

# CRS AND disaster risk reduction

## BY THE NUMBERS

# \$264

MILLION SPENT ON EMERGENCIES  
BY CRS IN FY15

# 168

CRS EMERGENCY PROJECTS  
IN 46 COUNTRIES

# 13 million

PEOPLE REACHED WITH CRS EMERGENCY  
SUPPORT IN FY15

# \$7 - \$10

MONEY SAVED IN DISASTER RESPONSE  
FOR EVERY \$1 SPENT ON DISASTER  
PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES

# 20

YEARS OF DISASTER RISK  
REDUCTION PROGRAMS

## OVERVIEW

In our emergency response and recovery efforts, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) takes a comprehensive approach that addresses urgent lifesaving assistance with a focus on full recovery. Our goal is to help people survive with dignity, rebuild their homes and lives, and strengthen their stability and resilience for long-term recovery. CRS carries out a range of disaster responses tailored to local contexts and needs, always following the community's lead for their engagement and program ownership.

Preparing in advance for a crisis can save a family a lifetime of assets, keep communities afloat, prevent lasting damage, and protect lives by simply knowing what to do when, and before, disaster strikes. To strengthen the resilience of families and communities to crisis, CRS invests in Disaster Risk Reduction activities that focus on preparedness in disaster-prone communities—those hit cyclically by floods, droughts, typhoons, and other crises—as well as strengthened means for resilience, especially in areas facing the growing effects of climate change.

## PILLARS OF OUR DRR PROGRAMMING

- 1. Community-based:** Empower families, communities and local actors to better understand the hazards they face, bolster existing capacities, and strengthen their skills, systems and structures for reducing risk.
- 2. Systematic Linkages:** Strengthen governance that manages disaster risk, and establish and advocate for linkages between communities and government to increase access to resources and services.
- 3. Increased Resilience:** Strengthen communities' strategies for reducing risks, increase their adaptive capacities to shocks, and build back better in post-disaster efforts.
- 4. Innovation and Learning:** Use technologies and innovations to help Disaster Risk Reduction efforts be more effective.



Almas Sikdar Almas secures his roof with rope, which will reduce flying debris in a storm. *Jennifer Hardy/CRS*



A fisherman stands near a char, a river island formed from sedimentation. Chars are extremely vulnerable to natural disaster. CRS and Caritas Bangladesh have been implementing a DRR project in the remote and underserved area of Barisal Division, where natural disasters and river erosion are common. *Ismail Ferdous for CRS*

## CRS PRIORITIES FOR DRR IMPACT

### PRIORITIZING LOCAL PARTICIPATION, LEADERSHIP AND ECONOMY

Community members play a key role in the conversations, strategies, and leadership that help to protect them in crisis and allow for a safer, speedier recovery. CRS anchors activities in ways that support the local market through cash or voucher systems, and other interventions that keep the economy going. At the same time, we work with communities to improve housing so that it is more resilient when cyclones or other crises strike.

CRS actively engages the local government within our Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction programming to influence and strengthen policies and regulations. CRS provides comprehensive training to participating government and civil society members on the following:

- Participatory Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction models
- The Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian response and Core Humanitarian Standards
- Early warning systems and first aid
- The integration of Disaster Risk Reduction interventions into government development plans

### Impact

In Vietnam, CRS trained 1,042 individuals from local government and Civil Society Organizations on key practices and standards, and the government endorsed 34 community-based Disaster Risk Reduction plans. Additionally, communities planted 15,000 mangroves, and proposed a management plan with policy regulations. The local government approved the community's regulations, and has indicated it will provide its own resources to replicate the plan in other areas.

### Our DRR Commitments at 2016 World Humanitarian Summit

**Invest at least US\$8 million by 2020 in strengthening the financial, human resources, planning, monitoring, evaluation and management capacity of our local partners so they can directly access international funding. CRS commits to help partners manage the range of risks associated with these funds, and will be transparent about its costs and those of its partners for donor funds.**

**Invest at least US\$5 million of our own resources and leverage an additional US\$5 million to support Disaster Risk Reduction, with a particular focus on urban Disaster Risk Reduction, in partnership with local organizations and government by 2020.**



Villagers demonstrate through a mock drill how prepared they are for disasters on the island of Chhatisdebil, a highly vulnerable village in India's Orissa's coastal belt. The Community Based Disaster Preparedness Project helps these villagers prepare for floods. *Amiran White for CRS*

### INTEGRATION INTO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

CRS has long prioritized Disaster Risk Reduction and resilience not only in its emergency relief and recovery efforts, but also in its development programming. By doing so, we can protect the gains made in development programs while mitigating the impacts of shocks. We see this especially relevant in communities dealing with climate change. For example, within our multi-year agricultural programs, CRS works closely with farmers to develop risk reduction plans and sustainable coping mechanisms to help them become more resilient to droughts and floods.

#### Impact

Ethiopia is suffering its worst drought in 50 years, putting more than 10 million people at risk of starvation. Despite this, nearly half a million people are seeing improvements thanks to REAAP, the Resilience through Enhanced Adaptation, Action-learning and Partnership Activity, helping them survive the brutal conditions created by climate change. The three-year activity, led by CRS and funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, works hand-in-hand with communities in six vulnerable districts in Oromia state. Community volunteers receive training and establish committees whose members design and implement plans that decrease the risk of climate-related disaster. One year into REAAP, families are building resilience against disasters by changing their behaviors and adapting new practices and technologies. Community leaders learn to identify and address their risks and challenges—from land and soil degradation or financial instability, to a lack of water sources or poor nutrition. Trained community forecasters

use national weather predictions and local data to help their communities better plan their farming activities.

### COMMITMENT TO LOCAL PARTNER COLLABORATION

CRS commits to going only where needed, and designs and implements programs with local partners wherever possible. In fact, CRS' Institute for Capacity Strengthening ([ics.crs.org](https://ics.crs.org)) provides a global platform for learning and access to tested guidance and tools for our network of 1,500 local partners in more than 100 countries, as well as other civil society organizations globally. Overall, CRS seeks to develop flexible programs that can transition quickly between preparedness, emergency response, recovery and development.

#### Impact

Across the Middle East and South Asia, CRS has provided joint emergency preparedness and response training (EPRT) for at least 45 local partners. The trainings have helped strengthen staff skills in financial and human resource management, rapid needs assessment, and adherence to quality and accountability standards for emergency response.

## URBAN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Urbanization has brought about rapid change and now well over 50 percent of the world's population lives in urban areas. Greater urbanization offers the benefit of opportunity for many, but also brings about real challenges, such as solid waste management and unregulated development, which can increase people's vulnerability. When hazards strike—such as flooding, storm surges and earthquakes—the already difficult situation can turn into a humanitarian crisis.

CRS works in Latin America, Africa and Asia to build local capacity of vulnerable groups and the government to manage, and helps to translate risk concepts from the rural context to the urban one. Activities include:

- Risk assessment and mapping
- Applying Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology to produce vulnerability and risk maps
- Developing emergency response and evacuation plans
- Reducing solid waste through community engagement and cleanup efforts
- Integrating Urban DRR concepts into government development planning
- Utilizing Disaster Risk Reduction planning in water, sanitation, hygiene and Shelter activities
- Engaging youth to be Disaster Risk Reduction ambassadors in their communities

### Impact

CRS worked with local partners in Manila, Philippines to prepare for and respond to seasonal flooding, after which local districts developed 15 separate Disaster Risk Management and Contingency Plans. Given the health concerns around the challenge of waste management during flooding, CRS supported 218 community “clean-ups” involving 13,000 community participants.

## MEASURING IMPACT

In post-project surveys of Disaster Risk Reduction programs, communities identified the activities they feel most contribute to their long-term resilience: Community organization and joint planning, savings groups, increased technical knowledge, and a stronger link with the government for services and assistance. In 2015, CRS undertook a study in five countries where post-disaster housing construction was carried out, using a behavior change methodology to learn from families who were not project participants but were applying construction techniques promoted in the CRS projects. The [study](#)—titled “**Extending Impact: Factors influencing households to adopt hazard resistant construction practices in post-disaster settings**”—showed that people were most influenced to invest in their own Disaster Risk Reduction because of “cues for action”—things that help remind people to do something toward hazard-resistant construction.



In Madagascar, families described displacement from their homes as a devastating consequence of recent disasters. Sara Fajardo/CRS

## About Catholic Relief Services

Catholic Relief Services is the official international humanitarian agency of the United States Catholic community. CRS is a member of Caritas Internationalis, a global confederation of more than 160 members. CRS' relief and development work is accomplished through programs of emergency response, HIV, health, agriculture, education, microfinance and peacebuilding. CRS eases suffering and provides assistance to people in need in more than 100 countries, without regard to race, religion or nationality.



To learn more about our work in emergencies, contact [emergencies@crs.org](mailto:emergencies@crs.org).  
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