shared with communities the general findings of the intangible value assessment and the process of ranking vulnerability. DRIVE teams addressed community feedback and concerns before finalizing the beneficiary list. Focus group discussions with beneficiaries also indicated their preferences for the dates and locations of the voucher fairs. Finally, to meet women's and children's needs, CRS ensured availability of products for women and children at voucher fairs.

On the day of the fair, staff gave special attention to people with heightened vulnerability (disabled, infirm or elderly) by setting up priority queues for beneficiaries with special needs, hiring daily workers to assist families during the activities and setting up complaints and feedback mechanisms including a suggestion box and feedback desk. Start and end times for fairs were decided by village leaders and beneficiaries, taking into account any special protection considerations for women and children, such as closing fairs early to allow beneficiaries from the furthest communities adequate time to commute home in daylight hours.

Process

The chart illustrates the implementation process.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The DRIVE team worked in each village for 1 to 3 months to assess needs, monitor markets and provide an appropriate response package. The teams used principles from the Cash Learning Partnership's [MARKit: Price Monitoring, Analysis and Response Kit](#) to ensure that CRS was doing no harm to local markets. CRS and Caritas used MARKit to collect market price data and monitor significant changes before, during and after the intervention, enabling staff to:

- Ensure NFIs and food prices during the fairs were reasonable and in line with local markets.
- Assess project impact on local markets in terms of price, availability and other indicators.
- Understand if any program modifications were necessary to ensure healthy market function.

The team used monitoring results to adjust the program design and improve future interventions. The program used the following monitoring and accountability mechanisms:

- Prioritized monitoring and evaluation aiming to collect indicators quickly and efficiently, per emergency standards.
- Registered vendors and beneficiaries using CRS' information and communications technology for development (ICT4D)—and automatically centralized, aggregated and analyzed vendor and beneficiary data. The project also used paper backup systems in case there were complications.
- Took photos of beneficiaries and recorded

signatures to corroborate identity if questions arose on the day of the voucher fair. Project staff also collected key information for a second household representative in case the beneficiary could not participate on the day of the fair.

- Monitored the quality and quantity of NFIs and food commodities on-site to guarantee beneficiaries' satisfaction and ensure they met cluster specifications.
- Interviewed a random sample of beneficiaries exiting the fairs to record purchases and appreciation on fair organization, prices and quality of products. The project used the data to report on fairs and generate statistically viable trend analysis and conclusions.
- One month after a fair, project staff visited a random sample of beneficiaries in their homes to assess assets and determine the NFI score and the food consumption levels of the household. Project staff compared this to the baseline NFI scores collected during beneficiary registration to assess changes.
- Emphasized participation rates of women, female-headed households, older beneficiaries and people with disabilities.
- Analyzed data monthly to identify emerging trends and challenges in project implementation. This type of analysis also enabled staff to make real-time project decisions, in case the program needed to shift due to a changing context.
- Conducted an intangible value assessment at the end of the project for each assisted community and compared the results to the initial baseline.

RESULTS

CRS and Caritas supported over 13,000 households, assisting 4,057 IDP and 9,740 returnee households with NFIs, through vouchers or direct distribution to restore their lost assets.

Voucher fairs provided necessary household assets. Voucher fairs took place in Walikale, Kato, Mutendele and Mukanga with a total of 423 vendors, of whom 121 were women and 302 were men. Of these, 65 sold food commodities only (15 percent), 264 sold NFI only (62 percent) and 94 (22 percent) sold both NFIs and food. There was one large-scale distribution that supported 4,225 families in Kamango.

Voucher fairs injected cash into the local economy. NFI purchases totaled US\$717,900 and food purchases an additional US\$830,745, all of which represented gains to the local economy. In

addition, CRS distributed 4,225 standard NFI kits and 12,675 half food rations.

Beneficiaries were satisfied with the support.

DRIVE's first-year final evaluation showed that 80 percent of beneficiaries were very satisfied with overall voucher fair activities, and 20 percent were satisfied. In the case of direct distributions 79 percent of interviewed households were very satisfied and 21 percent satisfied. The majority (95 percent) reported having the NFI purchased or received through DRIVE activities three months after the distribution or the voucher fair; 4 percent reported having received the necessary information on upcoming DRIVE activities.

Voucher fairs provided adequate choices and were accessible. The availability of NFIs and food was adequate according to the majority of respondents,

and the average NFI score for assisted households improved from 3.98 before the project to 3.03 after. Overall, 78 percent of beneficiaries considered fair prices to be normal compared to local markets, whereas 22 percent found them higher. Most (66 percent) beneficiaries walked less than 5km to reach the site, 33 percent walked 5km to 10km, 13 percent walked 10km to 15km, and 18 percent walked more than 15km.

Direct distribution supported households in vulnerable areas. Direct distributions took place in Kamango in December 2014. Only four villages received 4,225 standard NFI and hygiene kits due to armed conflict in the area, links of local vendors to military groups and the inability of local markets to meet an increase in demand.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|---|---|
| Voucher fairs help support the local economy. | Vendors were unable to procure items of acceptable quality or had an insufficient supply of high-demand items; some items were not always readily available in local markets or were of a lesser quality. | CRS bought items directly and worked with local transport vendors to guarantee timely shipment to the voucher fair sites. |
| | High demand for items led to an increase in prices during voucher fairs in some cases. Closed fairs and open market voucher fairs caused price inflation in local markets. | Voucher fairs relied on market forces to determine fair prices. Staff set ceiling prices only in exceptional cases. CRS conducted a detailed analysis to ensure that local markets were not overstrained. Where necessary, CRS bought items in larger, provincial capital markets or in neighboring countries, or invited vendors from surrounding areas to participate in fairs. These mediating actions acted to maintain fair market prices at fairs. |
| | Potential for fraud through the injection of fake vouchers during fairs. | Each booklet of vouchers had a barcode and each voucher had a unique serial number associated with the voucher booklet and linked back to the beneficiary. Other mitigating actions included rigorous verification and sensitization of beneficiaries, and close monitoring of fair activities. |
| | Due to security and logistical constraints, it was not always feasible and safe to transport cash to pay vendors directly. | When possible, CRS made payments to vendors from the CRS offices via checks; alternatively, DRIVE paid vendors using local money transfer agencies. |
| Voucher fairs enable beneficiaries to choose specific NFIs. | Ensuring that beneficiaries did not use Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance funds committed to NFI support to buy food or pay for non-NFI needs or services. Similarly, ensuring that beneficiaries did not use Food For Peace funds committed to the purchase of food to cover other nonfood needs. | Vouchers restricted purchases to essential household and shelter items (NFI vouchers) and food (food vouchers). The project conducted rapid market assessments and consulted local communities using DRIVE's feasibility study checklist before choosing the appropriate response strategy. |
| | Ensuring beneficiary and vendor security on the day of the fair. | CRS coordinated with local United Nations security forces and the Congolese military (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo or FARDC) to ensure secure routes to fair locations and a security presence at the fairs. Local authorities and village leaders were responsible for creating a secure environment on the day of the fairs. CRS did not employ armed security; if they could not ensure security at fair locations, CRS postponed activities or moved the fair to another nearby, safe location. |
| | Overcrowded fairs are difficult to monitor and can lead to theft of merchandise and vendor collusion in the market to increase prices. | Project staff limited fairs to 500 beneficiaries per day and permitted a maximum of one family member to accompany the voucher-holder into the fair. |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|--|---|
| A flexible approach allowed the project to select a strategy that was most appropriate for each geographic area. | Target areas could become inaccessible due to renewed conflict and violence. | DRIVE had two fully staffed and operational teams to offer assistance, and was able to shift activities to another geographic location until the target area became safe. |
| | Access to marketplaces was limited in remote areas. | CRS did not rule out direct distributions in remote areas isolated from markets. In these cases, CRS bought materials from the most viable local suppliers of quality NFIs and food. Through cash-for-work activities to rehabilitate key communal infrastructure such as roads and bridges, DRIVE assisted vulnerable host communities and improved accessibility. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

The voucher approach offered flexibility.

Each population's needs are different; returnee households often prefer income-generating activities to address their NFI needs, whereas IDPs might require more relief NFIs. The voucher approach offers flexibility for families to fulfill their specific needs. In general, the most vulnerable IDPs and host families need both NFIs and food assistance; thus, integration between the two sectors is most appropriate.

The household targeting process was effective but lengthy.

DRIVE interviewed all recently displaced and returnee households within a village and administered a targeting tool to identify the most food-insecure and NFI vulnerable households. Although this method of household targeting enabled DRIVE to identify and assist the most vulnerable families through a transparent process, it was extremely time- and resource-consuming and limited communities' participation.

Maintaining a flexible approach helped address different needs.

The possibility that target beneficiaries could be displaced during the course of the project made it difficult to complete activities like cash-for-work and vouchers. Maintaining the ability to shift timeframes and transfer options can help address needs in a volatile context.

Restricted access limited the project's ability to respond to needs.

Restricted access of project teams to target areas due to volatile security

situations and poor infrastructure (especially during the rainy season) significantly increased operational costs. Where possible, projects should favor market-based approaches that can help reduce operational costs, and should design budgets to take into consideration expenditures linked to the transportation and distribution of goods in cases where voucher fairs are not deemed appropriate.

Monitoring and sensitization could help to reduce the risk of inflation.

During a number of voucher fairs, beneficiary households found prices to be higher than local market prices. To avoid risk of inflation in the future, DRIVE teams will increase on-site price monitoring and will sensitize vendors and beneficiaries by informing them about price ceilings (i.e., the maximum they should buy or sell key NFI and commodities for), the need to bargain for goods, and sanctions for vendors who charge beneficiaries above price ceilings.

Procuring NFIs and food well in advance could reduce delays.

There could be a delay in the response time for direct distribution of NFIs because of the need to apply for tax exemption. For future programming, consider procuring essential NFIs and food well ahead of time to ensure rapid distribution and to maintain program flexibility. The program will also have a contingency plan that includes strategies to increase vendor numbers or other supply solutions in order to ensure that fairs effectively support local markets without price increases or other negative impacts.

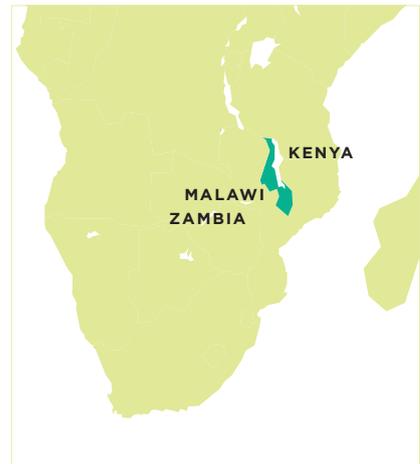


The goal was also to provide construction solutions that were affordable, replicable and achievable by the most vulnerable households.
 Photo by Eldson Chagara/CRS

Malawi

MALAWI FLOODS AND RAINS RECOVERY PROGRAM FLOODS AND RAINS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Disaster/conflict: | Floods and rains |
| Disaster/conflict date: | January 2015 |
| Project timescale: | May 2015 - January 2016* (9 months) |
| Affected population: | 638,000 people affected; over 170,000 displaced |
| Target population: | 1,350 households in Phalombe, Zomba and Machinga districts |
| Modality: | Distribution of tools and materials |
| Material cost per shelter: | US\$200 |
| Project budget: | US\$746,828 |



* The project was active at the time of publication.



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

In January 2015, heavy rainstorms and floods affected 630,000 people in Malawi. Protracted immersion or flow of water damaged or destroyed dwellings and displaced over 170,000 people, with timber and roofing material also lost to the floods. Catholic Relief Services conducted a physical survey of Phalombe, Zomba and Machinga districts to assess damage and needs, including interviews with householders, focus group discussions with communities and interviews with local government units and nongovernmental organizations.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose to provide in-kind support, coupled with trainings to communities and local builders.

Shelter needs

During the rainstorms, returnees found shelter with neighbors or relatives, stayed in the remains of damaged houses or constructed makeshift shelters using local materials such as bamboo and grass. Despite weeks of immersion in water, many houses survived with little or no damage, including those constructed using earth blocks, mud render (plastering) and mud mortar. Traditional houses with raised platforms, hipped roofs (sloping on all sides) with large overhangs and a veranda, and well-maintained roofs and walls were generally in good condition following the floods.

Assessments and interviews conducted by CRS found that all households intended to repair or reconstruct homes during the dry season using traditional building techniques and materials. Due to the likelihood of similar future disasters, CRS determined that emergency repair and reconstruction needed to be accompanied by appropriate risk-reduction strategies to reduce vulnerability, including siting and construction of dwellings and coping strategies.

Market context

The poorest households could not afford to buy materials such as burnt brick, cement and corrugated iron sheet roofing. Earth for block-making and grass for thatching were locally available, but other materials needed to be bought, including plastic membranes (sheets), timber, nails and fixing wire, some of which were not available in local markets. Timber poles for roof construction and support were in limited supply; demand for timber poles had inflated the price and reduced availability in local markets, and could lead to deforestation. Meanwhile, long distances to travel to local markets could lead to problems with transport and time.

Households needed to salvage and replant crops, as the loss of crops had a major impact on food security and cash-generating livelihood opportunities. The need to prioritize funding for food was a major obstacle for meeting shelter needs. CRS originally planned to provide cash grants to support households to buy their own materials. However, communities expressed a preference for materials and tools to repair or construct core dwellings, supplemented by local materials. Receiving these goods directly would enable them to focus on priority food and livelihood needs, reducing any time needed to buy materials and maximizing time spent on other livelihood activities.

Other concerns regarding the use of cash included security; the need to ensure safer building; the logistics of transporting materials and distances to markets; environmental impacts of sourcing timber locally; and controlling the use of cash. Women in particular were worried about how cash would be used and expressed concern that men would not use the cash for the intended purpose. CRS was also concerned about the method of cash distribution, as it would be time-consuming to set up bank accounts for all beneficiaries.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

CRS decided to directly procure and distribute needed shelter materials. The teams focused technical assistance on providing more resilient building solutions in compliance with the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#), the Sphere Handbook:

- **Safe:** Resilient to multiple disasters including earthquakes, typhoons and landslides.
- **Adequate:** With good ventilation and drainage, of a good size and gender-sensitive with appropriate privacy.

- **Durable:** Materials are strong and durable enough to last 18 to 24 months.

The goal was also to provide construction solutions that were more affordable, replicable and achievable by the most vulnerable and at-risk households. These solutions prioritized the use of local materials and construction techniques. As part of this project, CRS provided training to local builders to support communities, assisted builders in designing and constructing a model house in each community, and provided information and training to each community. CRS also provided vulnerable households with the tools, materials and technical guidance required to build Sphere-compliant homes and to construct latrines.

Program goals and objectives

1. People affected by floods have access to safe and dignified shelter:

- Households have access to tools to allow the production of earth blocks and thatching material, and for the construction and repair of the houses.
- Households are provided with materials to supplement locally sourced materials to repair and construct their houses.
- Vulnerable households that cannot carry out the physical work are provided with labor to produce materials and carry out the construction work.
- Technical support and supervision is provided to all affected households to assist in the production of materials and the construction work.

2. People affected by floods construct shelters that are more resistant to floods and other hazards:

- Training, support and supervision are provided to ensure houses are repaired and constructed to standards that provide improved resistance to flooding, wind and driving rain.
- Technical support and information are provided to ensure the most advantageous site selection to reduce exposure to natural and manmade hazards.
- The wider community is provided with disaster risk reduction information and physical examples of safer construction techniques.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS partnered with the Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM) to implement the project; CADECOM worked with local government departments and traditional authorities.

Beneficiary selection

Communities that were at the greatest risk and had the fewest resources and coping opportunities were the top priority. These included communities with houses that were damaged or destroyed by flooding, areas that were at the greatest risk of future flooding (confirmed by flood risk data), and areas that had substantial loss of crops and livelihoods and the fewest alternative livelihood opportunities.

CRS distributed tools and materials equally to beneficiaries among districts, which was calculated as a percentage of the number of affected households in each district. CRS selected households in partnership with government district offices and traditional authorities, who helped to identify households requiring assistance within selected communities. The project team verified need through household visits and prioritized the most vulnerable households, including single- and child-headed households, the elderly and disabled, households affected by chronic illnesses, and low-income families with children under 5 years old.

Value of materials

The cost of materials was approximately US\$200 per household. CRS distributed toolkits costing US\$80 to share among four families. Households supplied the bricks, thatch and labor.

Cash distribution

CRS distributed tools to assist with the manufacturing of materials and construction, following an initial induction and training. A group of households shared each toolkit, which included a selection of tools needed to produce earth blocks and to construct and repair houses. When the groups no longer needed the toolkits, CRS reassigned them to other groups. Following the completion of all work, beneficiaries handed the tools over to the Village Civil Protection Committee, a pre-existing government-initiated village authority, to provide a community tool bank to assist construction during current and future events.

Given the distance to markets, timing of implementation, and household requests for the same commodities, CRS procured all tools and materials centrally and distributed them through a voucher system. The project team distributed these vouchers once beneficiaries had met training and other requirements, including the collection of materials for thatching and the making of earth blocks. This procurement strategy also ensured that program activities did not impact the availability of local materials and further inflate prices on local markets.

Technical assistance

The project identified best building practices through workshops with local builders and used them to construct a model house in compliance with Sphere standards. These practices prioritized disaster risk-reduction (DRR) techniques to ensure that buildings

would be safer and more resilient to future rain and flooding events. The team then produced a training and information curriculum to assist communities and builders. The curriculum covered hazard and risk awareness, site selection and house orientation, building design, materials, construction, protection and maintenance of houses and the environment. The project shared these best building practices with communities, using the model house as an example, to reduce the impact of future flooding and rains upon families and communities.

The project recruited building support staff from local communities during the beneficiary selection and registration process, and included them in the orientation and technical training. The building

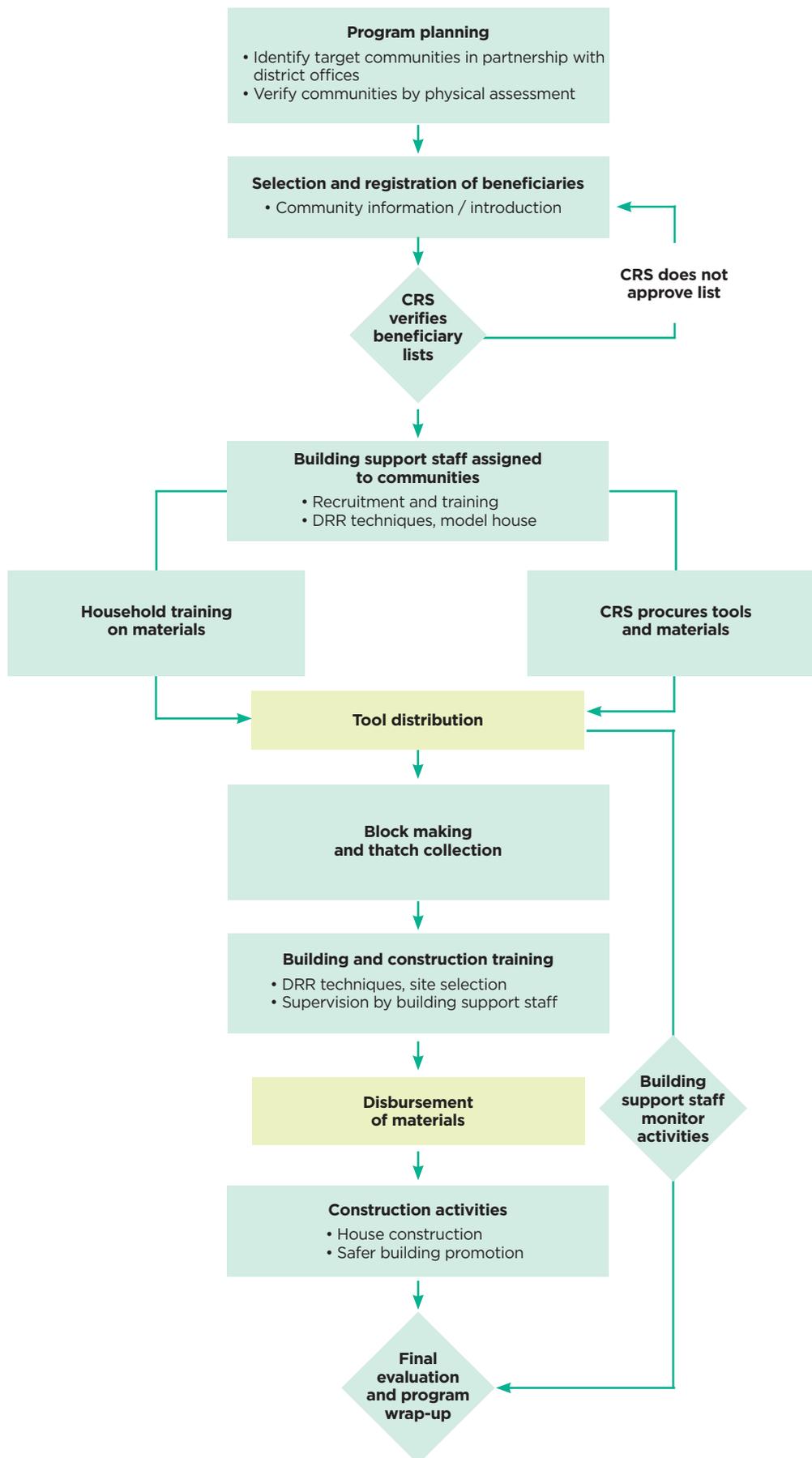
support staff was then responsible for providing training and instruction to householders and communities, assisting in the distribution of tools and materials, and providing technical support during the construction process.

Protection and security

The project advanced gender equality and female empowerment against cultural discriminatory norms by providing equal opportunities for both women and men to participate in all project activities. Men and women had equal access to information, equal representation and were involved in the work and activities in a way that was equitable, taking into consideration other work and responsibilities.

Process

The chart over the page illustrates the process of implementation.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CRS provided monitoring and accountability in the following ways:

- Assigned monitoring and evaluation officers to each district.
- Offered training to building support staff before conducting daily monitoring, and provided technical assistance.
- Ensured that building support staff carried out final inspections of buildings and latrines.
- Monitored the work of building support staff and ensured key messages were disseminated and understood through discussion with householders and community members.
- Produced a schedule of activities and work for each village to ensure they were completed as scheduled.

RESULTS

The program is ongoing; CRS targeted 1,350 vulnerable households to provide them with tools, materials and technical guidance to build homes and construct latrines.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|--|--|---|
| The community was actively involved, enabling them to use traditional skills and knowledge that were an affordable, effective means of coping with rains and floods. | Not all households were physically able to carry out the work. | The project requested that community members provide labor to carry out the work, with financial support. |
| The approach was sustainable, low-cost and replicable. | The program used a different approach from other organizations providing shelter support in the area. Most other programs looked at alternative technical solutions with less regard to cost, leaving this program at risk of derision. | CRS provided representation and management so that the credibility of the program and reputation of the organizations involved were not undermined. |
| Project staff leveraged local capacities and authorities to implement the project and ensure it was suitable to the context. | There were management challenges and resistance to the program from the government district office in Zomba. | A full district council meeting was called in Zomba to decide on approval for the project implementation; this was granted, but without the same enthusiasm for the program as in Phalombe. |
| | Staff capacity and leadership was not very strong in Zomba. | Consistent support during the first weeks established standards, schedules and protocols for successful implementation of the program. |
| This approach could be a model for future responses and disaster risk reduction learning, and engagement with communities, and provided the opportunity to explore community-led controls. A future response may also include support for community disaster planning, including shelter strategies and options for future events. | Hard components of the program (distribution of materials and construction of model houses) could dominate the program and divert efforts away from supporting the whole community. Efforts should focus on encouraging safer building practices and supplying relevant information. | Ensure the prioritization of disaster risk reduction strategies and community engagement in the project design. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

Cash may not always be the best response

option. Although the program initially planned to distribute cash, it was ultimately decided that the distribution of materials was a more appropriate response within the context. Market and needs assessments are important to establish the most relevant modality for support. Beneficiaries' preferences for assistance are also critical.

Community involvement is critical to success.

The success of the project depended on the active involvement of community groups and the implementation of traditional skills and knowledge.

The focus on promoting DRR and resilient shelter practices is likely a key success factor.

CRS' investment in promoting safe and durable shelter, despite its heavier management burden, is promising as an important part of achieving quality shelter programs. This element would have been equally critical had the program utilized a cash-based approach.



Beneficiaries received CRS cash grants for construction materials to build *pondoks* (small wooden homes). These transitional shelters provided a safe living space following the powerful quake. *Photo by Maria Josephine Wijastuti/CRS*

Indonesia

CASH TRANSFER FOR TRANSITIONAL SHELTER 7.6 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Location: | West Sumatra |
| Disaster/conflict date: | September 30, 2009 |
| Project timescale: | October 2009 – March 2010 (6 months) |
| Houses damaged: | Over 249,000, including 114,700 heavily damaged |
| Affected population: | More than 1.25 million affected; 1,117 fatalities |
| Target population: | 10,000 households |
| Modality: | Cash grants (in installments) with technical assistance |
| Material cost per shelter: | US\$267 grant per household |
| Project budget: | US\$4.7 million |



RESPONSE ANALYSIS

An earthquake measuring 7.6 magnitude struck near the coast of West Sumatra, Indonesia, on September 30, 2009, affecting over 1.25 million people. Catholic Relief Services conducted rapid needs assessments in October 2009, identifying shelter as the most urgent need. Over 80 percent of the houses in some villages had been totally destroyed, with the remainder being moderately damaged and structurally unsound.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose a cash-based response.

Shelter needs

Many households had begun building *pondoks* (temporary shelters) with materials salvaged from the rubble of destroyed houses, but the quantity and quality of materials available varied from household to household due to the resources available. While most households had sufficient materials to start construction of temporary shelters, people had limited cash to procure the necessary complementary materials and tools required to make

1.25+ million

PEOPLE AFFECTED BY EARTHQUAKE

a shelter adequate, safe and durable in compliance with *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, the Sphere Handbook.

Market context

A market assessment that surveyed the inventories of local vendors indicated that materials for construction were widely available in markets and village shops throughout the affected area. Local markets had resumed trading quickly following the earthquake and sources of materials had been largely unaffected, though there had been an average increase of 5 to 10 percent in the cost of these materials due to difficulties with transportation. Vendors reported no change in their inventories following the earthquake and had no difficulty meeting the demand for materials.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

Based on the findings of the needs assessment, CRS staff identified cash grants as the most flexible and effective response option to meet the varied shelter requirements, giving households the freedom to get the tools and materials they needed to complete their *pondoks*. The flexibility of cash enabled households to build on their own existing self-recovery strategies and capacities. Together with communities, CRS identified all households that were not already living in shelters that met Sphere standards of space (18 to 20m² for a family of five or six people), safety (earthquake-resistance) and durability.

The program prioritized owner-driven construction; beneficiaries assessed their own needs and

complemented the cash grants with their own resources and unskilled labor. CRS provided training to local skilled labor to ensure additional support, particularly to vulnerable households.

CRS provided technical assistance to beneficiaries to ensure that all constructed *pondoks* met the following Sphere standards:

- **Safe:** Resistant to earthquakes and other hazards.
- **Adequate:** With good ventilation and drainage, of a good size and gender-sensitive with appropriate privacy.
- **Durable:** Materials are strong and durable enough to last 18 to 24 months.

Program goals and objectives

1. Earthquake-affected households in target villages have safe, adequate and durable shelter to live in until permanent houses have been repaired or reconstructed:
 - Provide flexible technical assistance with cash grants to help households build or improve transitional shelters.
 - Promote community ownership and accountability.
2. Earthquake-affected communities have restored access to key services:
 - Affected communities work together to rebuild community infrastructure that meets earthquake-resistant construction standards.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS partnered with a local nongovernmental organization Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI), or the Indonesian Forum for Environment, to implement this project, and the Indonesian postal service company, Pos Indonesia, to deliver cash.

Beneficiary selection

CRS formed community shelter (or *pondok*) committees to determine the beneficiary lists for the project, as well as the design and assistance required for *pondok* construction.

Value of cash grant

CRS engineers put together a bill of quantities (a list of materials, prices and required labor) for a series of *pondoks* of various types, based on Sphere standards. Costs included materials and local labor. Estimates of cost ranged from 3.9 million Indonesian rupiah (approximately US\$417) to IDR 8 million (US\$854), depending on the style of shelter. The grant took account of a required household contribution, which the project openly communicated at the outset.

The grant of IDR 2.5 million (US\$267) was split into two installments. The first installment of IDR 2 million (80 percent) enabled households to start *pondok* construction. Households received the final payment after meeting previously agreed-upon community and household targets; and demonstrating acceptable progress, quality and Sphere-compliance in *pondok* construction.



CRS did not distribute the second installment of the cash grant to each community until vulnerable households had received Sphere-compliant shelter and other beneficiaries had demonstrated acceptable progress and quality in their *pondok* construction. Photo by Maria Josephine Wijastuti/CRS

Cash distribution

Indonesia Pos distributed the cash, using established procedures for this type of work from past experience working with the government, thus minimizing security risks. Beneficiaries collected the cash by redeeming numbered cash vouchers.

Protection and security

CRS and WALHI set up a feedback mechanism using a 24-hour hotline service, with the phone number posted in a central location in the community. In addition, CRS ensured regular interaction between community leaders, *pondok* committee members and CRS and WALHI staff. Community *pondok* committees monitored and verified the spending of cash grants and ensured that households met target criteria.

Technical assistance

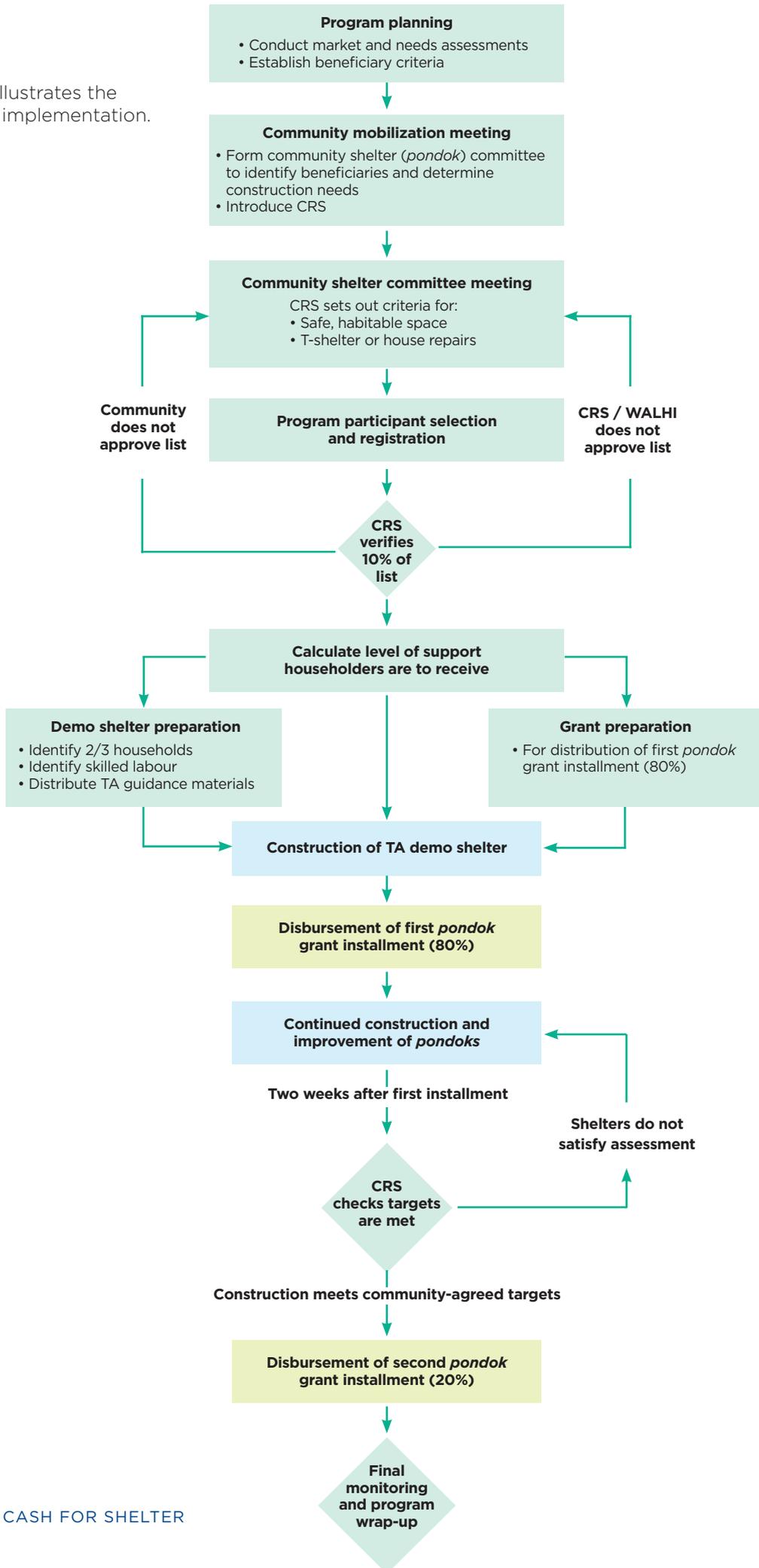
CRS and WALHI engineers and field team members provided technical assistance directly to beneficiary households to ensure the quality of construction, and additional training to skilled labor to complement local knowledge.

Due to the range of materials available and the type of building designs and structures adopted, the flexible technical assistance strategy provided a range of appropriate construction details and techniques. CRS provided technical assistance through home assessment visits, printed materials, community presentations and on-site technical support.

.....
CRS and WALHI set up a feedback mechanism using a 24-hour hotline service, with the phone number posted in a central location in the community.

Process

The chart illustrates the process of implementation.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

CRS provided the following monitoring and accountability mechanisms:

- During the initial assessment stage, only households that were interested in building a *pondok* were eligible for cash grant assistance.
- CRS and WALHI engineers provided direct technical assistance on site as required.
- CRS staff conducted regular checks on the progress and quality of *pondok* construction, monitoring the percentage of beneficiaries who had built Sphere-compliant shelters. CRS monitored Sphere compliance and completion separately.
- The project set high standards, and communicated those standards clearly to provide impetus for communities and teams to complete good *pondoks* quickly.
- CRS did not distribute the second installment of the cash grant to each community until vulnerable households had received Sphere-compliant shelter and other beneficiaries had demonstrated acceptable progress and quality in their *pondok* construction.
- Project staff interviewed vendors to understand the effects of the cash grant on local markets.
- CRS staff conducted complementary monitoring of beneficiary satisfaction with the technical assistance support and cash grant two weeks after the disbursement of the final payment.
- Following the completion of the project, CRS evaluated the use of the cash grant and the construction of Sphere-compliant shelters.

RESULTS

CRS and WALHI provided 11,000 households with transitional shelter assistance—this represented 6.2 percent of the total affected population in West Sumatra.

Cash was used largely as intended. Almost all (97 percent) target households used the majority of their cash grant for construction.

Markets were stimulated through the program. More than US\$3 million was injected into the local

economy. More than 73 percent of the project budget for transitional shelter was spent in the affected local economy.

Beneficiaries built homes of good quality. Most (86 percent) households built shelters that met most Sphere standards for risk reduction, comfort and durability. Almost all (96 percent) of surveyed households reported that the support they received was useful, timely and of good quality.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|--|--|
| Cash grants were quicker to disburse than materials for construction. | The safety of staff and beneficiaries handling cash may be at risk. | A third party (Pos Indonesia) distributed cash. Pos Indonesia had standard operating procedures in place to minimize risks, including a police escort. |
| | Locations for distributing and collecting cash must be accessible by beneficiaries. | Pos Indonesia set up central disbursement locations within targeted communities. |
| | The method of cash disbursement must be secure and usable by beneficiaries, even those who do not have a bank account. | Beneficiaries used numbered cash vouchers to collect cash. |
| | Possible misuse of cash by people involved in the program. | Only beneficiaries who stated a need or willingness to build a <i>pondok</i> received cash grants. |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|---|--|
| Cash grants were quicker to disburse than materials for construction. | | <i>Pondok</i> committees monitored and verified spending. |
| | | Initial assessments identified shelter as the most urgent need; final evaluations showed that the majority of beneficiaries used the cash for this purpose. However, in a very few cases beneficiaries commented that they would have preferred assistance to meet other needs, such as water and sanitation. |
| | Risk of corruption and misuse of cash grants among community leaders and volunteers. | Providing some compensation for volunteers could help prevent this in the future. |
| | | CRS handled isolated cases of corruption or misuse on an individual basis. Where there was evidence of corruption or misuse, CRS recovered the money and enforced appropriate disciplinary measures. CRS staff chose to focus on positive engagement in cases with insufficient evidence and considered them minor impediments to overall project goals. |
| The cash grant provided a stimulus for the construction of <i>pondoks</i> . | Direct cash grants do not ensure the speed or quality of construction. | The second installment of the grant provided an impetus to complete construction speedily to a certain standard. |
| Cash grants provided beneficiaries with the flexibility to determine their own shelter needs. | Cash may not be used for intended purpose. | Monitoring and verification of spending was undertaken. |
| | Ensuring the construction of safe and durable shelters. | CRS provided technical assistance and on-site monitoring. |
| Vulnerable households were empowered to meet their own needs and maintain dignity. | Vulnerable households may still need additional support from the community, such as skilled labor, to complete their shelters. | Vulnerable households did not receive the second installment of the grant until they had completed <i>pondoks</i> . The grant was sufficient to enable households to hire labor where necessary. |
| The program had a positive impact on the local economy. | Risk of inflation due to availability and transport of materials. | Community members went to traders in groups to share transport and reduce costs. |
| | Increase in cost of hiring skilled labor due to supply. | An influx of external laborers helped maintain availability of services and keep wages stable. |
| CRS teams were able to focus on community engagement through their partnerships with Pos Indonesia, community leaders and <i>pondok</i> committees. | CRS had reduced visibility among beneficiaries, as they often attributed support to other partners. This led to problems with accountability. | CRS maintained a physical presence in the community and open lines of communication with stakeholders, and ensured branding and visibility of the CRS logo. |
| Women often took leadership roles in designing and managing <i>pondok</i> construction. | Ensure women's needs and priorities were met. | Communities formed <i>pondok</i> committees with equal numbers of men and women, and beneficiary lists included names of women. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

Needs assessments help prioritize urgent needs.

Shelter was the priority for most beneficiaries in this project. It is important to understand the range of household priorities and where shelter fits in to this; recipients in other situations may have more urgent needs, such as food or water and sanitation, on which to spend their money.

The value of the cash grant was sufficient. The cash grant amount covered the minimum expenses for constructing a basic Sphere-compliant shelter. The ability of beneficiaries to contribute to reconstruction differed according to their situation, so the grant was sufficient to enable the most vulnerable beneficiaries to construct a Sphere-compliant shelter.

A trusted partnership can ensure timeliness and efficiency. The involvement of Pos Indonesia ensured that competent and trusted financial professionals with established procedures for cash disbursement handled the delivery of cash. It was important to identify an institution with no role in the project beyond disbursement and with a commitment to achieving humanitarian goals.

Monitoring markets can reduce risks. Open dialogue with traders is good practice, as well

as any practice that helps anticipate and resolve market-related hindrances (e.g., discussions regarding the availability of skilled labor). Monitoring of markets during the project may be required to evaluate the effect of cash grants on the local economy; be aware of possible inflation in the cost of materials.

Good communication and record-keeping promote efficiency and accountability. Clear and prompt communication and good records shared between all parties is essential to keep the project moving quickly. The speed and efficiency of the project is dependent upon clearly defined roles for each partner. The needs assessment also enabled program staff to determine an appropriate value of the cash grants, in order to enable people to spend money on their shelter needs as well as other priority needs.

The tranching system and good technical support enabled high-quality shelters. CRS' system of providing good technical support, as well as checking quality against clear criteria before the next cash grants were made, allowed for strong adherence to quality and DRR standards.



Maria Janice Boholst and other volunteers register beneficiaries to receive a CRS emergency shelter at a distribution site in the village of Esperanza, outside Ormoc City. *Photo by Jim Stipe/CRS*

Philippines

PROJECT DAIJOK (“HELPING EACH OTHER”) 7.2 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Location: | Bohol |
| Disaster/conflict date: | October 15, 2013 |
| Project timescale: | December 2013 – June 2014 (7 months) |
| Houses damaged: | 79,200 |
| Affected population: | 272,000 people displaced from homes, 198 fatalities |
| Target population: | 873 households in 61 <i>barangays</i> (villages) |
| Modality: | Bank transfer (installments) with technical assistance |
| Material cost per shelter: | US\$590 or US\$691 |
| Project budget: | US\$444,400 |



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RESPONSE ANALYSIS

After a major earthquake in the Philippines in October 2013, Catholic Relief Services reached 5,000 families with emergency shelter materials, water and hygiene kits, and emergency latrines. In November 2013, CRS staff conducted a housing and market assessment in three of the worst-hit municipalities of Bohol province: Antequera, Inabanga and Sagbayan.

Based on identified needs and the local market context—as well as feasibility, protection and security, and beneficiary preferences—CRS chose a cash-based response.

Shelter needs

Many families in these three municipalities lived in makeshift tents and tarpaulin shelters because their homes were destroyed or because they feared another earthquake; 80 percent of houses were unsafe to live in and 63 percent were completely destroyed. Many affected people were rebuilding and repairing their homes, whereas others had plans to build new homes but lacked money for materials.

Before the earthquake, construction of buildings in the municipalities varied; over half were made of concrete and others used various light materials such as coconut timber. Few affected people intended to rebuild their homes using the same design, wanting instead to adopt stronger and more resilient construction techniques. Households intended to salvage materials from damaged homes and buy the remainder locally. The majority of households planned to hire labor for construction, but the availability of labor was a concern.

PROGRAM STRATEGY

CRS chose to provide cash grants to affected families because their needs for shelter were diverse and numerous, and because markets in the area were functioning well. Cash grants offered the most flexibility and allowed people the freedom to buy the materials needed to build back on site based on what was salvageable from their damaged homes. This approach aimed to help families rebuild quickly and strengthen the local economy.

In the early stages of the response, before the implementation of cash support, CRS provided basic building materials to support people who were already rebuilding and repairing their own homes. This support included tools such as hammers, nails and saws; advice on how to build back safer; and helping beneficiaries salvage wood that they could reuse in construction.

63%

OF HOUSES WERE
COMPLETELY DESTROYED

Market context

Vendors of building supplies in the area reported increased sales of items such as nails, plywood, galvanized iron sheets and tarpaulins, but they reported an overall decline in bulk purchases. Earthquake damage to stores had limited the amount of stock vendors could keep, so they were stocking items they knew they could sell. The sources of supplies had not changed but speed and capacity had—restocking could occur anywhere from three days to two weeks, depending on the size and location of the vendor. Earthquake damage had caused an increase in transport costs, but there was no other inflation due to a strict Department of Trade and Industry mandate that regulates fluctuations of prices in times of emergency. Some ports temporarily slowed down following Typhoon Haiyan on November 8, 2013, but they quickly returned to normal. Large vendors have backup supplies in other parts of the country should shipping be disturbed in the future.

First Consolidated Bank (FCB), a thrift bank, was identified as the financial institution with the largest presence in all three municipalities (22 branches), though many potential beneficiaries reported not having any sort of bank account.

The program provided technical assistance to beneficiaries to ensure that transitional shelter designs were compliant with the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#), commonly known as The Sphere Handbook:

- **Safe:** Resilient to multiple disasters including earthquakes, typhoons and landslides.
- **Adequate:** With good ventilation and drainage, of a good size and gender-sensitive with appropriate privacy.
- **Durable:** Materials are strong and durable enough to last 18 to 24 months.

Families were encouraged to work together and complete homes as a group, using shared resources and labor.

Program goal and objectives

Vulnerable earthquake-affected households live in repaired or reconstructed safe, adequate and durable homes:

- Targeted households construct or repair shelters with cash and salvageable materials.
- Targeted households adopt improved shelter construction techniques.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Partnership

CRS partnered with local government units, or LGUs, and local leaders to respond to the emergency, in particular the Dioceses of Tagbilaran and Talibon, which provided additional labor and covered labor costs. CRS also collaborated with First Consolidated Bank, which provided greater access to cash and financial services to CRS beneficiaries.

Beneficiary selection

CRS coordinated with LGUs and *barangay* (village) officials to compile a list of beneficiary households that would receive support. Community members nominated beneficiaries according to agreed-upon criteria, which included coping capacity and vulnerability. Households chosen were living in makeshift tents or evacuation camps as their homes were not safely habitable, and they did not otherwise have the means to repair their shelters. CRS and the local government then assessed houses individually for damage and posted the list of validated households in each community for two days to allow time for feedback via the CRS hotline.

Value of cash grant

CRS engineers calculated the cost of an 18m² shelter based on designs used in previous CRS shelter programs, including materials and labor. The intention was for each cash grant to cover 70 percent of the cost of rebuilding or repairing a shelter, with the remainder contributed by the beneficiary or salvaged from the old shelter. Each beneficiary household with up to six members received a cash grant amounting to US\$590 (27,000 PHP) to build an 18m² shelter. Households with seven or more members received a cash grant of US\$691 (32,000 PHP) to construct a 24m² shelter. In all, 671 households received US\$590 and 199 households received US\$691.

Cash disbursement occurred in two installments. Households received the first installment of US\$328 (15,000 PHP) following an initial orientation on recommended disaster-resilient shelter design. Households were also required to gather the material required to start construction of the basic structure. Once CRS shelter engineers confirmed that families had completed the shelter framing, they were eligible to receive the second installment of US\$262 (12,000 PHP).

Cash distribution

FCB distributed the cash using various services—including ATMs and direct over-the-counter payments—to beneficiaries in any of its 22 operational branches within the province of Bohol. Most CRS beneficiaries used the FCB debit card called PITAKard, which did not require an opening balance and also bore interest. CRS staff helped beneficiaries to open their FCB accounts and obtain their PITAKard.

Technical assistance

CRS conducted a technical orientation during pre-construction meetings with beneficiaries to ensure that shelters were compliant with Sphere standards and constructed in a safe, adequate and durable manner. Households received information, education and communication materials illustrating recommended practices, and CRS engineers trained local engineers by constructing model houses according to the recommended disaster-resilient techniques using locally available materials.

Protection and security

CRS established an anonymous feedback hotline—operated by monitoring and evaluation staff to ensure the recording of issues without bias—for beneficiaries, and publicized it widely in the community throughout the program. Staff forwarded issues raised to area coordinators and the head of office for resolution. Suggestion boxes were also available during project staff visits to the target communities, so those without access to a mobile phone could provide feedback.

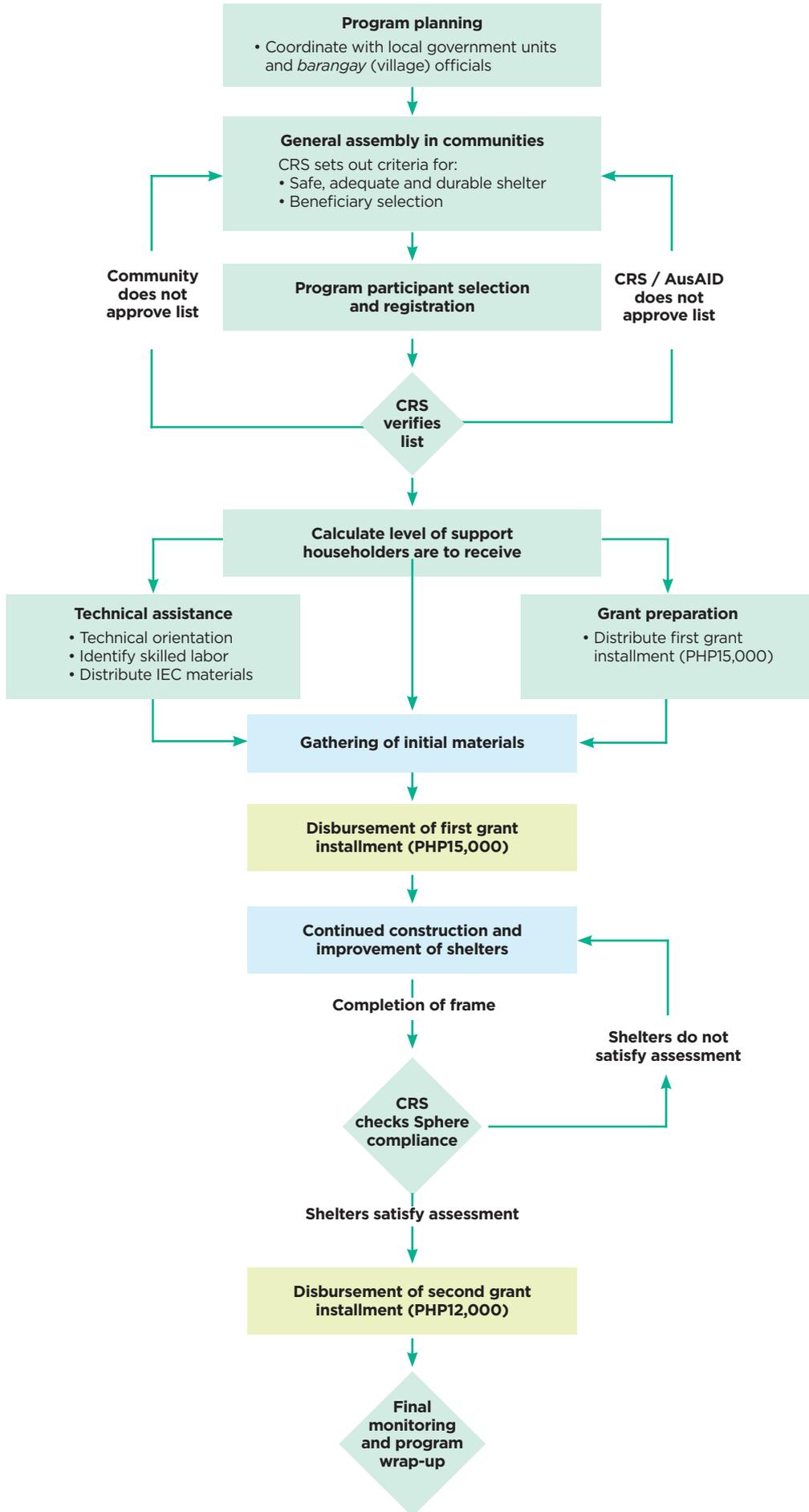
Risk of theft and diversion were low in the Bohol context as most beneficiaries went to FCB branches to withdraw their installments, reducing the risk of distributing cash by hand.

Information and Communications Technology

CRS used information and communications technology, such as iPad mini devices and iForms software to collect and manage registration and project monitoring data. The use of this technology made it easier to communicate with team members and helped ensure that CRS analyzed data accurately to measure progress in reaching the program objective.

Process

The chart below illustrates the process of implementation.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In addition to the accountability mechanisms described earlier, CRS monitored the program as follows:

- CRS staff monitored the construction progress based on Sphere standards and resilience to disasters including earthquakes, typhoons and landslides.
- Beneficiaries who did not meet progress targets experienced a delay in, or cancellation of, the second installment of the disbursement; this occurred in 2 percent of cases.
- Between July 24 and 29, 2014, CRS randomly selected and surveyed 130 household beneficiaries from all target municipalities on whether their shelters met the “safe, adequate and durable” criteria. The project also evaluated the usefulness, timeliness and quality of the shelter support that beneficiaries received. Upon review of the data, CRS determined there was no need for any program changes; the results of this survey are below.

RESULTS

Beneficiaries used cash grants as anticipated.

Beneficiaries overwhelmingly used cash grants as anticipated—98 percent of families reconstructed or repaired their shelters with cash and salvageable materials according to the Sphere standards.

Shelters were safe and durable.

All (100 percent) households said their shelter was durable, and 99 percent reported that they felt safe in their new shelter.

Beneficiaries were satisfied with the support.

Almost all (98 percent) households reported that the shelter support they received was useful; 96 percent that it was of good quality and 85 percent that

the shelter size was adequate for their family. Most respondents (82 percent) said shelter assistance was timely, as CRS assistance arrived before other organizations were active in their community.

Households adopted improved techniques.

The majority of respondents reported that they were not aware of earthquake-resistant construction techniques before the earthquake and learned about them through assistance provided by CRS. Almost all (98 percent) households repaired or rebuilt their homes using techniques promoted by the project engineers or the information, education and communication materials.

ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|---|---|
| Cash grants were quicker to disburse than materials for construction. | There was potential for the misuse of cash by people involved in the program. | CRS disbursed cash after beneficiaries had started the construction process, showing willingness to use cash to construct the shelter. CRS distributed the second installment upon completion of the shelter frame. |
| | Cash grants do not ensure high-quality construction. | CRS provided technical assistance and on-site monitoring alongside cash support. This, along with the installment system, enabled all construction and repairs to meet Sphere standards. |
| | Risk of corruption, such as committee getting money from beneficiaries. | Committee members signed a contract as volunteers showing their scope of work. Though relying on the cooperative nature of the beneficiaries, the CRS team provided regular visits to communities constantly reminding them of the project timeline and the importance of teamwork. |

| Advantages | Challenges and risks | Actions and recommendations |
|---|--|---|
| Distributing money via bank transfer with FCB was more secure than distributing cash directly. | The method of cash transfer through banks may not have been usable by all beneficiaries (not everyone had a bank account). | CRS staff helped beneficiaries set up PITAKard accounts. CRS established strong relationships with the bank's leaders, resulting in smooth disbursement of installments. |
| | The locations for distributing and collecting cash must be accessible by beneficiaries. | FCB was the financial institution with the largest presence across all three municipalities, with 22 branches. |
| Working at a community level to coordinate with LGUs, <i>barangay</i> officials and community members was largely successful. | CRS had difficulty identifying beneficiaries as the master lists coming from LGUs and <i>barangay</i> officials were incomplete and not thoroughly assessed. | CRS conducted house-to-house validation of every household nominated in the community meeting to ensure proper screening before finalizing the list of beneficiaries. |
| The cash grant program had a positive impact on the local economy. | There was a risk of inflation due to a potential lack of availability and transport of materials. | A strict mandate from the Department of Trade and Industry prevents inflation in times of emergency. Also, CRS' initial market assessments found there was sufficient supplies and vendor capacity. |
| | Availability of hired labor. | Beneficiaries were encouraged to construct homes in groups and share resources and labor. |

WHAT WE LEARNED

Bank transfers are more secure than the disbursing of cash. Using bank transfers is more secure than disbursing cash, but some beneficiaries may need to set up bank accounts, which could delay disbursements.

Targeting must begin early in the program. It is crucial to ensure a clear and thorough process to identify beneficiaries at the outset of the program. Partners who screen beneficiaries should be able to provide a complete and proper assessment.

Market assessment and monitoring helps to ensure proper functioning. Clear market assessments help identify the capacities of local vendors. Monitoring of markets is required to ensure that markets maintain their ability to respond to demand.

Good IEC materials and proper technical assistance is key for quality programming. CRS invested in regular technical assistance and strong communication so that people had good access to information and assistance for quality construction.

Conclusions

These eight case studies are a snapshot of programs in which CRS used a market-based approach to achieve shelter outcomes. In six of the countries highlighted, CRS used cash as a preferred modality. However, the series includes one example where CRS chose not to use cash to meet shelter objectives (Malawi), and one in which a mixed modality was chosen (eastern DRC); in these cases, assessments indicated a lack of market functionality, market inaccessibility, or beneficiary and community preferences that favored in-kind distribution. In several cases, CRS chose to also invest in supporting local service providers in other ways, such as trainings to local contractors or laborers.

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These case studies tell a story of the value of enabling people to choose the shelter materials and services most relevant for them.

Together, these case studies tell a story of the value of enabling people to choose the shelter materials and services most relevant for them. This in turn engages their local market systems rather than creating parallel structures that can undermine existing systems. These studies also underline the importance of strong technical accompaniment and community buy-in and ownership, which were two critical success factors for meeting quality shelter objectives across the programs. Creative approaches that reflect the increasing relevance of cash combined with technical assistance can enable people to build, rebuild or rent safe, adequate and durable houses that “don’t look like aid”, but reflect the needs and tastes of their owners.

Risks and how we overcame them

Cash is still a relatively new form of assistance for shelter programs. The following table lists risks and challenges common to the eight cases, along with the solutions CRS staff and partners used to overcome or mitigate these risks.

| Risks / Challenges | Solutions / Mitigation measures |
|---|---|
| <i>Risk: Markets are unable to meet demand for shelter supplies and services.</i> | |
| Supply ruptures or inflation. | Conduct an initial assessment of key shelter materials; continue to monitor prices in these markets. [All programs] |
| Vendors are unable to procure acceptable quality items or have an insufficient supply of high-demand items. | Conduct market assessment (including vendor survey) to ensure vendors are prepared. [All programs] Support vendors with grants or loans to increase their stocks of high-demand shelter items. |
| <i>Risk: Beneficiaries do not use cash grants for their shelters.</i> | |
| Potential for the “misuse” of cash by people involved in the program. | Ensure that needs assessments enable a clear understanding of what people would buy if given cash. A separate program might need to be set up to respond to varied needs. Alternatively, cash grant amounts could be set higher to enable people to spend grants on multiple needs. In West Sumatra, quality needs assessments identified that people would spend cash on shelter. Distribute follow-on installments upon completion of certain shelter milestones, according to specifications. Where beneficiaries have already started the construction or reconstruction process, their willingness to repair shelters using their own resources is demonstrated; thus, an injection of cash has a low risk of misuse. [Bohol] Where beneficiaries have a wide variety of needs, such as IDPs in eastern Ukraine during winter months, CRS should not expect that unrestricted cash will be used exclusively for shelter or NFIs. |

| Risks / Challenges | Solutions / Mitigation measures |
|---|--|
| Potential that people's needs will change rapidly in volatile contexts. | Design the value of the cash grant to ensure that people can also meet basic lifesaving needs. [Serbia] |
| A fluctuating exchange rate will diminish the purchasing power of fixed cash grants. | Track exchange rates and remain flexible to increasing cash grant amounts. In Serbia, the devaluation of the dinar led to changes in the value of the cash grant. The effect was negligible because the project was short, but this should be tracked. [Serbia; eastern Ukraine] |
| <i>Risk: People's shelters will not meet Sphere standards or local building codes.</i> | |
| Cash grants do not ensure high-quality construction. | Provide technical assistance and on-site monitoring alongside cash support. Along with the "tranche" or installment system, construction and repairs can meet Sphere standards. [Bohol] |
| <i>Risk: Transporting and delivering cash creates a protection or security risk.</i> | |
| Due to security and logistical constraints, it is not always feasible and safe to transport cash to pay vendors directly. | Where possible, use local third-party cash delivery options (microfinance institutions, remittance agencies, local banks), electronic or mobile transfers. [DRC] |
| Providing cash grants to women might cause intra-household tension. | Include this issue in needs assessments and market assessments, as it is very context-specific. In Ukraine, 1 percent of households reported that receiving cash grants led to conflict within their households, and less than 1 percent reported that receiving cash grants led to conflict in the communities where they resettled. |
| <i>Risk: Beneficiary selection is more difficult, because everybody wants cash.</i> | |
| Beneficiary selection will be skewed by corruption, since cash is more valued than in-kind aid. | Ensure the participation of local civil society, government, or other community groups as appropriate. In Serbia, where local authorities were in favor of blanket assistance, CRS and local committees persisted in implementing beneficiary selection criteria that was transparent and just. |

Lessons learned from the eight case studies

As the humanitarian community moves forward with cash-based assistance for shelter, the following lessons learned can be gleaned from CRS experience to date:

Cash-based assistance provides people with choice. In every cash-based program, project participants noted that cash enabled them to choose what materials and services were most important for their own shelters.

Local markets can benefit from cash-based shelter programs. In West Sumatra, more than US\$3 million was injected into the local economy. More than 73 percent of the project budget for transitional shelter was spent in the affected local economy.

When a tranche system is used, beneficiaries use cash grants as anticipated. Beneficiaries overwhelmingly used cash grants as anticipated. In Bohol, Philippines, 98 percent of families reconstructed or repaired their shelters with cash and salvageable materials according to the Sphere standards.

When accompanied by technical assistance, onsite monitoring, and IEC, households can construct Sphere-compliant shelters that are safe, adequate, and durable. In Bohol, 100 percent of households said their shelter was durable, and 99 percent reported that they felt safe in their new shelter. Almost all (98 percent) households repaired or rebuilt their homes using techniques promoted by the project engineers or information, education and communication materials.

Cash grants can be quicker to disburse than materials for construction. In West Sumatra, cash grant start-up was significantly faster than setting up a pipeline for in-kind distribution, which was an important factor in that response.

Good assessment and monitoring of shelter materials markets helps to ensure continued market function without price fluctuations. Clear market assessments help identify the capacities of local vendors of shelter materials. Monitoring of markets is important to ensure that markets maintain their ability to respond to new demand.

Markets for shelter goods and services must be nearby, safe and accessible. For a cash program to be successful, people must feel safe and be able to access goods and services safely. This was the case in all CRS cash-based programs. Most (66 percent) beneficiaries walked less than 5 km to reach the site in the DRC.

Cash may not always be the best response option. Market and needs assessments are important for establishing the most relevant modality for support. Beneficiaries' preferences for assistance are critical. Direct distribution is relevant for households in areas where markets are not functioning, where markets are very distant or unsafe, or where beneficiary and community dynamics indicate a preference for in-kind distribution. In other cases, a combination of modalities may be the most appropriate. In cases where in-kind aid is used, efforts should be made to procure materials locally, and provide a diversity or choice of materials.

In Malawi, direct distribution was chosen, given the distance to markets, timing of implementation and household requests for the same commodities. In the DRC, CRS conducted direct distributions in four villages of NFI and hygiene kits, because of armed conflict in the area.

Community involvement is critical to success. The success of the project, from beneficiary selection through implementation of quality shelters, depends on the active involvement of community groups and the implementation of traditional skills and knowledge. In Malawi, this was critical, as local skills ensured the use of techniques that were an affordable, effective means of coping with rains and floods.

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