

HAITI

Camp Closures through Market Based Cash Transfers for Rental Subsidies



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Country: Haiti

Project location: Port-Au-Prince

Disaster: Earthquake, Cholera Outbreak

Disaster date: January 12, 2010 (Earthquake), October 2010 (Cholera Outbreak)

Project timescale: Commenced 22 months after the earthquake and continued for one year

Houses damaged: Over 180,000 houses damaged or destroyed

Affected population: Over 3 million affected, 1.5 million homeless, at least 200,000 fatalities

CRS target population: Distributed 40,000 emergency shelter kits, helping 25,000 families in the resettlement program

Cost per household: One year's rent, with a maximum of \$500 per household

Project budget: A six-month, \$619,000 pilot project to close two camps with 460 families, followed by another program of \$659,000 to close the Solino camp with 650 families. Funded by private donors.



What did CRS do?

- All 1,110 families from three targeted IDP (internally displaced person) camps resettled to individual housing (rentals and transitional shelter); 98 percent took rental subsidy.
- 100% camp closure through voluntary departure.
- Life-skills training program was seen as vital by the program participants.
- Most renters reported using remaining funds to support their micro-enterprise activities.
- Program was fully integrated with the government of Haiti strategy and CRS Community Resettlement and Recovery Program (CRRP).

Background

The earthquake that struck Haiti's West Province on January 12, 2010, resulted in one of the worst humanitarian disasters in modern times. More than 200,000 lives were lost, at least 180,000 homes were damaged or completely destroyed, and an estimated 1.5 million people were made homeless. Half of the nation's 15,000 schools collapsed or were severely damaged. At the peak of the emergency, 1.5 million people were living in 1,300 camps. Before the disaster, Haiti ranked 145 of 169 in the UN human development index. Powerful aftershocks shook improperly constructed buildings and homes, heightening the impact of the damage in this desperately poor country. An outbreak of cholera in October 2010 intensified the crisis, killing more than 7,000 people, with 470,000 more contracting the disease. As part of the ISAC Shelter cluster, CRS emergency response provided shelter kits to 46,963 families to provide immediate protection. A transitional shelter program was launched to provide semi-permanent accommodation for families for the duration of the reconstruction period.

Rental Subsidies for the most Vulnerable

At the peak of the emergency, around 1.5 million people were displaced and living in 1,300 camps in the earthquake-affected areas of Haiti. This population gradually went down as the humanitarian community built more than 100,000 transitional shelters, and people with safe houses returned home. The remaining caseload of more than half a million people were those with the least options: Those who were squatters or renters before the earthquake, those who rented in multi-story buildings, and those who did not have large enough land plots to construct a T-shelter. When several humanitarian agencies piloted projects to assist in camp closure, CRS too decided to take on the challenge. In addition, CRS wished to address questions of sustainability in resettlement. Each family benefiting from the project received psychosocial support and micro-health insurance as well as training in household management, conflict resolution, and how to start a small business.



Children in the camp drawing their new homes.
Photo: CRS

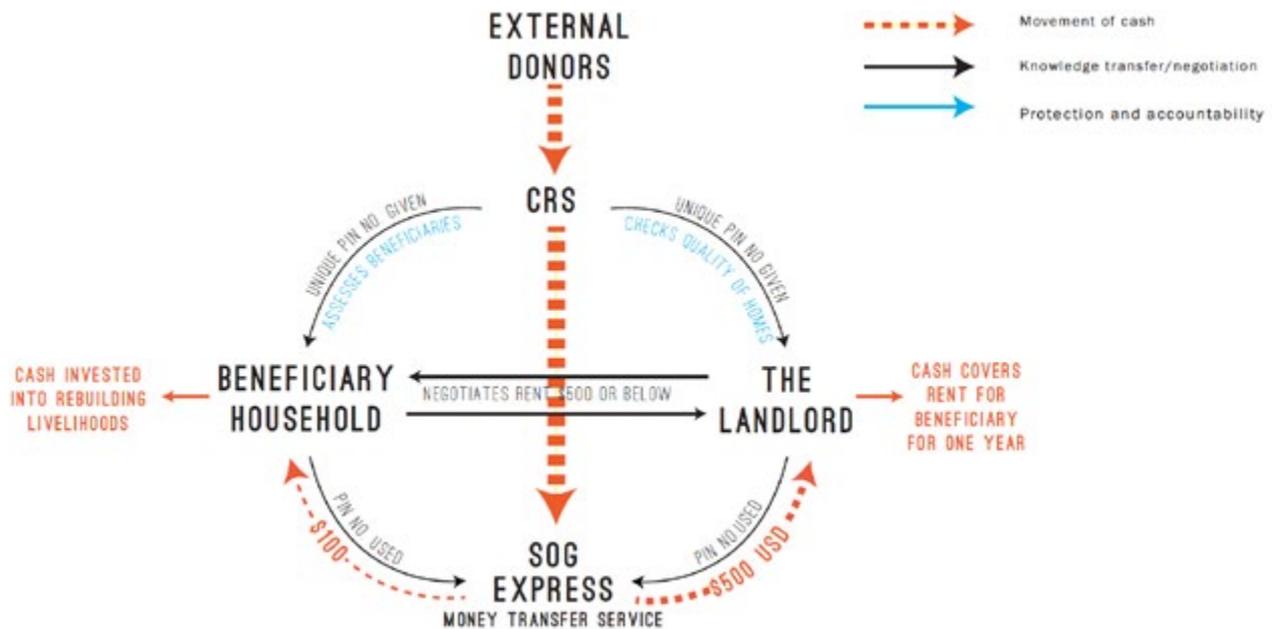


Diagram of cash flow and methods to protect project participants and rental market.
Credit: Amanda Rashid / CRS

Project Principles

When the Ann Ale Lakay (“Let’s go home!” in Haitian Creole) project commenced in September 2011, there were just under 120,000 households remaining in 660 IDP camps. Over 78 percent of these families were renters before the earthquake, and thus had no land of their own on which to construct T-shelters. This project facilitated families to leave camps and find suitable housing solutions. It offered a cash/market-based solution (rental support for one year) for these families, combined with comprehensive psychosocial support. It began as a six-month pilot program to close two camps (Petit Place Cazeau and Cazed-32). On the success of these closures, more funding was acquired, and the program extended to close one of the most challenging camps, the Solino camp with 650 families.

Delivery Mechanism

- A six-month, \$619,000 pilot project to close two camps with 460 families, followed by another program of \$659,000 to close the Solino camp with 650 families.
- Three options were offered: A rental subsidy, construction of a T-shelter, or the repair of a “yellow” house. The vast majority of families opted for the rental subsidy, given that most were without a house or land before the earthquake.
- The rental option provided one year’s rent, a maximum of \$500 (HTG 20,000) with a “keep the change” principle: Any savings on the \$500 are to be kept by the family leaving the camp.
- The agreed upon rent amount was transferred directly from CRS to the landlord via a money transfer service.
- The remainder was transferred to the head of the household via a mobile money PIN system.
- Generally, program participants relocated to areas close to the camps and/or inside CRRP neighborhoods, thus benefiting from other CRS services such as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and livelihoods.

“Keep the Change” Principle

The cash subsidies were managed in a careful way that protected the program participants and the local market. A money transfer service was used so that cash was never directly exchanged between the program participant and the landlord. Program participants had \$500 to negotiate with, with a “keep the change” principle in place. This had two benefits:

1. Program participants were able to keep the remainder of the money and thus negotiated hard for the rental price, which prevented market rent rates from artificially inflating due to the program;
2. Renters were only able to select houses ranked “green” (safe to occupy, according to the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Communications (MTPTC) damage assessment, using ATC-20 guidelines) and not allowed to choose homes located on a ravine or otherwise deemed unsafe.

In order to put more weight into the contract, all rental agreements were signed by the Mairie (town hall), preventing the landlord from unfairly evicting the program participants and reinforcing the government’s legitimacy and role in the response.

Following the rental payment, the majority of households used the remainder of the money to support micro-enterprise activities like running a small shop, thus the program also contributed to the vital rebuilding of their livelihoods.

This type of customized service provision and attention to individual households has required significant investment of CRS staff time and involvement with participant families, but the resulting payoff in program quality and impact has been enormous.

“ I love waking up in the morning and breathing the air outside of the camp. I feel joy in my heart each day and I owe it all to God and to CRS.”

– Marie Andree, project participant

Extra Capacity

The assumption that the existing housing market outside the camp could not cope with extra demand proved to be untrue. Although the housing market in Haiti was by no means fully recovered, the new market was adapting and finding a way to absorb more people than it previously could. Program participants did not have problems locating rental properties. Finally, the concern that the program might break up any nascent sense of community cohesion that had developed within the camp was disproved. CRS was pleased to observe that families chose to stick together, finding rental accommodation in clusters outside the camps that reflected existing social networks.

Life-Skills Component

CRS addressed the long-term recovery and rebuilding of the family by integrating the cash transfers with a core life-skills module. According to participant interviews and focus groups, the seemingly “complementary” life-skills training activities were actually vital to the project. These six-module courses prepared camp residents with life skills they would need for a successful transition and helped them develop a sense of personal responsibility and agency for the long-term success of their family after leaving the camp. Families were to develop their own “family plan,” a personalized roadmap to sustainable resettlement. Its aim was to prepare them for the future, as well as for facing unexpected setbacks and crises.

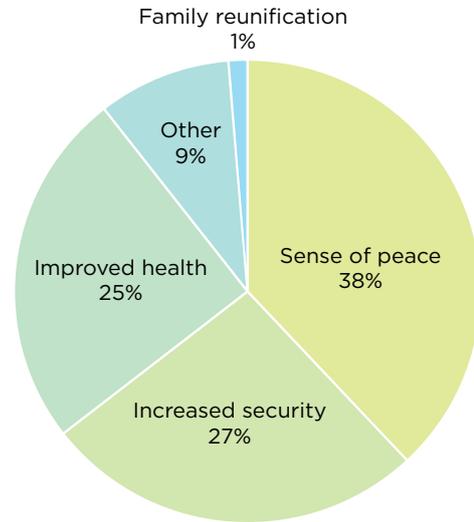
Ann Ale Lakay witnessed an overwhelmingly positive response to life-skills training. Though attendance was only mandatory for one session, 94 percent attended four or more trainings, a testament to the high level of interest.

Program

Session	Module	Details
1	Family communication	Interpersonal skill building and conflict resolution
2	Personal responsibility and problem solving	Role within the country of Haiti, larger community, neighborhood and family
3	Prioritizing needs, planning for the future	Helps the family learn how to identify needs and create a plan. Individual sessions result in production of plan
4	Financial planning	Banks, savings, lending options, health/other insurance, negotiations

Program Participant Selection

Ann Ale Lakay aimed to close three IDP camps, which housed 1,110 families: one in the neighborhood of Christ Roi, Nan Bannan; one in the neighborhood of Petit Place Cazeau (PPC warehouse camp); and one in the neighborhood of Solino, on the Pere Solino sports field. Only families who genuinely lived in the camp were targeted for this project, not people who rented out tents in the camp.



Pie chart showing changes project participants experienced. Credit: CRS

Challenges

- Program participants could have been better prepared to protect themselves from being taken advantage of. Some participants were pressured into sharing the remainder of the money with other camp dwellers.
- At times, rental payments went through too slowly, so landlords changed their minds and refused to rent to a program participant.
- Although residents in Cazed 32 eagerly welcomed Ann Ale Lakay, those in Petit Place Cazeau reacted angrily and were critical of the program and mistrustful of CRS. However, after participating in life-skills training, their attitudes changed.
- In Pere Solino camp, the neighborhood around the camp was unsafe with many gangs, and staff safety was a serious concern.



A potential project participant finds out about his resettlement options by reading a CRS poster.

Photo: CRS

Acknowledgements

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