



Komba Angele learned how to manage community conflict in the CRS-led, KFW-funded STaR II project in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Photo by Jennifer Lazuta / CRS

Annual Report of Activities Fiscal Year 2023

P.O. Box 1851 Yaoundé | Street N° 1.782 / 725
Entrance opposite Italian Ambassador's Residence
Office: +237 652 744 744

CONTENTS

Letter From the Country Representative	2
About Catholic Relief Services	3
Country program overview	4
Key programming areas	4
Geographical reach	4
Country program profiles	5
Anglophone Crisis Emergency Response (ACER III)	5
Anglophone Crisis Emergency Response (ACER IV)	7
Key Interventions to Develop Systems & Services for Orphans & Vulnerable Children (KIDSS)	9
Advancing Local Leadership in the Right Way (ALLRight)	11
West Africa Rapid Response Fund (WA RRF)	13
Empowering Partner Organizations Working on Emergency Responses (EMPOWER)	15
Stabilization and Reconciliation in the Lake Chad Region – Phase II (STaR II)	18
Cameroon’s Feedback, Complaints, and Response Mechanism	20
Country program REDI Internship	21
CRS private funds budget in 2023	22
Country program 2023 funds spent	23
Country program staff	23
ACER IV Success story: Caring for Cameroon’s displaced	24
STAR II Success story: Building peaceful communities in the Far North Region of Cameroon	26

LETTER FROM THE COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Dear Partner,

In 2023, CRS celebrated 80 years of being grounded in our Catholic faith, empowered by partnerships, and walking side by side with our one human family. As the official international agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, our enduring mission to serve our brothers and sisters in need remains ever constant, even as our methods continue to evolve. By setting ambitious goals, embracing innovative technology, and partnering with local leadership, we become the catalyst for remarkable, sustainable, and life-altering transformation on a global level. We are unwavering in our belief in the possibility of a better world—one we create together. Our faith knows no bounds.

We invite you to read about the impactful work that CRS accomplished in Cameroon during the fiscal year 2023, in collaboration with our dynamic partners. In 2023, CRS served people living in vulnerable conditions and families facing displacement and conflict in Northwest Cameroon and in the Far North to meet their basic needs, supported communities to create development plans, and coached Savings and Internal Lending Communities to develop financial literacy and build assets, among many other activities.

In 2023, the Cameroon country program also continued to dedicate resources to ensure that local organizations, like the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, develop strategies and talent to better serve the Cameroonian people. Our successful transfer of a major US-government-funded health project to this local partner was a highlight of 2023, the culmination of years of intentional capacity strengthening and institutional development. We are proud that our partners have been able to share their expertise in new forums and develop relationships that further enable them to carry out their missions.

We acknowledge and are deeply appreciative of our strong collaboration with our partners, donors, and the Cameroonian government, all of which make our service to the poor and vulnerable of Cameroon possible. While we continue to encounter new and evolving challenges, these collaborations allow us to draw upon our individual and collective capacities to respond quickly, effectively, and innovatively for the common good.

Sincerely,
Caroline Agalheir
Country Representative

ABOUT CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

CRS GLOBAL

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the Catholic community in the United States. Catholic Relief Services carries out the commitment of the Bishops of the United States to assist the poor and vulnerable overseas. We are motivated by our mission to cherish, preserve, and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity, and justice, and embody Catholic social and moral teaching as we act to promote human development by responding to major emergencies, fighting disease and poverty, and nurturing peaceful and just societies. As part of the universal mission of the Catholic Church, we work with local, national, and international Catholic institutions and structures, as well as other organizations, to assist people on the basis of need, not creed, race or nationality. Catholic Relief Services supports hundreds of transformative projects in more than 100 countries around the world. Our work is not built around one idea, or a one-size-fits-all approach; we tailor our response to needs and the people we serve.

CRS IN CAMEROON

Catholic Relief Services' first programs in Cameroon began in 1960. Responding to the country's strategic needs, the first interventions aimed to reduce infant mortality and increase food security. Since then, Cameroon country program has continually adapted its programming to the changing circumstances of the country and to serve the most pressing needs of the Cameroonian people. Recent projects have strengthened local capacity in healthcare and in response to emergencies, including the Anglophone crisis in the North-West and South-West regions, the Lake Chad Basin crisis in the Far North, and the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic. Working with local partners, CRS in Cameroon is providing direct services and addressing the structural barriers affecting the most vulnerable populations. In 2023, CRS Cameroon country program reached 138,381 people with life-changing services.

The CRS Cameroon office is based in the capital city of Yaoundé, and CRS has sub-offices in Bamenda, Maroua, and Mokolo in 2023. In addition to administering CRS' projects in Cameroon, the Yaoundé office also oversees the CRS Chad country office.

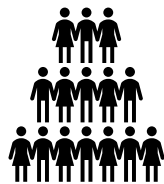
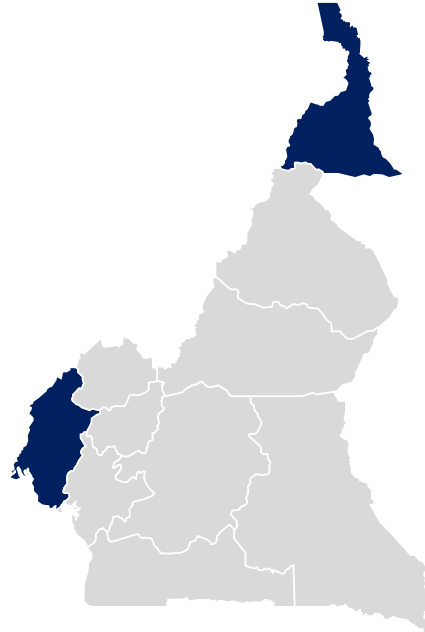
COUNTRY PROGRAM OVERVIEW

KEY PROGRAMMING AREAS

- Emergency response and recovery
- Multi-sectoral programming
- Partnership and capacity strengthening

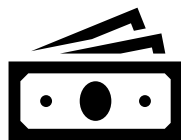
GEOGRAPHICAL REACH

- All 10 regions of Cameroon
- Emergency programming focused in the Northwest and Far North regions



138,381

PEOPLE REACHED IN 2023



\$6.87 million

IN RESOURCES SPENT IN 2023, OF WHICH OVER \$1.35 MILLION WENT DIRECTLY TO LOCAL PARTNERS



42 partners

WORKING ACROSS CAMEROON

COUNTRY PROGRAM PROFILES

ANGLOPHONE CRISIS EMERGENCY RESPONSE (ACER III)

Northwest Region – \$1,182,149



An ACER III participant purchases non-food items using the Cash and Asset Transfer platform. Photo by Louis Blaise Djilo for CRS

The Cameroon country program implemented an earlier phase of the BHA-funded ACER project in 2023. The year-long project concluded on March 31, 2023, immediately prior to the launch of ACER's fourth iteration. The CRS country program, and its partner, the Archdiocese of Bamenda offered food and non-food-items (NFI) assistance in the form of electronic vouchers (e-vouchers) to families affected by the ongoing insecurity and living in vulnerable conditions in the Northwest Region. The Cameroon country program and the Archdiocese of Bamenda reached 26,241 people through the ACER III project in 2023. In addition to e-vouchers to improve household food security and to help families meet their basic needs, in this phase, the project also launched a pilot to support 60 families to start poultry production businesses through the provision of training, inputs, and accompaniment. In October and November 2022, the project distributed 21-day old chicks to 60 families. This pilot intervention resulted in an increase in the average number of animals owned per individual in the poultry intervention to nearly 80 at endline from just over one animal at

baseline. Results from this activity also informed the design of the ACER IV project, which began in April 2023.

Results: By the close of the project in March 2023, participants had received \$1,083,914.38 in electronic vouchers to purchase food and NFIs. The distribution of electronic vouchers had a positive effect on project participants. Comparing baseline and endline results, the Household Hunger Scale score showed a significant improvement in participants’ dietary diversity and frequency of food consumption. At project endline, 91% of respondents experienced little to no hunger (a 66% increase from the 25% at baseline), 8% experienced moderate hunger (a 55% reduction from 61% at baseline), and 0.4% experienced severe hunger (14.6% reduction from 15% at baseline). The percentage of respondents with acceptable Food Consumption Scores increased by 41%, from 30% at baseline to 71% at endline. Also, over 78% of respondents reported they could meet most or all their basic needs at the endline, which was a 71% increase from 7% of respondents at baseline.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$233,689,28
Operational cost	\$38,810,34
Funds given to local partners	\$59,606.06
Other costs	\$652,935,69
Cost recovery/indirect	\$197,106,99
Total spent	\$1,182,148,36



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



ANGLOPHONE CRISIS EMERGENCY RESPONSE (ACER IV)

Northwest Region – \$1,041,994

Since 2016, political and social unrest has brewed in Cameroon’s Anglophone Southwest (SW) and Northwest (NW) regions. In 2017, the conflict escalated, culminating in violence and hostilities between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and Cameroonian state security forces, triggering significant internal displacement and humanitarian needs. The CRS country program in Cameroon and its local partner, the Archdiocese of Bamenda, have been at the forefront of the current humanitarian response in the NW since 2019, providing immediate relief support to families through cash-based provision of food and NFIs assistance using electronic vouchers (or e-vouchers) via the Cash and Asset Transfer (CAT) platform.

Building on lessons learned in prior project phases and funded by USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), ACER IV’s goal is to **improve food security and alleviate suffering of displaced and host families in the Northwest Region of Cameroon**. The project does this in two ways: (1) aiding vulnerable displaced and host families in Mezam, Momo, Ngoketunjia, Boyo, and Bui Divisions to meet their basic food and NFI needs, and (2) helping displaced and host families living in vulnerable conditions in the Northwest to improve their



An ACER IV participant receives chicks as part of the project’s livelihoods component, which offers 21-day old chicks to participants to raise as an income-generating activity. Photo by Blessing Beri/CRS

poultry production. CRS works with the Archdiocese of Bamenda to deliver emergency food, NFIs, poultry production training and support to displaced and host families living in vulnerable conditions. This fourth phase of the ACER project began in April 2023 and will run through June 2024.

Results: In the first six months of ACER IV, CRS and its partner, Caritas Bamenda, reached 10,925 individuals in 2,129 families with assistance. They were in 19 communities in 12 subdivisions (within 5 divisions). Assistance consisted of two cycles of food top-up disbursements and one disbursement of NFIs to 10,773 individuals (5,913 female, 4,860 male) in 2,098 eligible families. Most of these families are female-headed. CRS uses e-vouchers in the ACER project, which are redeemed at local vendor shops in their communities. In 2023, ACER IV distributed e-vouchers which were valued at 305,476,980 XAF, or just over \$509,000. After the second distribution, CRS, and Caritas Bamenda’s monitoring showed that 96.67% of participant households reported “little to no hunger,” a decrease of over 76% from the project’s baseline survey in April 2023.

ACER IV also offered poultry training activities to 568 individuals (300 female, 268 male) in 110 families, including the assembly of chicken coops at each participant’s home.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$259,808.58
Operational cost	\$39,519.59
Funds given to local partners	\$88,110.90
Other costs	\$481,595.61
Cost recovery/indirect	\$172,959.30
Total spent	\$1,041,993.98



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



KEY INTERVENTIONS TO DEVELOP SYSTEMS & SERVICES FOR ORPHANS & VULNERABLE CHILDREN (KIDSS)

All 10 Regions of Cameroon – \$1.8 million

For nine years, the Cameroon country program implemented the KIDSS project, facilitating collaboration between the Government of Cameroon, community networks, and families to provide quality care and support services to children living with, affected by, or at risk of acquiring HIV, and their caregivers. The project was funded by USAID as part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR. CRS partnered with the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC), and 26 local implementing partners including dioceses and civil society organizations to support the country to achieve HIV epidemic control and reach the UNAIDS 95-95-95 objectives across all 10 regions of Cameroon.

Results:

- **Contribution to HIV Epidemic Control:** The project reached a cumulative total of 25,369 families, comprising 87,007 project participants, 36% of whom were living with HIV, providing differentiated services based on identified needs. These services included access to pediatric prevention and HIV testing services, microfinance activities, school placement and scholarships, support for early child development and positive parenting, and referral for child protection services. The project improved viral load suppression outcomes among pediatric patients living with HIV, from 61% in FY20 to 85% in 2023.
- **Robust Monitoring and Evaluation:** The electronic case management system (called COLMIS), which the KIDSS project developed, permitted automated synchronization, the use of multiple languages, strong data governance, and timely access to data analysis to support effective evidence-based decision-making. By the end of the project, CRS trained 170 project staff on the system and completed internal and donor reporting using the COLMIS. NECC will continue to host the platform for their follow-on project.
- **Successful Transition to Local Prime:** The CRS country program successfully implemented the transition of the project to NECC, achieving all key milestones and effectively capturing lessons learned through a series of learning briefs and webinars. In FY2023, after NECC successfully took over oversight of approximately 50% of the project implementation and financial and partner management nationwide, USAID issued a non-competitive funding opportunity for the "Consolidating Systems and Services for the Management of OVC" (CoSMO) project in August 2022. CRS provided technical and financial assistance to support NECC in preparing a high-quality proposal, which was subsequently submitted to USAID. **NECC won the \$33M award in January 2023, a major milestone for localization efforts in Cameroon.** From January to March, during the project closeout activities, CRS provided ongoing

support to NECC through the ALLRight Project to ensure a rapid and high-quality start-up of the new project, following donor guidance and best practices in operations, program planning and management, financial management, human resource management, donor and stakeholder engagement, and accountability. On the February 23, 2023, CRS officially marked the transition and close of KIDSS through a closeout ceremony.



NECC, CRS, and USAID representatives celebrate the closeout of the KIDSS project and the awarding of its follow-on project, CoSMO, to NECC in February 2023. Photo by Cara Bragg/CRS

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$504,096
Operational cost	\$40,297,44
Funds given to local partners	\$858,053,95
Other costs	\$80,58,50
Cost recovery/indirect	\$ 299,978,83
Total spent	\$ 1,783,014,72



ADVANCING LOCAL LEADERSHIP IN THE RIGHT WAY (ALLRIGHT)

Cameroon – \$346,743

For over 20 years, the CRS country program in Cameroon has focused on building the capacity of its local partners, including the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) so that NECC can reach more people living in vulnerable conditions in its emergency and development programming. In addition to accompanying NECC in strategy development and the updating operational processes as part of the KIDSS project, the Cameroon country program has also allocated its own private funding under the ALLRight project to support these efforts. ALLRight began in May 2022.



When NECC expressed a desire to strengthen their external communications, CRS accompanied NECC in the development of a scope of work for the training. NECC communications staff led the training for the benefit of their colleagues. Photo by CRS Staff

Results: The key achievement of the ALLRight project in 2023 was the successful transition towards NECC becoming the prime recipient of the USAID-PEPFAR funded CoSMO project. As part of this transition and in continuation of on-going efforts, the ALLRight staff coordinated several trainings and accompaniment to ensure the quality of programs, operations, and safeguarding across the conference, with particular emphasis on the ongoing transition. This included support to NECC to develop a project risk register to anticipate and mitigate context-specific risks to the timely and efficient implementation of the CoSMO project.

ALLRight supported NECC to develop a Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) manual, MEAL tools and scopes of work, and a Safeguarding policy. ALLRight also supported the development and implementation of a procurement management system and began to implement a comprehensive and consolidated financial system for all NECC services and projects. In addition, in February 2023, CRS and NECC embarked on the development of a strategy to launch a Feedback and Complaints Response Mechanism for NECC. CRS supported NECC in the hiring and formal orientation of new staff, including a Business Development Officer and a Human Resources Officer.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$183,916,37
Operational cost	\$1,073,13
Funds given to local partners	\$101,628,37
Other costs	\$27,016,04
Total spent	\$313,633,91

WEST AFRICA RAPID RESPONSE FUND (WA RRF)

Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali - (Cameroon - \$112,292.39)

CRS implemented the West Africa (WA) Rapid Response Fund (RRF) in four countries: Cameroon, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. Launched in July 2020, the WA RRF mechanism was a three-year project designed to meet unanticipated but emerging needs, mobilizing resources for rapid, short-term, life-saving assistance across Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Multi-Purpose Cash (MPCA), and Shelter and Settlement (S&S) sectors. The project emphasized local partner networks to deepen the potential for sustainability through organizational and emergency response capacity building. In Cameroon, CRS worked with the NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council) and four local partners – the Archdiocese of Bamenda, the Dioceses of Buea, Maroua-Mokolo, and Batouri – covering the areas in Cameroon that are most likely to experience emergencies related to ongoing conflict and natural disasters.



RRF leading a capacity building session to support Caritas Maroua-Mokolo on the elaboration of an organisational strategy and resource mobilisation action. Photo by CRS personnel

Results: The year 2023 was the final year of implementation for the RRF. The CRS country program in Cameroon organized a training for Cameroonian partners on protection mainstreaming and safeguarding from November 2022 to January 2023. The training introduced key concepts on safe and dignified programming and introduced tools and resources to operationalize them. A second training between May and July 2023 focused on building the capacity of local partner leaders in emergency management, particularly around their responsibilities as leaders and decision-making in emergencies. In addition to benefiting from CRS’ emergency training, the RRF project team sourced out the Regional Technical Advisor for Partnership and Capacity Strengthening and Local Leadership at the CRS Central Africa Regional Office to support Caritas Maroua-Mokolo and CODAS Caritas Batouri in developing their respective development strategies and resource mobilization plans from November 2022 to September 2023. This support was part of RRF partners requests for individualized support requests based on their organizations’ needs.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$30,020,72
Operational cost	\$35,911,78
Funds given to partners for rapid response	\$ -
Other costs	\$28,501,16
Cost recovery/indirect	\$18,858,73
Total spent	\$113,292,39



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

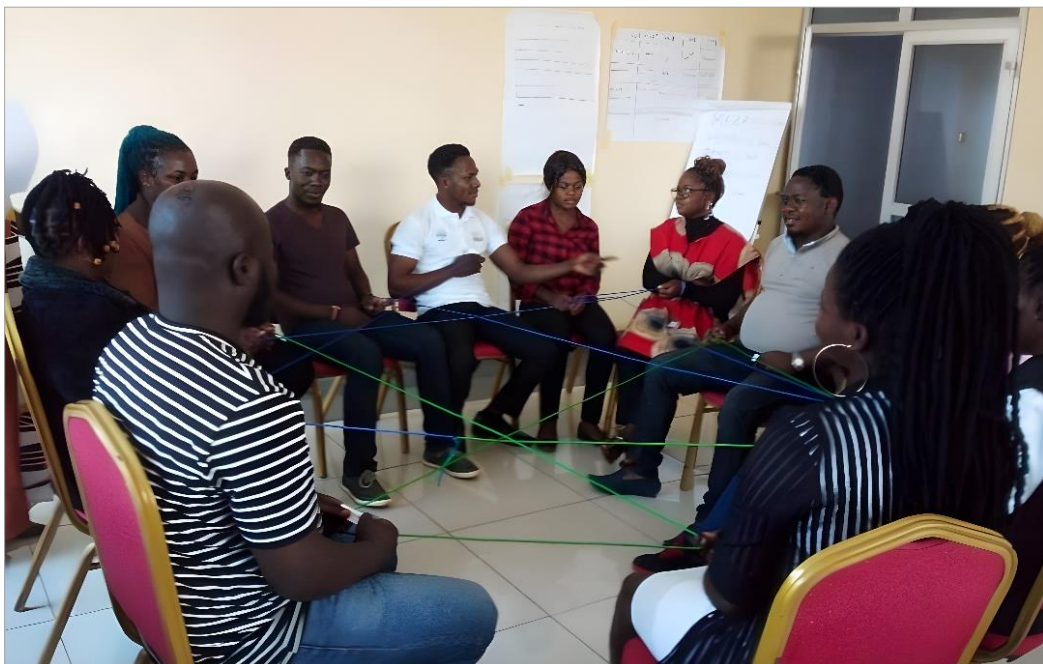


EMPOWERING PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON EMERGENCY RESPONSES (EMPOWER)

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali-
\$1,778,817

Funded by USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and implemented by CRS across five countries in West and Central Africa, the Empowering Partner Organizations Working on Emergency Responses (EMPOWER) project improves the humanitarian architecture in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali to be more accountable, localized, and inclusive. In Cameroon, the project supports 10 local humanitarian actors (LHAs) through capacity strengthening on operational and technical subjects and supports the LHAs to create individualized improvement plans.

Results: EMPOWER has designed a series of standard trainings for local humanitarian actors. In 2023, the Cameroon country program trained 51 Cameroonian LHAs on protection mainstreaming and on the sphere standards and leadership roles in coordination. The bulk of the training centered on how to apply these standards in real-world scenarios in Cameroon. The training also included modules on leadership in coordination and discussed the overall goal of humanitarian coordination, detailing how to become leaders and the expectations for LHAs in those roles. This part of the training was carried out jointly with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).



An exercise on referral pathway during a training of RRF and EMPOWER partners on safe and dignified programming in Bamenda. Photo by CRS staff.

In addition to the abovementioned standard trainings, **focused capacity strengthening and accompaniment of the LHAs** is a continuous activity in all five countries. Topics depend on the LHAs' expressed needs in their improvement plan. In Cameroon, CRS provided 202 hours of training and targeted capacity strengthening to LHAs in 2023. These trainings focused on finance and accountability, gender integration, and overall leadership. Thanks to the training provided by the EMPOWER WCA project on resource mobilization, Cameroonian partner Strategic Humanitarian Service (SHUMAS) used the skills they acquired during the training to obtain a sum of \$25,000 from CITI Bank. This funding permitted them to provide additional support to the communities living in vulnerable conditions in the Northwest Region. In addition, partner organizations such as AJED-MR, Caritas Kumba, Tammounde Speranza, SIRDEP and AMEF noted improvements in the overall efficiency of their organizations, and the quality of exchange and negotiation of partnership agreements with resource providers, due to the resource mobilization training and action plan, as well as the support provided by CRS in developing, refining, or updating their policies and procedures.

EMPOWER-WCA provided small grants to six LHAs to be able to secure leadership roles in coordination structures. The team supported many of the LHAs in discussions with these structures. The grant amounts were decided on an individual basis given the real needs of that LHA, whether that financial barrier was salary for a dedicated staff, transportation credits to travel to the location, funds to host meetings in their office, and more. As a result of this accompaniment, a \$7,545 grant, and EMPOWER's advocacy in Cameroon, **local partner ASOPV received a small grant to support a position they already had as the Regional Leader of the Cameroonian Humanitarian Organization Initiative in Bertoua, and they also ascended to a new leadership position, as the Lead of the Livelihoods working group in East Region.** It is worth mentioning that the coordination focal points of local partners are coached by the leads of clusters and working groups. On a more global level, the EMPOWER team also serves on Cameroon's localization task force. The interactions and support to coordination forums includes advocacy around localizing aid, such as presenting to different bodies, meeting with focal points to discuss action plans, and discussing opportunities to elect local actors to leadership roles in different levels of coordination in different regions.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$60,333,63
Operational cost	\$35,511,78
Funds given to local partners	\$ 32,228,10
Other costs	\$40,101,71
Cost recovery/indirect	\$33,828,31
Total spent	\$202,003,53



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



STABILIZATION AND RECONCILIATION IN THE LAKE CHAD REGION – PHASE II (STAR II)

Far North – \$901,352.58

Since 2019, through the STaR project, CRS has responded to communities affected by the Lake Chad Basin crisis and living in vulnerable conditions in Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria. STaR activities began in Cameroon in 2021. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) via KfW (German Development Bank) and has four main activity components: improving access to basic services through infrastructure rehabilitation or construction, expanding livelihood opportunities, strengthening social cohesion between host communities and displaced populations, and strengthening local governance through local economic development, disaster risk reduction, and conflict mitigation.

Results: In early 2023, the STaR team conducted procurement activities for Cash-for-Work (CFW) infrastructure, ensuring that community members participating in CFW activities would be supported in their tasks with private sector partners. The project prioritizes local production of construction materials for these projects, including compressed adobe mud blocks and cut-stone blocks. The infrastructure team also finalized the validation process of the CFW lists in the 10 intervention communities with support from MEAL and other component colleagues. The team trained 208 CFW participants on the code of



The STaR project uses a mixed approach to infrastructure improvement, employing both the private sector and men and women from participant communities via Cash-for-Work. Photo by CRS Staff.

conduct, the project feedback mechanism, fire management, first aid kit use, and Personal Protective Equipment requirements. They carried out road repair works in three different communities, oversaw the renovation of two classrooms in Goray-Zamalva, and prepared tender documents for the construction and renovation of the planned infrastructure works (water points, classrooms, etc.) by private companies and CFW participants.

STaR II also supported livelihoods restoration through seed and tool distribution for market gardening crops in 2023. More than 4,500 participants were trained on rain-fed farming techniques and best practices for home gardening throughout the year. The team also created 15 new Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) to help participants gain financial literacy and act towards their household financial goals. In addition, 147 SILC groups participated in savings sharing-out meetings at the end of their savings cycles. New jobs were created when 7 people passed their exam to become SILC Private Service Providers. They will support SILC groups in their own communities.

Under the project’s Social Cohesion component, 20 Youth Ambassadors and 20 Peace Facilitators were trained on CRS’ signature 3B/4D approach¹ assessed conflict factors in 10 communities and radio hosts were also trained on social cohesion programming. This resulted in the production of six radio spots and three micro-programs related to peacebuilding. In addition, the project trained 10 local Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Committees in DRR planning techniques and helped them collect data to inform preparation of their plans.

Strong local leadership is also a priority for the STaR project. In 2023, STaR created Village Development Committees in seven communities and helped them conduct a participatory assessment. The project also helped the Council of Mokolo update its Communal Development Plan.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$595,924,76
Operational cost	\$130,229,76
Funds given to local partners	\$200,220,05
Other costs	\$186,211,08
Indirect/cost recovery	\$102,187,72
Total spent	\$1,214,773,37



¹ This approach combines the 4Ds of Appreciative Inquiry ("Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver") with CRS’ 3Bs peacebuilding methodology ("Binding, Bonding and Bridging"). The result is a powerful approach for use within a people-to-people peacebuilding framework.

CAMEROON'S FEEDBACK, COMPLAINTS, AND RESPONSE MECHANISM



An ACER project staff speak with a participant during a distribution event. Face-to-face feedback is the most common way CRS Cameroon receives comments, appreciations, and complaints from program participants. Photo by Louis Blaise Djilo for CRS.

In 2023, the CRS country program in Cameroon built upon its hybrid model of feedback channels, which include hotlines, face-to-face interactions between CRS and partner staff and project participants, and suggestion boxes, among other means. Each project has its own mechanisms, and all feedback and complaints are received using a centralized feedback form in CommCare. CRS uses the YouTrack platform to delegate and track cases safely and confidentially.

Results: In 2023, a total of 3,599 issues were received across Cameroon country program projects, except for EMPOWER and RRF. Of these issues, 3,469 issues were resolved. The system received 494 requests for information, 1,451 appreciations, 1,124 requests for assistance, 216 complaints, 155 suggestions, three safety and security concerns, and 156 out of scope issues. There were zero reports of potential misconduct (CRS/partner or other affiliates). The majority (47%) of the issues were submitted through face-to-face means, while 36% (1,290) of the issues were received through hotlines and 16% (418) were presented through the suggestion box with CRS or partner staff. The ACER III project had the greatest engagement of FCRM (2,167), followed by STaR II project (876), and the KIDSS project (555).

COUNTRY PROGRAM REDI INTERNSHIP

Yaounde, Maroua, Mokolo, and Bamenda, Cameroon

Following a Respect, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (REDI) workshop in 2021, CRS designed a 6-month internship program to identify, mentor, and develop diverse junior staff who are aligned with CRS' mission and competencies and have the interest and potential to take on full-time positions within the CRS country program in Cameroon. The program is an opportunity for young graduates with disabilities or from under-represented or marginalized groups to take their first step into the world of work and discover the codes, culture, and workings of an organization.

Results: The CRS country program in Cameroon proudly hosted 41 interns across three cohorts in 2023. Twelve interns, of which 11 were women, served from September 2022 to February 2023, and 11 women and three men followed them, from March 2023 to August 2023. The final cohort of 2023 (and into 2024) began in September 2023. They



In addition to gaining work experience, interns enjoyed the camaraderie the experience offered. Photo by Ernest Mbeng/CRS.

were comprised of 10 women and five men. Interns served in a variety of functional areas in the country program: Programming, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning, Finance, and Human Resources. Each CRS county program sub-office hosted interns in 2023, offering a wide array of experiences and on-the-job learning.

Three recent former interns have even gone on to work for CRS. Steffanie Wouyang Shushe, for example, after participating in the second cohort, was recruited following a competitive recruitment process. She holds the position of Accountability Field Officer for the STaR project in Mokolo. Steffanie had this to say when she was still an intern: "I had very good impressions of CRS, with people who were always available and courteous, a supervisor who allowed me to deploy myself by giving me responsibilities, and I had the opportunity to train and upgrade in Excel. I have a very good impression of CRS. And I'd say it was my best internship ever."

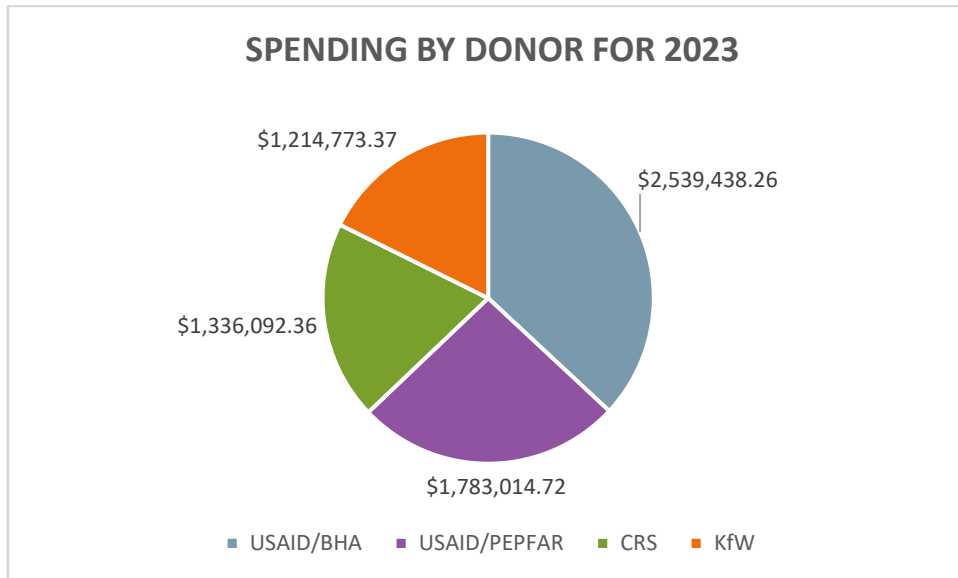
CRS PRIVATE FUNDS BUDGET IN 2023

CRS private funds support ongoing operational costs and salaries for senior leadership. The country program uses some resources to complement donor-funded projects, such as continuing programming when there is a gap between donor awards, to meet cost-share requirements, or to fund additional staff positions that CRS deems critical for the success of its projects. CRS also dedicates private funds to staff professional development opportunities, capacity strengthening initiatives with local partners, and business development costs.

In 2023, CRS was proud to offer continued support to the local church for trauma healing workshops for Catholic priests and religious men and women in Buea and Kumba. This year, CRS funded a consultant to lead three of these workshops from June 4th to June 25th. CRS also supported the Edea Diocese with the construction of a borehole at their seminary, a project valued at just under \$5,400. CRS also supported “Foyer de l’Espérance” with a financial contribution of \$4,800 for the implementation of the project Familial and Social Reintegration of Minor Girls Living on the Streets in Yaoundé.

COST CATEGORY	BUDGET AMOUNT
Personnel cost	\$636,715,80
Operational cost	\$244,042,48
Funds given to local partners	\$10,834,39
Other costs	\$130,865,78
Total spent	\$1,022,458,45

FUNDS SPENT IN 2023 FOR THE COUNTRY PROGRAM



COUNTRY PROGRAM STAFF

CRS Cameroon had a total of 55 staff as of September 30, 2023. A further breakdown is available in the table below.

INTERNATIONAL STAFF	4
NATIONAL STAFF	51
FEMALE STAFF	17
MALE STAFF	38

ACER IV SUCCESS STORY: CARING FOR CAMEROON'S DISPLACED

For many years, Adeline Nayah Tim had been running a successful business as a seamstress in her birthplace, Abo, a remote village in the Boyo subdivision of the Northwest region of Cameroon.

Then, in June 2023, during a flare-up of armed conflict, her family's home was burnt down. Adeline, her husband, and relatives were forced to flee to the regional capital, Bamenda, leaving everything behind, including her sewing materials.



Adeline Nayah Tim washes her family's clothes using buckets and soap she received as part of CRS' ACER IV project in the Northwest Region. Photo by Emmanuel Joko/Caritas for CRS

Adeline, like many other residents in the Northwest region, has suffered the negative repercussions of the ongoing conflict that has affected Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2016. The situation has led many families to leave their communities and seek safety elsewhere.

"We lived with a relative when we came to Bamenda in June," she says. "It was very difficult for all of us. Even getting enough food was a problem, especially as my husband and I were jobless."

Then, when a team from Catholic Relief Services (CRS)' Anglophone Crisis Emergency Response project (ACER) carried out a rapid registration process for more than 100 recently displaced families who had arrived in the Bamenda area, Adeline was enrolled as a participant. As part of the project, Adeline and the other families who had been displaced received electronic vouchers, which can be redeemed for critical food and non-food items, like clothes, sanitary products, and cookware, to help provide some immediate relief.

"I am a little bit more at ease, as I do not have to worry about food," Adeline says. "I am confident that by the time my supply will be running out, I will have found a job."

CRS, in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Bamenda, and with funding from USAID, has been helping families like Adeline's through the ACER project since 2020, providing access to food and critical household items for 10,800 people who have fled violence in their communities or welcomed vulnerable families into their homes.

One such individual who's been assisting vulnerable families in the Nkwen neighborhood of Bamenda is Paul Akemngwa, the head of the community. The neighborhood received a wave of families seeking refuge in early 2023 and he witnessed firsthand the struggles that these families faced.

"I experienced the desperation of some of the families," Paul says. "When they just arrived, I supported some with food when I could...Some did not even have a place to stay, talk less of what to eat."

Adeline says she is grateful for the support she's received from the ACER project, and she is quite optimistic about the future. As soon as she saves enough money, she plans to set up her tailoring workshop within the Mile 5 area of Bamenda's Nkwen neighborhood.

"I am seeing this as an opportunity to restart my life and build from scratch," Adeline says. "I know it will be hard, but I am ready for the challenge."



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



STAR II SUCCESS STORY: BUILDING PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES IN THE FAR NORTH REGION OF CAMEROON

On a large slab of rock in the small mountainous village of Zamalva, Cameroon, a group of 30 or so men and women sit, listening to youth peace ambassadors from Catholic Relief Services' STaR II project. It is midday, but threatening rain clouds offer protection from an otherwise strong sun. The discussion is lively.



Today's topic: how to avoid and resolve problems among various ethnic and religious groups.

Boubakari, right, a peace facilitator in CRS' STaR II project, leads a discussion on social cohesion in Zamalva village in the Far North region of Cameroon. Photo by Jennifer Lazuta/CRS

The population of Zamalva has more than tripled in the past few years.

Hundreds of families whose communities near the Nigerian border were attacked by Boko Haram fled south, hoping to find safety and security in Zamalva and neighboring villages. They had to rely on the generosity of the host community for shelter, food, clothes, and other necessities.

"They arrived here with nothing," said Angele, a mother of eight from Zamalva. "We tried to help those that we could. We tried to support them, but it was difficult."

The influx of new arrivals was too massive. It quickly put a huge strain on the village's already limited resources.

The lines at the water pump were long, and it often ran dry before the end of the day. There was not enough food to go around. The newcomers wanted to farm but there was no available land. They wanted to enroll their children in school but had no money for the fees. The host community grew resentful of the arriving families. Additionally, many began to fear for their safety, suspecting their new neighbors—many from different religious and ethnic backgrounds—of being terrorists in disguise.

"When we first arrived, it wasn't easy to approach the host community," says Walla, who arrived two years ago after her home was set on fire during the night. "The community often insulted us here. They told us we could not use the water pump anymore. We did not want to be a burden to them, but we had no place else to go. Our homes were gone. We had nothing."

The situation slowly improved as local churches and other organizations distributed food and household items. Displaced families slowly built their shelters. Deals were made to loan plots of land so they could plant their food. Additional wells were dug. Friendships formed. But the mutual resentment between the host community and new families still simmered beneath the surface.

Then the CRS' STaR II project identified and trained youth peace ambassadors and peace facilitators selected from within the community. To help strengthen relationships, these community volunteers lead door-to-door campaigns to encourage group dialogue. They help promote reconciliation and conflict resolution between families and within households.

"We take the time to talk with people, explain why a certain behavior is harmful, and help peacefully resolve problems when they arise," explains Boubakari, a 23-year-old peace facilitator in Zamalva. "This helps people understand the value of living together in harmony because when there isn't peace, that again brings war and that destroys a community. So, we need to put an end to the problems."



His peace partner in the community, Sarah Dougie, a 19-year-old peace ambassador who focuses on working with young people in the village, says her age and experience resettling here helps people listen to her.

Walla holds her 10-month-old daughter. She just attended a discussion on how to avoid and resolve problems among various ethnic and religious groups in the community, led by peace ambassadors from CRS's STaR II project. Photo by Jennifer Lazuta/CRS

"It's important for me to help people learn how they can better live together. People listen to my messages because they are important lessons for all of us. Everyone gets along better now."

A participant in the discussion, Angele, says they are so grateful for these activities. "We have learned so much from these discussions," she says. "They have helped us see each other in a different light. There is understanding now. So, the difference has been remarkable."

