



*CRS/Caritas Ukraine rush to get relief to thousands of families displaced by conflict in the East. Photo courtesy of Caritas Ukraine*



*Pilgrims pray on a hilltop in Boda, Central African Republic. Photo by Sam Phelps for CRS*



*Teacher Maniela Dorcelus speaks with a student at Notre Dame du Saint Esprit Catholic School in Haiti. Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS*

This Global Emergencies Update provides the latest report from around the world, where our field teams and local partners are carrying out vital emergency relief and recovery efforts in the most pressing humanitarian crises today. The following emergency efforts are possible thanks to the generous support of private and public donors, the dedication of local partners and the unwavering presence of Caritas and the local Catholic Church.

## **EUROPE**

In [\*\*Ukraine\*\*](#), CRS and Caritas Ukraine are providing critical humanitarian relief in the escalating conflict that is uprooting and claiming lives in the East. Relief efforts include food, hygiene, living and winter supplies for some of the nearly 1 million displaced people.

## **AFRICA**

In [\*\*West Africa\*\*](#), we have seen a positive turning point in the fight against Ebola, but the needs remain high. While the number of cases continues to decline, the outbreak has significantly impacted the local economy, as well as the health and education sectors.

In [\*\*Central African Republic\*\*](#), hundreds of thousands of people remain displaced as civil conflict continues to paralyze community life. CRS teams and partners work bravely in dangerous conditions to provide relief and care for thousands of people. Emergency support includes shelter, food, living supplies, agricultural recovery and conflict resolution.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

In [\*\*Iraq\*\*](#), internal armed conflict has displaced more than 2 million people. CRS and Caritas Iraq are jointly helping uprooted families with living supplies and relief items for winterization, shelter improvements and child friendly spaces.

[\*\*Syrian refugees\*\*](#) are facing bitter winter conditions. Piles of snow have left roads blocked, and families huddle together in small rooms for warmth. CRS is reaching nearly 700,000 war-affected Syrians with a variety of support across the region.

In [\*\*Gaza\*\*](#), intense fighting for 52 days in the summer between Israel and Palestinian militants killed many people and devastated infrastructure. CRS is working with communities and local partners in Gaza to provide an array of critical supports as families start to rebuild their lives.

## **LATIN AMERICA**

In [\*\*Haiti\*\*](#), January marked the 5-year anniversary of the devastating 2010 earthquake. Read highlights of recovery efforts at this important milestone.

## EASTERN UKRAINE



Ireena, 34, and her daughter Masha, 3, found refuge, thanks to the generosity of Garina, right, in rural Izyrum who opened her doors to them. Photo by Volodymyr Nechaiev

### Context

In Ukraine, 1.5 million people have fled their homes as a result of the armed conflict between Ukrainian government forces and separatist groups in the eastern Donbas regions. After a period of relative calm in December, pro-separatist rebels, who identify with their Russian roots and seek independence from Ukraine, and Ukrainian forces—fighting to keep the regions under government control—escalated hostilities in recent weeks in eastern Ukraine.

Millions of innocent civilians are caught in the line of fire. An estimated 921,640 people have been displaced within Ukraine, fleeing primarily to the provinces of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporozhe. At least 600,000 people have fled to neighboring countries, with 400,000 going to Russia. More than 5,400 people have been killed in the conflict.

In addition to the fighting, a controversial decision by the government to cut off all pensions and subsidies to those living in the areas occupied by pro-separatist rebels prompted thousands of families to leave the Donbas region. The pensions are many people's sole source of income, and losing them means people can't pay for basic—often urgent—daily needs.

People fleeing the conflict are finding refuge primarily through family and friends, and by squeezing several family members into small living spaces. Others have moved to bigger cities in hopes of finding jobs and getting social services from the government or charities. Uncertainty about returning home is growing, and the local Donbas economy offers few reasons for doing so: At least 40,000 small and medium-sized businesses have closed, as have 60 percent of the region's coal mines.

*“Families who before the conflict lived quite normal middle-class European lives, now find themselves crammed into a small room or two, or in an isolated cottage in a remote rural area, largely dependent on charity. For many, the routine of work, supermarket shopping, and after-school activities has been replaced by the fear of a savage war that seems to have no end.”*

—Christian Hennemeyer, acting country manager, CRS Ukraine

### CRS Response

CRS is supporting emergency relief efforts in this growing humanitarian crisis. In June 2014, as displacement in the East reached a peak, CRS and Caritas Ukraine began jointly distributing emergency food, water and living supplies. In time for the current winter months, CRS and Caritas Ukraine provided shelter subsidies and winterization support to 4,100 displaced and host families in the provinces of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and Zaporizhia.

### Priorities

CRS is supporting cash grants for rent, food, clothing and firewood. We're also helping people navigate the government bureaucracy, and find work and lodging. CRS field teams recognize the likely long-term nature of this crisis—the shelter, livelihood and protection needs facing families beyond these immediate months.

## WEST AFRICA: EBOLA CRISIS



CRS staffer Yusuf Mackery at work in Sierra Leone. Photo by Michael Stulman/CRS



### Context

As of February 6, 2015, the World Health Organization reported 22,560 cases of Ebola and 9,019 deaths across West Africa. CRS is continuing our response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa by capitalizing on our long history in the region and our broad community and Church networks. Although we have seen a turning point in the fight against Ebola—the number of cases continues to decline in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone—the outbreak has had a significant impact on the affected countries' economies, and health and education sectors.

### CRS Response

CRS has committed more than \$9 million to our emergency response, focusing on breaking the cycle of Ebola transmission by:

- improving community and health worker awareness and protection;
- ensuring comprehensive contact tracing and monitoring;
- promptly referring people believed to have Ebola to holding centers so they could be tested;
- transferring all positive cases for care and treatment; and
- ensuring access to safe and dignified burials for all victims and their families.

### Impact to Date

- Training and equipment for 3,000 health workers at 200 facilities that will ensure health care for 3 million people
- Hygiene kits and hand-washing stations for 8,500 families
- Training for 1,600 community and religious leaders and 2,600 volunteers to carry out information campaigns
- Awareness messaging to more than 2 million people
- Reopening of a 150-bed Catholic hospital in Monrovia and construction of a holding center in Sierra Leone
- Food assistance for 120,000 people and discharge kits for 3,000 Ebola survivors
- Support for safe and dignified burials in 3 districts to prevent further infections and respect families' religious practices. CRS is now expanding the program to Kenema, Sierra Leone's third-largest city. The agency is also collaborating with religious and traditional leaders to ensure access to safe and dignified burials.
- Calling on Congress to support emergency funding that commits \$2.9 billion to fight Ebola in West Africa. We urge the U.S. government to lead the development and funding of a coordinated, long-term humanitarian and development strategy that rivals that of its HIV and AIDS response in scale and scope.

*“Despite declining cases in West Africa, we are not at zero yet. Until communities are Ebola-free, we cannot altogether move on to recovery and rebuilding. Even one case can lead to another epidemic. What is needed now is vigilance. We need to continue to invest in public education on Ebola prevention, infection control trainings for health care workers and safe and dignified burials.”*  
—John Service  
CRS Ebola response coordinator

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



CRS meets with the community leader to discuss food needs in a rural village outside Boda. Photo by Kim Pozniak/CRS



### Context

Nearly 2 years of violent civil strife between 2 groups battling for political control has paralyzed community life. More than 5,000 people have been killed and other human rights violations are occurring as the Seleka and anti-balaka groups battle for power and control. By the end of 2014, thousands of civilians had been killed by both sides and more than 800,000 people had been displaced. About half—most of them Muslim—took refuge in neighboring countries. The country is described as a failed state in permanent crisis.

### CRS Response

CRS teams and partners work bravely in dangerous conditions to provide relief and care for thousands of people. Emergency support includes shelter, food, living supplies, agricultural recovery and conflict resolution. We are participating in a livestock migration study with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the Ministry of Agriculture. The partnership will analyze the relationships between farmers and pastoralists and recommend strategies for livelihoods, food security, social cohesion and peacebuilding. Also, given security concerns about using cash, all vouchers and similar activities were replaced by distributions of supplies for 1,500 families served in a shelter project.

### Impact to Date

- Emergency food supplies for 2,400 families, seeds and farming tools to 9,859 families and shelter kits for 2,437 families
- Distributions of 2,306 vegetable-seed and garden-tool kits to families and farmer groups
- Evaluations of water points in 6 communities to restore access to clean water
- Group management trainings with 32 out of 50 farmer groups to prepare for distribution of post-harvest handling kits, including seed-preservation materials and income-generating cassava mills
- Focus groups conducted in December in southeastern CAR on the topic of gender relations and sexual and gender-based violence; training for staff and partners on gender issues to raise awareness in 33 target communities
- Conflict resolution training and trauma-healing workshops for 800 interfaith and civil-society leaders
- Repair of 2 bridges, allowing access to 32 villages and 2,000 people previously unreachable by aid
- Technical training for 250 families on how to prepare land for rebuilding and place latrines
- Living supplies for 10,723 families and firewood to 700 families in the Muslim enclave in Boda
- Workshops with 32 of 50 farmer groups to prepare for distribution of post-harvest handling kits, including seed preservation materials and income-generating cassava mills
- Support for logistics, distribution, staff training and other infrastructure improvements for Caritas partners
- Construction startup of a community health center and community radio

## THE MIDDLE EAST: IRAQ and SYRIA



*A girl comforts her sister near their tent at St. Elijah Church in Erbil, Iraq. Photo by Daniel Etter for CRS*



*Half of all Syrian refugees are children. Photo by Sam Tarling for CRS*

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### I. IRAQ

#### Context

Internal armed conflict in Iraq has escalated since January 2014, displacing more than 2 million people. Civilians of all ethnic and religious backgrounds have been displaced by the violence including minority communities such as Yazidis, Christians and Turkmen as well as Shiites and Sunnis. In addition to internally displaced persons, Iraq is host to approximately 230,000 Syrian refugees, mainly in the northern Kurdistan region. This has a strained impact on the local communities where the displaced and refugees are living. More than 80 percent of the displaced are living outside of organized camps, with host families or in makeshift or unfinished dwellings. Temperatures hover around freezing. In total, approximately 5.2 million people in Iraq are believed to be in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. Nearly half of them are children.

#### CRS Response

CRS and Caritas Iraq are jointly helping uprooted families with living supplies and relief items for winterization, shelter improvements and in creating child friendly spaces. CRS and Caritas Iraq have hired 54 staff. The two groups share offices in Dohuk and Erbil. In January, they welcomed delegations of Dominican sisters and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

#### Impact to Date

- Provided 30,000 highly vulnerable displaced Iraqis with shelter and winterization support
- Distributed emergency living supplies to 5,000 families
- Opened 4 child friendly spaces with daily activities reaching roughly 1,000 children
- Repaired shelters and improved shelter conditions for 4,000 families, or some 24,000 people

### II. SYRIA

#### Context

Syrian refugees face bitter winter conditions. Piles of snow have blocked roads and families huddle in small rooms for warmth. The brutal Syrian civil war, now in its fourth year, has killed almost 200,000 people, displaced 7 million and forced 3.2 million to flee to other countries. More than 70 percent of refugees are women and children.

#### CRS Response

CRS is responding across the region—primarily in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq—to support Syrians as well as communities affected by the influx of refugees. To date, **CRS programs have provided the following assistance to more than 700,000 people:**

**Food and Living Supplies:** Food baskets, heaters, blankets, bedding, clothing, living supplies and cookers

**Shelter and Winter Supplies:** Shelter materials, rent assistance, construction or repair of shelters, and winter materials

**Trauma Healing:** Counseling for Syrian refugee children, adults and parents now, and soon after for Iraqis

**Education:** Informal education, tutorial and child care programs, and support to schools for capacity and materials

**Hygiene and Sanitation:** Soap, laundry detergent, diapers, buckets and other hygiene materials to prevent illness

**Medical Assistance:** In Jordan and Lebanon, treatment for injuries, illnesses, chronic diseases, and maternal and child care

## THE MIDDLE EAST: GAZA



*Children play at a kindergarten CRS is repairing.  
Photo by Shaeef Sarhan for CRS*



*A man employed in a cash-for-work program makes repairs to a local kindergarten. Photo by Shaeef Sarhan for CRS*

### **Context**

The level of devastation in Gaza over the course of 7 weeks in the summer of 2014 has the potential to set back a generation. Intense fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants resulted in massive loss of life and destroyed infrastructure. The combination of airstrikes, naval bombardment and a ground invasion in the tiny urban Gaza Strip has ruined many lives. All aspects of life were gravely affected: homes turned to piles of rubble, agricultural land destroyed, water networks damaged, electricity lines broken, schools shelled, and families traumatized and grieving. The conflict was an added blow to an already strained lifestyle. After 6 months, Palestinians in Gaza are still struggling to put their lives back together.

### **CRS Response**

CRS is working with communities and local partners in Gaza to support families in diverse circumstances as they rebuild their lives. Our emergency recovery efforts include the following:

***Emergency Living Supplies:*** During and immediately after the recent conflict, distributing 6,000 living supply kits and 8,000 hygiene kits to displaced families across the Gaza Strip.

***Psychosocial Support:*** Providing art supplies, puppets, sports equipment and games to help teachers engage children throughout their healing process. Also, group and individual sessions for parents, teachers, partners and CRS staff.

***Shelter:*** Helping 200 families build transitional shelters made with locally available materials. Seventy transitional shelters currently are under construction or complete.

***Cash-for-Work Opportunities:*** Providing income opportunities for vulnerable unemployed laborers and repairing areas devastated by the recent conflict, including farmland and kindergartens.

***Agricultural Recovery:*** Supporting 450 vulnerable farmers with vouchers to purchase seeds, tools and other materials, as well as assistance with land leveling and preparation.



*A new transitional shelter built with CRS support. Photo by CRS staff*

### **Spotlight on Shelter:**

At least 13 percent of housing in Gaza was destroyed during the war, displacing 108,000 people. CRS architects are working with vulnerable families to build transitional homes. The shelter design, which meets international humanitarian aid standards—includes a timber-frame unit with a corrugated galvanized iron roof. All materials are locally available. Shelters come in three sizes to accommodate various family sizes. With an expected lifespan of 5 years, the shelter can be extended and upgraded as people's lives and circumstances change. Each shelter costs about \$5,500.

## HAITI EARTHQUAKE RECOVERY: 5 YEARS LATER



*Israel Chery examines coffee berries in a farmer project supported by CRS. Photo by Benjamin Depp for CRS*

On January 12, 2010, an earthquake brought massive destruction to Haiti. The challenge of rebuilding the Western Hemisphere's poorest country has been great, but reconstruction has been a catalyst for lasting change. It drove us to re-evaluate our long-term work and execute creative programming that has improved schools, addressed the shortage of qualified health care professionals, given Haitians the opportunity to own homes and introduced diverse agricultural opportunities.

### 11 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RECOVERY EFFORT

1. Immediately following the earthquake, CRS provided 10 million meals to more than 1 million people in affected areas.
2. Using hand-powered rubble crushers supplied by CRS, communities removed almost 1.5 million cubic feet of rubble. Nearly 389,000 cubic feet of it was recycled and used for foundations for more than 4,500 transitional shelters and 300 latrines.
3. CRS helped 10,500 families resettle in Port-au-Prince, providing transitional shelter—sturdy earthquake and storm-resistant buildings that enabled people to return to their neighborhoods. As part of community rebuilding efforts, CRS also supported clean water, sanitation, safety measures, home repairs and education.
4. CRS installed or repaired 2,397 sanitation facilities (sinks, latrines and related plumbing) in Port-au-Prince. CRS constructed 8,140 rainwater catchment units for transitional shelters, and installed 394 showers and 29 potable water tanks or inflatable water bladders. CRS also constructed or repaired 3½ miles of drainage canal.
5. We created short-term employment for about 11,100 people—42 percent of them women—through cash-for-work activities to improve local infrastructure. Participants worked 217,630 days and earned more than \$1 million.
6. In partnership with the Catholic Church in Haiti, CRS rebuilt St. Francois de Sales, one of the country's oldest hospitals. The 200-bed teaching hospital is among 7 faith-based hospitals CRS is working with to improve the quality of health care for Haitians.
7. Haiti's cholera outbreak killed thousands. CRS built cholera treatment units, medical incinerators, laboratories and storage facilities for 7 partner hospitals. With our partners, CRS provided soap, water-purification tables and hygiene guidance to 450,000 families. We distributed more than 41,000 cholera kits, sanitized 250,000 homes and trained 2,264 community health workers and 905 civil protection committee members in cholera awareness and treatment. They, in turn, helped train nearly 3.1 million people in the community.
8. CRS is the first nongovernmental organization in Haiti to work directly with Haitian banking institutions to develop a loan product with a reasonable interest rate that will enable low-income households to manage the reconstruction of their own homes.
9. CRS conducted a first-of-its-kind survey of all Catholic schools in the country. To improve the quality of education, CRS is partnering with the Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education on a data-driven strategy to improve education, including teacher training and early-grade literacy programs. The initiative is funded by dioceses in the United States.
10. CRS is helping to revive the Haitian coffee industry. We have helped create a network of 6 coffee cooperatives, planted 265,000 new coffee trees and facilitated the sale of 43,000 pounds of coffee.
11. CRS provided 10 Haitian dioceses with \$1.1 million for 180 projects and \$1.5 million to support Church partners. CRS hosted more than 50 training sessions for U.S. dioceses on best practices for parish partnership. We have worked in Haiti for more than 50 years and intend to work alongside Haitians for as long as needed.