**Situation Reports (SitReps)**

**Frequently Asked questions**

**Why do we write SitReps? Who’s our audience?**

The purpose of SitReps is to keep a wide audience of internal and external stakeholders abreast of CRS’ response to an emergency situation as it evolves over time, so that they understand and accurately represent CRS’ work. SitRep inform decisions related to programming, external advocacy, media and communication, and fundraising.

Upon receipt of the first SitRep indicating intention to respond and preliminary plans, a Country Program can obtain initial approval from the RD for up to $50,000 to immediately start the response. If there is no funding available at the regional level, these funds can come from the OverOps Reserve / Emergency Funds, pending HRD approval. (An Emergency Proposal will still be required to account for this funding.)

**Who receives the SitReps?**

SitReps are disseminated broadly within CRS, including to HRD and HQ departments such as OverOps, fundraising, media and communications. They are also disseminated outside the agency, to program partners and actual or potential donors; in particular, SitReps are shared widely within the Caritas Internationalis (CI) network.

Because of this broad dissemination, sensitive or confidential information should never be included in SitReps. Instead, communicate confidential management or security issues separately to the region/HQ.

**Who writes SitReps? Who reviews them? Who sends them out?**

Sitreps are prepared by Country Programs which have experienced or are experiencing a natural or man-made disaster to which CRS and/or its partners are responding or intend to respond. The CR is responsible for overseeing the SitRep preparation and sending it to the designated person(s) within the regional team, as determined by the RD, for review.

Once the Sitrep is approved for circulation by the RD or his/her delegate, the CR sends it to the Vice President, Humanitarian Response, Jennifer Poidatz at jennifer.poidatz@crs.org or to emergencies@crs.org, and to the HRD Emergency Focal Point for that region, and any staff within the region as determined by the RD.

The Vice President, Humanitarian Response and/or her delegate are responsible for sending the approved SitRep to the CRS Sitrep distribution list-serve email address within 4 to 5 hours of receipt.

**When and how often do we write SitReps?**

Whenever a natural or man-made disaster hits a country where we work -- or where we could potentially respond -- the Country Program should prepare an initial SitRep within the first 24 hours of the onset of the crisis using information that can be obtained from secondary sources or through phone calls to partners and other contacts on the ground in the affected areas.

During the acute phase of a crisis, when the situation on the ground is still fluid and CRS and partner activities are evolving rapidly, SitReps should be prepared at a minimum on a weekly basis, and in some cases more frequently. As the emergency situation stabilizes, SitReps can be written less frequently, for instance monthly.

The CR, RD and the Vice President, Humanitarian Response will jointly determine when the need for SitReps has abated and they can be discontinued.

**What information should I include?**

SitReps provide targeted humanitarian information that includes a brief overview of evolving emergency events and conditions on the ground and greater detail into CRS and partners’ plans and activities.

The template and guidance below aim to assist Country Programs in writing SitReps that are informative and useful to their intended audience(s), with minimal workload to Country Program staff.

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| **Tips:*** Some sections of the below template may not be relevant for initial SitReps or based on the context of the emergency, and can be omitted at the discretion of the County Program.
* Use bullet points and keep the SitRep short (max 2 or 3 pages)
* One-two photos can be included in the text or at the end, but stay within recommended page limit.
* If the response has started, include an overview (table format) of what has been done during the reporting period and cumulative numbers reached to date.
* Do not repeat information from SitRep to SitRep. If there is no new information, simply write ‘*no change since last SitRep’*. Reduce the frequency of SitReps (from daily to weekly to monthly) once the situation stabilizes and there is less new information to report.
* Adopt a neutral tone on policy and coordination issues. This is not an advocacy tool.
* SitReps are circulated widely at HQ and through the CI network. Communicate confidential management or security issues separately to the region/HQ.
* Edit (as appropriate) and share your Sit Reps with your local OFDA rep and other prospective donors, to show them that you are already active and on the ground. Information from assessed needs and gaps may help them decide how to respond.
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Situation Report # XX Date: XX

**Country Program: XX**

**Type of Disaster: XX**

**HIGHLIGHTS**

* Include 3 to 5 bullet points on key developments.
* This should highlight CRS/Partner results achieved during the reporting period, but may also include significant changes in the operating environment, funding secured or VIP visits.
* All information included here should be further detailed in the main part of the SitRep.
1. **CONTEXT (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

Briefly describe the overall disaster context: what happened and what are the overall humanitarian implications. Give a sense of the magnitude of the event, area affected and evolving situation (including population movements, relevant policies, etc.)

Keep this section short, as most of this information will be from secondary sources - the media, government and UN reports, that readers have access to.

1. **AFFECTED POPULATION/NEEDS ASSESSMENT (1/2 page max.)**

With a focus on the areas where CRS and/or partners are present or planning to respond, provide key quantitative and qualitative information on the impact of the disaster on affected populations and estimated numbers of affected people. This information may be from local sources, coordination meetings and CRS/partner field assessments or monitoring visits.

In initial SitReps when the situation is still fluid and field assessments are under way, this section may represent the core of the SitRep; over time, it is likely to decrease in importance. Do not repeat information from previous SitReps, but focus on new information or changes in the situation during the reporting period. In some cases, there may be no new information to report.

As feasible, include the following information in summary form:

1. In initial SitReps, you may want to provide some brief general information on the affected population’s character or demographics (origin, ethnicity, religion, age/gender…).
2. Once field assessments are under way, focus on specific findings from these assessments: the affected population’s living conditions and priority needs identified, as relevant to informing the response proposed.
3. Describe how different vulnerable groups within the affected populations may have different priority needs; document in particular specific needs of women and men, the elderly, children/youth, as applicable.
4. **PROGRAMMING (1/2 page to 1 page)**

In the first SitRep, indicate preliminary plans. Subsequent SitReps should summarize key programming developments, including field assessments, strategic planning, and MEAL activities completed during the reporting period.

Present results achieved by sector (and location as appropriate, but without excessive detail), documenting results achieved during the reporting period, cumulative results to date, and (as applicable) overall targets. This information is typically best presented in table format.

Briefly describe problems encountered, if any, and actions being taken to address them.

Discuss relevant cross-cutting considerations, e.g. protection, capacity building, gender responsiveness, as and when applicable.

Where applicable this section may also briefly outline plans for the upcoming period and new programming options being considered and/or key gaps in resources to meet the priority needs identified.

1. **PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATION (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

Describe any significant developments in relation with local and international partners, most importantly Caritas partners and CI member organizations, as well as with the local Church. Mention visits by CRS Board members or US Bishops and other VIPs (other than donors, who are discussed in section E).

As relevant, briefly describe any efforts on the part of CRS and/or partners to influence the overall response strategy, challenges encountered by the humanitarian community and/or relevant policies/decisions at the national or international level that may affect the nature or scale of the CRS response. You may also mention key results of coordination efforts (UN/Cluster or bilateral) that may have an impact on CRS work. In all cases however, be specific and focus on new developments during the reporting period.

1. **DONOR UPDATE (1 or 2 paragraphs)**

Provide an update on donor cultivation, proposal submissions and wins. Make sure to include funding requested or allocated by the CP, Region and HQ, as well as in-kind donations. Highlight donor visits to CRS programs, invitations to high level meetings or other evidence of donor recognition, as applicable.

This section may also briefly highlight gaps in resources secured to meet identified needs, and what actions are being considered to address this, as appropriate.

The following tables illustrate two possible ways to present project data in reader-friendly manner. If the emergency response has many different donors and proposals, consider using template 2 which provides aggregate data by sector and proposal status (submitted / approved). In all cases, make sure to highlight new submissions or wins.

Example 1: Possible matrix to illustrate funding information project by project

| Program sector(s) | Target  | Donor | Local Partner | Duration | Status | USD value |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | HH or beneficiary numbers |  |  |  | In production / submitted / approved / lost | Value or quantity of in-kind items  |

Example 2: Possible matrix to illustrate funding information in summary format:

| Program Sector | Status | Donors | Targets | Value |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SECTOR 1 | submitted | List all donors for that sector & status | aggregate targets | Aggregate value  |
| Approved | List all donors for that sector & status | aggregate targets | Aggregate value  |

1. **LOGISTICS / SECURITY**

Describe any logistical challenges encountered or anticipated with emergency response operations, and what specific actions are being taken to address them, including information on key procurement needs and plans.

Clearly note any issues related to staff safety and security, focusing on whether and how possible security developments may affect CRS’ response and plans.

1. **STAFFING**

Note any changes in staffing since the last Sitrep, including planned responsibilities of new arrivals. List names, if relevant, but keep it brief.

**H. MEDIA / PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Include any information and/or quotes that can be used by the Web Unit or Communications Department.

Describe and attach any press coverage which names CRS or staff members.