

**A Real- Time Evaluation of Christian Aid's Response to the Haiti
Earthquake**

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Final Report

By

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1.0 Executive Summary

From May 23-June 8, 2010, Chanon Bernstein, Judith Foss and Ginny Robins implemented a Real Time Evaluation (RTE) of Christian Aid's emergency response to the Haiti earthquake. The objective of Christian Aid's emergency response was to support immediate relief and to enable the early recovery of directly and indirectly disaster affected communities. Emergency response activities were designed to empower people to build their lives back better than they had been before the disaster.

Planned emergency response activities included the distributions of cash, food, shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs), as well as livelihood support. Targeted beneficiaries included vulnerable individuals and families living in their own houses, inhabiting planned or spontaneous camps, as well as IDPs who had moved in with those who had not been directly affected by the earthquake.

The main aim of the RTE was to enable Christian Aid and its partners to reflect and learn from their experiences to date in order to influence the next phase of programmes. In order to do this, the RTE examined:

- how the implementing chain of headquarters to field office to partner to beneficiary functioned
- the quality and timeliness of decision making and programming

The RTE framework was designed to explore issues of appropriateness and timeliness, coordination, coverage, appropriateness and effectiveness, efficiency, as well as connectedness and sustainability. In addition, the evaluator was asked to include recommendations as well as to propose a program strategy.

Key Findings

Under extreme duress, including the deaths of staff member's family members and loved ones, and the destruction of its office and other assets, Christian Aid implemented a timely, appropriate, and effective emergency response that sustained lives and reached many beneficiaries who otherwise would not have received aid. A strong international and regional presence, and the long-established relationships between Christian Aid Haiti, its partners, local CBOs, and beneficiaries allowed for rapid needs assessments, the quick identification of beneficiaries, and the fast distribution of food, NFIs, cash and other essentials items to those beneficiaries.

The speed of Christian Aid's emergency response was also maximized by a fast-acting and flexible implementation chain that spanned from the local CBOs to the International Office. The International Office released funds without requiring formal proposals from partners, the regional and international staff supported Haiti as soon as possible, and demonstrated quick decision-making and action in immediately starting the appeals process. Christian Aid's regional offices provided financial and personnel support and along with the Dominican Republic facilitated the movement of people and commodities in and out of Haiti.

Project implementation during the first two of weeks of the response was well coordinated and efficient, especially given the lack of the Haitian government's capacity to respond to the disaster, communication challenges, and the sheer scope of disaster's impact.

The utilization of cash was a rapid means to get aid to beneficiaries. It also helped beneficiaries maintain their dignity by affording them the power to prioritize their own needs and consequently helped restart the local market economy as soon as possible. Utilizing food sellers to provide hot meals not only ensured that beneficiaries lacking kitchen supplies and/or fuel would not go hungry but helped stimulate the local economy.

Christian Aid's implementation chain included the international office, regional office, national office, local partners and CBOs. Overall, it operated effectively in that first and foremost, the response was initiated rapidly, maximizing timeliness with decision-making with important contributions to the response happening at all levels simultaneously. The result was a program that within one week had life sustaining food, water, NFIs, and cash, in the hands of many beneficiaries who otherwise would not have received aid.

However, there did not seem to be definitive management of the implementing chain and as the response continued past the initial crisis phase, the chain began to weaken, lessening the quality and efficiency of the emergency program. Some of the issues with quality and efficiency were certainly due to the scope of the catastrophe and the destruction of systems that affected individuals and agencies across the entire country. However, from within the implementation chain itself, a scattered approach to fundraising, insufficient and ineffective monitoring, and irregular cash flow compromised the program's quality. The result of these challenges affected parts of the entire implementation chain all the way down to the beneficiary level with some beneficiaries not knowing what kind of aid they would receive, when it would arrive, and for how long they would receive it.

Recommendations

To build upon the strengths and address the challenges of Christian Aid's implementation chain and program quality Christian Aid should consider the following recommendations:

- To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the fundraising approach, develop a clear funding strategy that is communicated throughout the agency and tied to the program strategy
- To improve accountability, establish a uniform financial and programmatic monitoring protocol and schedule that is prioritized at all levels
- To improve cash flow consistency, Christian Aid should train partners to develop and submit a simple cash flow forecast a month in advance
- To ensure that the most appropriate beneficiaries are targeted, establish clear criteria for beneficiary selection
- To better measure the impact of the program, establish baseline measures with beneficiaries

Program Strategy

To support the decentralization of Haiti, strengthen rural areas, and facilitate the rebuilding of the greater Port au Prince area, Christian Aid and its implementing partners should pilot a four-pronged strategy that:

- Develops sustainable and permanent communities for IDPs outside of the greater Port au Prince area
- Provides improved temporary shelters, livelihood opportunities, and food security for IDPs living within the greater Port au Prince area
- Incorporates DRR activities into all projects
- Utilizes the ACT Alliance to advocate for the rights of individual beneficiaries, IDP communities, and the Haitian population as a whole