

**Grand Bargain in 2021:  
Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary**

**Name of Institution: Catholic Relief Services (CRS)**

**Point of Contact (please provide a name, title and email to enable the consultants to contact you for an interview):  
Amanda Schweitzer, Technical Advisor, Humanitarian Partnerships and Capacity Strengthening**

**Date of Submission: 16 February 2022**

(NB. Please limit your answer to no more than **4 pages in total** – anything over this word limit will not be considered. Please respond to all of the questions below.)

### **Grand Bargain in 2021**

**Question 1: Reflecting on the information you have provided in the Excel spreadsheet, please highlight the 2 or 3 key outcomes or results relating to the Grand Bargain that your institution achieved in 2021?**

Cash and Vouchers: Total CVA for the year significantly increased from last year going from fiscal year (FY) 2020 (\$38 million) to FY2021 (\$80.2 million), illustrating CRS' continued investment in and commitment to cash assistance and cash readiness programming as well as the agency's improved financial system for tracking and record keeping of CVA programs, as mentioned in last year's report. In FY2021 eight countries (Vietnam, India, Bangladesh, Malawi, Madagascar, El Salvador: Philippines, and Guatemala) completed an 18-month cash-readiness process, which included an organizational capacity assessment (the Holistic Assessment for Readiness in Cash, or the HARC), followed by action planning and implementation of cash-readiness activities designed to fill gaps in capacity as identified through the HARC. These investments have shown results. El Salvador, which had not done CVA before FY21, posted \$1.4m in CVA after cash-readiness efforts. Malawi, Madagascar, and Vietnam also went from no CVA in recent years to over \$1m across the 3 countries in FY21. CRS also continued its cash-readiness program with a new 18-month commitment, this time focusing on local and national civil society organizations. CRS has begun administering an organizational capacity assessment tailored for local/national organizations, which will reach 13 local organizations in Bangladesh, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia (4 organizations), Philippines (2 organizations), Somalia, and Turkey.

CRS also remains a co-chair (with Save the Children and World Vision) of CCD, which pursues support to NGOs collaborating for more effective and efficient cash delivery. CRS is recently a lead of CCD's localization working group.

Localisation: Guided by our agency strategy and its commitment to local leadership, CRS has worked to increase our organizational commitment to local partners and their capacity strengthening, while also increasing our advocacy for expanded localisation. Programmatically, **in FY 2021, CRS awarded \$54M (out of a total of \$495M)** in humanitarian funding to local/national responders and assisted local partners in mobilizing approximately \$7,832,944 in funding

directly from donors. Additionally, 67% of all CRS humanitarian projects (149 out of 225 humanitarian projects in FY21) included local/national partner capacity strengthening. CRS has continued to invest in 5 stand-alone capacity strengthening projects which have engaged a total of 120 partners in 32 countries. Phase 2 of the Empower project began in Latin America/Caribbean after Phase 1 results showed a 43.5% increase in local orgs. organizational & programmatic capacities. The BHA-funded SPSEA project ended resulting in a 32% avg. increase in local orgs. capacity to identify/respond to SEA allegations and 98% of staff indicating they have the tools and resources needed to handle allegations of SEA. A second phase of the project was approved by BHA and is called, "Preparing for Enhanced Protection in Disasters (PrEPD)". This phase will target 10 local organizations in Philippines, Uganda and Sierra Leone with the goal of preparing them to be accountable to crisis affected communities and to manage protection risks and impacts during disasters. The project will also develop a comprehensive guidance and toolkit to assist DRR and humanitarian actors in supporting disaster prone communities improve protection mainstreaming and accountability in disaster preparedness.

**Question 2: Briefly explain how the outcomes contribute to achieving the Grand Bargain 2.0 enabling priority 1 (quality funding).**

*Enabling priority 1: A critical mass of quality funding is reached that allows an effective and efficient response, ensuring visibility and accountability.*

*(For ease of reference, see Senior Officials Meeting recommendations [here](#).)*

Throughout our significant localization advocacy work, CRS has consistently pushed for both investment in local organizations, as well as the critical need to adjust funding conditions and mechanisms. In our policy work, engagement with USAID and in our testimony to the United State Congress, CRS continues to advocate for consideration of size of awards, timeline of awards, flexibility of funding, choice of funding instrument, language requirements in proposal processes, and associated compliance burdens, among other procurement issues. CRS was pleased to see that the newly released draft USAID Local Capacity Development (LCD) policy highlights the importance of these considerations as well as others that CRS and our local partners have highlighted numerous times with the policy drafting team. In addition, this year has seen the emergence of a number of legislative bills introduced in the US Congress intended to advance localization of foreign assistance. CRS has engaged with each of the bill's congressional sponsors to ensure any legislation that progresses addresses quality funding issues.

CRS is managing 4 donor-funded rapid response fund mechanisms (1 global, 2 in East/Central/West Africa and 1 in the Caribbean) providing flexible, quality

funding to local frontline responders. In FY21, \$1,438,726 in direct funding was dispersed through the mechanisms to 8 local organizations in Grenada, Haiti, Burkina Faso, Congo, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil and Benin. All local organization grantees can include overhead costs in their grant budgets and CRS is committed to assisting its local partners in developing indirect cost recovery policies, if they don't exist, to standardize and solidify their overhead cost requests.

**Question 3: Briefly explain how the outcomes contribute to achieving the Grand Bargain 2.0 enabling priority 2 (localisation and participation).**

*Enabling priority 2: Greater support is provided for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs.*

CRS has significantly advanced our advocacy efforts this year around local leadership and localization. Through a three-pronged strategy of strengthening the evidence base, increasing policymaker engagement, and amplifying local partner voice, CRS has helped advance a vision for locally led development and humanitarian response among policymakers, in particular with the US Government. Some highlights from the year include: publication of [policy research and policy papers](#) on a variety of localization topics, presenting at the USAID evidence summit, providing inputs which directly led to clear changes to USAID's forthcoming Local Capacity Development (LCD) Policy, and convening four focus groups of 38 local partner organizations from 23 countries to engage directly with USAID on the policy. CRS also successfully included language into the USG Appropriations Bill which calls for more funding for local partners and reporting on how much funding is going to local entities. Finally, CRS provided [testimony](#) to the USG Congressional House Foreign Affairs Committee entitled: "[Shifting the Power: Advancing Locally-led Development and Partner Diversification in U.S. Development Programs.](#)"

To align with our Vision 2030 goal of catalyzing transformational change at scale, in FY20 CRS began reporting on two new KPIs on local leadership and influence, with the following results for 2021: KPI1 - 73 documented cases in which CRS significantly strengthened the capacity of a local partner; and KPI 2 - 46 documented cases of CRS contributing significantly to government policies or other actions that positively impact the poor or marginalized.

CRS' EMPOWER project in Latin America and the Caribbean supported the development and implementation of 22 funding agreements between international donors and national partners (out of which 50% were directly between donors and the national partners as prime) equalling \$11.79M in

funding, \$6.87M which went directly to the national NGOs as primes. Since 2018, Empower has helped and enhanced local NGOs to participate in regional coordination platforms or sectorial clusters. Through these efforts there are currently 16 project partners participating in 13 different clusters or platforms.

In 2021, the success of the EMPOWER project solidified creation of CRS' branded EMPOWER Approach to humanitarian capacity strengthening and led to the development of two new EMPOWER projects: EMPOWER West/Central Africa and EMPOWER Asia. With funding from BHA, the EMPOWER West/Central Africa project will target 50 local organizations in Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Nigeria and focus specifically on addressing barriers of local humanitarian actors' participation in humanitarian coordination mechanisms. With funding from CRS, the EMPOWER Asia project will target 8 strategic national NGO partners in the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam and Nepal with the objectives of strengthening their structures and capacities for emergency response, improve their collaboration and coordination with humanitarian platforms and increasing their direct donor funding to respond to emergencies.

### **Grand Bargain and cross-cutting issues**

**Question 4: How has your institution contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment<sup>1</sup> in humanitarian settings through its implementation of the Grand Bargain? What results/outcomes have been achieved in this regard? (Please outline specific initiatives or changes in practice and their outcomes/results).** Please refer to the Guidelines for definitions of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which are included in this self-report template package.

One of CRS' organizational goals is to contribute to gender equality for women, men, girls and boys. In 2021, CRS developed and piloted a custom indicator that can be collected across all development and humanitarian response projects and annually aggregated across the agency. While it is accepted that reducing gender disparities in a number of gender analysis domains is needed to achieve gender equality, CRS aimed to start simple. CRS chose an indicator related to decision making, which is widely relevant across projects, while also a key element of gender equality. Females' participation in decision making is

---

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the IASC definitions of gender equality and women empowerment, available [here](#).

often a proxy indicator for their voice, agency, and/or control over her and her household's affairs. The indicator "Number of women/girls currently in union with increased input in household decisions" was piloted in Madagascar, the Philippines, and Benin and launched agency-wide in late May 2021. In FY2021, (Oct 1-Sept 30), five projects reported on this indicator. The projects ranged from a few hundred direct participants to 60,000. In FY21, the projects reported that 3,664 women/girls in union had increased input in household decisions.

CRS's 10-year Global Gender Strategy has been shared widely with CRS' humanitarian and development staff across all regions and has been translated into French, Spanish and Arabic to increase its accessibility to the widest range of staff possible. CRS continues to build staff capacity on gender equity on many fronts including: implementing gender-transformative approaches in both humanitarian and development programming, including SILC+GTA (Savings and Internal Lending Communities + Gender Transformative Approach), gender-based violence prevention, and addressing unconscious gender bias through training for staff. CRS also developed and implemented a Gender-based Violence course for its frontline staff that is designed for delivery over 15 hours, either online or in person. Training was conducted for staff and partners in Mali, Niger and Uganda. The training includes a series of interactive exercises designed to build participants skills to help individuals, families and communities to understand ways that GBV can be prevented and addressed; demonstrate good listening and referral skills in relation to GBV survivors, as part of 'Psychological First Aid (PFA)'; map local resources for GBV survivors and build their commitment to applying what they have learned in the workshop to:

- Actively consider and where possible address the root causes of GBV
- Respond through PFA to individual GBV survivors

During the year CRS also developed and piloted two gender impact indicators on women's decision-making, including during emergencies, as part of the agency's larger goal of developing clear agency-wide metrics. CRS' West Africa Region (WARO) has adapted and is systematically using a gender marker during country program and regional humanitarian and development proposal review processes. The tool assists reviewers in assessing whether the design of the humanitarian or development project is gender blind, aggravating, responsive or transformative, and assigns a score that the region uses to determine whether proposals meet the gender-responsive threshold before submission for funding consideration. This has assisted WARO in increasing inclusion of gender transformative approaches in programs, including SILC+GTA, Harmonious Family Life, Peaceful Masculinities, gender-based violence prevention, and time- and labor-saving technology pilots.

Several CRS projects worked to address and advance gender equality throughout the year in the midst of the ongoing C19 pandemic:

1. CRS is working with 8 international and local partners to implement a large-scale food security project - the Joint Emergency Operations Project (JEOP) to provide emergency assistance to the poorest households in Ethiopia. The project provides conditional cash and food transfers to chronically food insecure Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) clients with specific provisions to support women and adolescent girls.
2. CRS is implementing the Kisili 4 project, with USAID/BHA funding, which provides lifesaving assistance to households identified to be in crisis in Mali. The project conducts gender-sensitive rapid needs assessments and provides rapid deployment of teams and local partners in each region of Mali to provide shelter, WASH, food security and nutrition needs. The project takes into account the needs of women and girls, and project teams have been trained in Gender-based Violence basics.
3. CRS Madagascar is implementing Maharo, a comprehensive food and nutrition security project with BHA funding, that includes a significant humanitarian preparedness and response component. The Maharo project has put in place deliberate integrated strategies and resources to ensure that activities advance gender equality and the social and economic participation of women, female-headed households, young people and people with disabilities. Specific project activities have included a gender analysis, gender audits, specific gender training for staff and partners and a gender-responsive feedback accountability mechanism.

**Question 5: How has the humanitarian-development nexus been strategically mainstreamed in your institutional implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments?** Please explain how your institution has linked commitments 10.1 - 10.5 with other commitments from other workstreams.

Cash and Voucher Programming: CRS' agency strategy aims for a significant scale-up of cash across both humanitarian and development programs by 2030. The coherent cash approach initiative aims to streamline and improve quality cash programming, recognizing the impact that quality cash programming in development programs can have on surging or pivoting those programs in a

humanitarian context – and vice versa. To that end, CRS is hiring a full-time advisor to focus on social protection and cash. CRS' advocacy team has also dedicated a team to explore cash programming in development programming, with an aim to build evidence and determine a way forward.

*In South Sudan*, due to the operational context which presents multiple shocks (economic, health, political, environmental and conflict), all CRS programming is designed both for periods of relative stability and instability. This is realized through the recruitment and capacity development of field teams hired from local communities and/or local partner organizations anchored in local communities. These staff (within CRS and our partners) are acutely aware of the operating environment and skilled in anticipatory action both to support program participants and take evasive action to protect themselves and their families from harm or threat during times of crisis. While program planning, staff training, MEAL, reporting and operational quality standards are centralized, decision making is taken at the most effective local level. Programs are designed to pivot across the humanitarian, recovery, and resilience continuum, with a focus on timebound short-term and well-coordinated humanitarian responses which don't create dependency or undermine local capacity. Even in areas of acute instability, CRS strives to build an enabling environment through a focus on community institutions (farmer groups, saving groups, water user committees and community managed DRR groups), with the skills and confidence to progress to civil society actors in a more stable context.

The South Sudan programs have a particular focus on rural women and rural youth, both to provide opportunities for livelihoods and income generation as well as enhancing their status, skills, and leadership capacities. Activities provide a valuable space for women and youth to participate more effectively in decision making in their households and communities. The programs use trauma awareness training and social cohesion mobilisation as the underpinning intervention for all sector interventions. This is based on the recognition that given the very high levels of conflict related trauma in South Sudan, interventions to assist communities and individuals to recognise and better manage the negative impacts of historic trauma are essential in reducing conflict and to sustain recovery and development programming. Finally, programs are delivered in tandem, with humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programs co-locating to serve diverse population needs (including sharing of technical and operational staff, fleet, communications, facilities, and management structures).

*CRS' Homes & Communities Global Strategic Platform* aims to help improve and increase access to safe and healthy homes for communities recovering from



emergency events and for permanent housing enhancing sustainability of emergency responses and helping to transition into longer-term development. One example is CRS Malawi, which is a member of the platform and has identified three areas in which to achieve its goals:

- Access to information, through an institutionalized curriculum for improved construction using local materials, for example;
- Increased market access to improved and sustainable materials for communities;
- Increased community access to housing finance schemes.

This initiative connects with both Government of Malawi and other in-country development actors to understand the housing ecosystem so that recovery and DRR efforts can be sustainable and contribute to recovery and longer-term development and resilience.

CRS promotes *community-led disaster risk management* in development and DRR programs to ensure a participatory process that includes key stakeholders: community, government, and private sector. This includes identification of community-implemented small projects with monitoring plans developed and managed by the communities. In January 2021, CRS developed an emergency strategy that included social cohesion as one of its priority areas and built conflict-sensitivity into our emergency cash/NFI responses. Finally, CRS emergency sectoral teams (e.g., cash/markets/food security, WASH and DRR) have been working closely with development of longer-term projects (e.g., RFSAs), especially for locations that are disaster prone and/or have protracted emergencies as part of the context. When available, CRS is pursuing longer-term emergency funding opportunities that start to transition into later recovery/development.

**Question 6: Has your institution taken any steps towards improving risk sharing with its partners? If so, please describe how.** (*For ease of reference, please see a set of actions to enhance risk sharing as suggested in the Netherlands and the ICRC [Statement on risk sharing](#).*)<sup>2</sup>

In Summer 2021 CRS launched the agency-wide Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) self-assessment in conjunction with the CHS Alliance. More than 700 staff and 10 country programs (Bangladesh; Indonesia; Ghana; Greece; Honduras; Malawi; Mali; Nigeria; Somalia and Uganda) were included in our sample,

---

<sup>2</sup> During the 2021 Annual meeting and in consultation leading up to this Signatories have expressed a strong interest in advancing the risk-sharing agenda. As communicated, the Netherlands, ICRC and InterAction are in the process of setting up a Risk Sharing Platform. This work will benefit greatly from an inventory of Signatories' risk-sharing practices.

representing CRS' work across the world. CRS will continue with the interpretation of the results and action planning in early 2022.

CRS continued to participate in the InterAction Risk Leadership cohort and in work led by InterAction to facilitate peer exchange on risk management. Twenty CRS staff participated in the workshop led by CDA Collaborative Learning and InterAction to inform the Risk III – From Evidence to Action Report. CRS anticipates participating in the Risk Sharing Platform organized by the Netherlands, ICRC and InterAction. Internally, CRS launched a new process to identify its high-risk country programs for support in conducting participatory, country program-level risk assessments to better mitigate risks for program participants, CRS and its local partners.

CRS also completed the development of the Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanisms (FCRM) Guide. The FCRM Guide presents steps and quality standards to enhance FCRM design, start up, implementation and close-out and highlights how key actions for FCRMs differ during an emergency response. The FCRM Guide will be a primary resource for CRS and partner program and response teams, MEAL staff, and senior leadership.

Within the EMPOWER program, CRS facilitated two peer exchanges with partners in Colombia on their Protection programs for Migrants, with more exchanges planned in the future. CRS is also supporting EMPOWER partners to conduct a review of their Safeguarding systems, including their internal and external FCRMs.