

# HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION FUND

## Final Report

<b>Organisation Name</b>	Catholic Relief Services/United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
<b>Project Title</b>	Gaza Risk Reduction and Mitigation (GRRAM)
<b>Problem Addressed / Thematic Focus</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction in complex urban, conflict-prone environments with non-state actors
<b>Location</b>	Gaza Strip/Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT)
<b>Start Date</b>	October 1st, 2011
<b>Duration</b>	17 months
<b>Total Funding Requested</b>	<b>Humanitarian Innovation Fund:</b> £147,694
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS)
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>Humanitarian Innovation Fund:</b> £147,694 CRS: 20% of the HIF contribution £34,793
<b>Reporting Period</b>	October 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2011 to February 28th, 2013
<b>Total Spent</b>	<b>Humanitarian Innovation Fund:</b> £140,949

### I. ACTIVITIES COMPLETED:

#### October 2011: Preparatory activities

- Hired new project staff: one Project Officer and two Project Coordinators were hired as CRS project team members.
- Project staff reviewed project materials: proposal, operations manual, detailed implementation plan, and budget.

#### November 2011: Research methodology & M&E system established, observers convened, and staff capacity on DRR built

- Developed M&E Binder, operational manual and learning agenda.
- Convened observers: ELRHA and ALNAP, and key humanitarian assistance actors such as ESSEC, GANZO (Gaza Security office), OCHA, WFP, ICRC, and Al Azhar University. GRRAM M&E binder and operations manual were sent to HIF for review. Project updates and the case study were also discussed with HIF.
- Trained staff members on IHD/DRR models.

#### October 2011 to February 2012: Project partner and target areas finalized

- Finalized partner selection: CRS approached Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) to be the implementing partner for GRAMM. After five meetings, an agreement was signed in January 2012.
- Coordinated with PRCS in hiring members for the PRCS/GRAMM field team composed of one Project Coordinator and five Field Coordinators.
- Conducted 3-day start-up workshop with PRCS team members.

- Confirmed five target areas: Ezbet Abd Rabu in North Gaza, Shejaea neighborhood in Gaza City, Albureij Camp in the middle area, Alfoukhari in Khanyounis, and Alsalam neighborhood in Rafah.

### **March to April 2012: Households selected and mobilized**

- Conducted broad sensitization of key local stakeholders (KLS) and households: field team approached KLS in five target areas and conducted five community mobilization meetings to inform them of GRRAM and to consult on the formation of 10 specific groups (2 groups per each of 5 target areas) to participate in GRRAM.
- Selected 200 HHs (20 HHs per group): the team conducted 10 community mobilization meetings to orient HHs to the project and its application process.
- Reviewed the applications and applied the selection criteria in choosing 200 GRRAM participants based on 10 groups which consisted 20 participants living in the same geographical area.
- Conducted consensus-building sessions among all groups to establish and agree upon responsibilities and terms of participation.

### **May to August 2012: Mapping hazards**

- Conducted 60 community-based vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCA) training sessions to acquire baseline data, identify hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities, risks, needs and strategies, and build action plans.
- Conducted final evaluation for the VCA training: CRS prepared final VCA report and shared findings with HIF.
- Presented hazards identified by DRR groups to its members and KLS: CRS conducted five feedback sessions to confirm the validity of the VCA results and establish a sense of ownership of the projects. Participants approved of all VCA results with slight modifications.

### **August to September 2012: Project management training conducted and DRR plans prepared**

- Project management training: CRS conducted 40 project management training sessions for the DRR groups—10 out of 24 DRR drafted plans were approved by CRS and PRCS. CRS allocated \$2,000 toward implementing each DRR plan, which was based on the results of the VCA training. All actions discussed among participants were further refined and their feasibility assessed in terms of duration and financial capacity.
- Conducted final evaluation of the project management training: findings of the evaluation revealed that the training encouraged teamwork, improved communication skills, and developed their ability to design DRR plans based on their current needs.

### **October to December 2012: Implemented DRR plans**

- Supervised the implementation of 10 DRR projects of all groups: The finalized DRR projects included:
  - a) Providing solid waste tanks to reduce the accumulation of solid waste.
  - b) Delivering first aid training courses and providing first aid kits.

- c) Raising community awareness on child protection against violence and street accidents.
  - d) Installing water tanks to alleviate water shortages.
  - e) Providing electricity chargers to lessen the burden of electricity cut-offs.
- Completed five exchange visits between DRR groups to share experiences and best practices.

#### **October 2012: Facilitated case study on GRRAM project**

- CRS assisted HIF in conducting a case study to learn about the nature of the project's innovation within a humanitarian context.

#### **February 2013: Conducted closing ceremony and final evaluation**

- On February 11, 2013, CRS conducted a closing ceremony for the project. Attendees were staff members and other representatives from CRS, PRCS, key local stakeholders, and the participants from the DRR groups.
- CRS prepared a detailed Scope of Work for a third-party evaluation of GRRAM and an external consultant was hired. The evaluation took place over several weeks and included field visits to target communities, interviews with participants and key stakeholders, and focus group discussions. The external evaluator was able to: a) complete a project evaluation and evaluation report (**Annex 1**); b) consolidate key lessons learned (**Annex 2**); and c) review and recommend different disaster assessment approaches that could be adapted and used for scale-up (**Annex 3**).

#### **Activities implemented throughout the project period**

- **Bi-monthly meetings with PRCS:** CRS facilitated five bi-monthly meetings with PRCS to discuss implementation progress; challenges encountered, lessons learned, and best practices.
- **Documentation and consolidation of learning:** HIF supported CRS in the development of a GRRAM blog: [www.grram.wordpress.com](http://www.grram.wordpress.com): The blog was updated with lessons learned throughout the implementation of the project. It also served as a repository for training material with links to other organizations' DRR pages. HIF also posted updates on their website that included the project summary, reports, images and a link to the GRRAM blog: <http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/blog/GRRAM/update2>.
- **Videos of activities:** CRS staff filmed best practices identified during field visits and posted them on the GRRAM blog and CRS' technical production library.

## II. ACHIEVEMENTS

CRS completed most all planned project activities per the detailed implementation plan (DIP), largely achieving project results. One key activity that was not achieved, and tied to the project's objective, was the production and dissemination of a "How-To" guide on DRR programming in urban, conflict-prone areas with non-state actors. The particulars of the Gaza context rendered the GRRAM pilot exceptionally unique. This fact, in combination with the project's small scale, and the types of challenges and learning gleaned along the way, helped CRS recognize that a "How-To" guide was not an appropriate culmination of the pilot. The final project evaluation (**Annex 1**) provides a comprehensive external review of the project according to criteria around relevance, sustainability, coherence, coverage, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. **Annex 2** is a consolidation of lessons learned throughout the project and post evaluation. The final evaluation and lessons learned document are important products of the project, providing insight into the value of the approach and recommended adaptations for taking DRR to greater scale in urban, conflict prone settings with non-state actors, or settings of similar circumstance.

In that GRRAM was a learning project, CRS focused on extracting lessons learned and discussing results and findings. Over the course of the project, several international organizations consulted with CRS on the GRRAM experience in Gaza. CRS began attending a DRR working group to share their experience and also learn from others' DRR experiences. By the conclusion of GRRAM, CRS designed and received funding for a follow-on DRR project in the same communities in Gaza which incorporated elements of community development and economic safety net programming. This project, Bedayia, is a 14 month project which began in May 2013.

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## III. METHODOLOGY

GRRAM's methodology was systematic yet flexible and responsive, ultimately based on learning. The flexibility of the approach permitted communities to redefine hazards in their unique context and address their priority problems. The process was participatory throughout the project cycle, and created a sense of ownership by the communities as a result. Although an unintended by-product of the project, one of the greatest impacts was women's empowerment. By targeting women – training them in the identification of hazards and risks and building their capacity to implement a community-wide capacity assessment – the project permitted women to play a leadership role in their communities which improved their confidence and allowed others to view them from a different social lens.

The methodology however was not without challenges. Comprehension and use of the VCA proved challenging for the women given their vulnerability, varying levels of education, and restricted mobility due to cultural norms. The tool required important adaptations during project implementation in order that it could serve its intended purpose. It was noted that further adaptation and testing would be necessary in the event of scale-up.

The evaluation indicates that GRRAM could have had a greater impact had it differentiated project participants from the impact group and engaged a broader

representation of the communities as well as strived to reach a greater proportion of the community. Creating linkages with other non-profits and community-based organizations working in the target zones in an effort to coordinate complementary actions could have also helped achieve greater impact. Finally, CRS' financial contribution to the community-based projects distorted the conception of projects and created unrealistic expectations. It was observed that the model could have greater chances of sustainability if communities were encouraged to identify and apply their capacities and existing resources to implementing their risk reduction plans, rather than waiting for and expecting external funding. This shift would also very likely lead to the development of more realistic and incremental projects.

The appropriateness of the methodology and suggested adaptations are further discussed in the final evaluation and consolidated lessons learned documents.

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#### **IV. MAJOR OBSTACLES**

- CRS lost time in project implementation due to protracted partnership negotiations with PRCS. CRS' Deputy Country Representative met extensively with the PRCS Gaza branch and Ramallah main office in order to expedite an agreement. PRCS' Scope of Work (SoW), budget and sub-recipient agreement was drafted with PRCS involvement. An agreement was finally signed in January 2012.
- Disaster risk reduction – especially data collection, verification and project planning – is challenging without the involvement of government and local authorities. To compensate, the team maintained a regular presence in the target communities from the beginning to better understand the context and population. The team consulted with non-governmental key community stakeholders and local NGOs and CBOs to verify and substantiate data collected.
- The delay in project start-up due to the late finalization of the partnership agreement, and the Hamas-Israeli confrontation and resulting conflict in November 2012, interrupted activity implementation. The project team revised the project's implementation plan and requested two no-cost extensions (NCE) from HIF to allow sufficient time to complete activities and the final evaluation. The last NCE extended the project to February 28, 2013.
- Cultural and gender norms placed restrictions on women's mobility and availability, making meetings and activities difficult to organize. In an effort to ensure consistently high rates of participation, the project team afforded great flexibility to target beneficiaries to determine meeting times and venues. The team also conducted continuous informal follow-up discussions with participants to address their concerns and ensure their commitment to the process.
- Participants found the PRCS/ICRS VCA manuals difficult to understand and use. The project team concluded that this was due to varying levels of education/literacy of group members, limited knowledge of and experience in participatory assessment approaches, and mobility restrictions. The facilitate use and comprehension, PRCS simplified the VCA presentation and manual.
- The project approach was new for the community in that it was process oriented and required significant participation and initiative from the beneficiaries. This is in contrast with the type of direct, one-off relief assistance to which Gazan

communities have grown accustomed. Beneficiaries and members of their community complained about the limited financial resources allocated to the small community/risk reduction projects. It was clear that they expected significant material benefits from the GRRAM which distorted the size and nature of projects they conceived following the VCA.

The project team met with beneficiaries and key local stakeholders several times to clarify the project approach and objectives. They explained the preventive and mitigating nature of DRR; that it is built from existing capacities and resources; and that the project, as a stand-alone, could not solve their communities' problems. PRCS and CRS then worked with the groups to develop more practical proposals that could be realized with the limited budget (\$2000/project) and time allocated.

### **Activity/Objective Amendments**

With the NCEs, CRS revised the timeline of planned activities. The objective of producing a "How-To" guide on DRR programming in urban, conflict-prone areas with non-state actors was also amended. In lieu of a How-To guide, CRS reached an agreement with HIF to share the following: 1) a comprehensive project evaluation report, 2) a consolidated key lessons learned document, and 3) a review of the VCA with recommendations for making it more user-friendly in the event of DRR scale-up in Gaza or a similar context. The project evaluation and lesson learned document are available and attached to this report as Annex 1 and 2 respectively. The VCA was not adapted as original suggested given questions around the copyrights associated with the creation and publication of that tool, but rather the evaluator reviewed a number of different tools for community-based disaster risk assessment, highlighting the strengths and weakness of each and suggesting appropriateness for the Gaza or similar context. The review of assessment tools is attached as **Annex 3**.

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## **V. BENEFICIARIES/HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IMPACTED**

GRRAM had two primary impact groups:

1. Humanitarian assistance organizations implementing DRR projects in contexts combining urban and conflict settings and non-state actors representing the authorities;
2. 204 women from urban areas in Gaza and their households (approx. 1,500 persons).

### *Humanitarian Assistance Organizations Implementing DRR Projects*

Although a How-To guide was not produced, CRS learned and benefited from the process oriented approach of the project and gleaned important lessons learned, which they shared with the NGO community and United Nations Agencies operating in Palestine. As indicated above, CRS also joined a DRR working group in Palestine to exchange experiences and strategize for broader DRR programming. One of the most valuable lessons extracted by partner agencies from the GRRAM experience was the interpretation of hazards by urban, conflict prone communities. As illustrated by the VCA, progress reports and the final evaluation, in the unique



context of Gaza, target communities perceived and classified problems such as military incursion, unemployment, traffic accidents, water shortages and electricity outages as the most pressing recurring hazards that they face, which thus shifts the discourse of DRR from natural hazards to perhaps a broader definition.

#### *Target Female Beneficiaries*

The evaluation showed that the impact of GRRAM on the broader community—beyond the 204 female project beneficiaries and their households—was limited. Although anecdotal evidence suggests that some activities were replicated in the larger community (internal awareness raising on conservative water usage and first aid), the project did not monitor the results and impact of this replication. The impact of the target beneficiaries however was important in many respects. Although an indirect benefit, the project seemingly addressed women’s strategic needs by giving them a voice in their communities and boosting their confidence. Husbands, family members and key community stakeholders alike commented on the changes in women’s behaviour from participating in the project which was perceived as positive. The project’s impact on women’s practical needs however was more limited. The evaluation suggests that the project likely only marginally reduced the vulnerability of women and their households in a sustainable way. Women’s knowledge, skills and self-purported ability to cope with risks and hazards however did increase. If these assets are built upon and additional stakeholders are incorporated, there is potential for greater impact and sustainability.

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## **VI. PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**

Despite the delay in reaching a finalized partnership agreement with PRCS, the partnership proved effective and mutually beneficial to both organizations. PRCS brought to the partnership its extensive experience in implementing DRR projects in Gaza and greater Palestine, while CRS proposed a unique process-oriented approach targeting more vulnerable community members.

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## **VII. DISSEMINATION**

CRS sought to disseminate project findings and results to the broader humanitarian community through the following:

- Use and maintenance of GRRAM blog ([www.grram.wordpress.com](http://www.grram.wordpress.com));
  - Posting updates – reports, images and videos—on the HIF website and CRS’ technical production library;
  - Informal meetings with the humanitarian community through project start-up and implementation;
  - Participation in DRR working group in Palestine;
  - Commissioning of external evaluation and consolidated lessons learned to be continuously shared with other CRS country programs and the broader humanitarian community as relevant.
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## **VIII. TRANSFERABILITY**

The purpose of the final, external evaluation was to review the GRRAM project against the project's key learning agenda and validate and elaborate on lessons learned from GRRAM that could shape a follow-up project in Gaza, or in other context similar to Gaza. The evaluation concluded that the lessons learned were largely generic or very project-specific and therefore not unique to urban/conflict/non-state actor contexts. That said, important and promising findings around the participatory process and women's empowerment indicated that the model warranted further investigation – additional adaptation and testing.

In May 2013, CRS received funding from CAFOD to implement a modified DRR design inspired by the GRRAM experience. Bedayia will be implemented in the same six target communities in Gaza and combines DRR – building from the hazards and risks identified in the GRRAM VCA, community development and socio-economic safety net programming. CRS anticipates that the complementary approach will spur greater community participation and ownership and help households pool the necessary assets to reduce vulnerability and mitigate risks. As with GRRAM, CRS is committed to sharing experiences and lessons learned from Bedayia with the broader humanitarian community to inform best practices in DRR.