

# CRS AND protection



*Millions of children and vulnerable adults worldwide regularly face verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; are subject to violence, neglect and harmful traditional practices; and are exploited through gender discrimination, child labor or human trafficking. Consequences include impaired physical and mental health, and the social and occupational outcomes can slow a country's economic and social development. Preventing maltreatment before it starts is possible, but it requires a multi-sectoral approach.*

## THE BASICS

# 25%

OF ALL ADULTS REPORT HAVING BEEN  
PHYSICALLY ABUSED AS CHILDREN

# 1 in 5

WOMEN REPORT HAVING BEEN SEXUALLY  
ABUSED AS CHILDREN

# 21

MILLION PEOPLE LIVE IN SLAVERY AS  
TRAFFICKED HUMAN BEINGS

# 20

CRS PROJECTS CURRENTLY FOCUS ON  
THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN OR  
VULNERABLE ADULTS

## OUR APPROACH

CRS tackles the root causes of abuse and discrimination by working to alleviate major drivers of abuse such as extreme poverty, parental stress, gender inequality, and the lack of capacity or engagement by government and civil society partners. Equally important are the ways that CRS and its partners respond to the loss of protection when it occurs through improved reporting, prosecution and legal enforcement; strengthening of referral systems; improved access to health and education services; and psycho-social support.

As an agency, CRS promotes the protection of children and vulnerable adults through our staff policies and through mainstreaming, integration and stand-alone programming. We also facilitate the participation of children and adults in addressing these problems and promote widespread awareness of human rights and protection issues, especially in areas of conflict and during humanitarian emergencies.



At 17, Debora was the oldest student in her fourth-grade class in Guatemala. Over-age children are at great risk for school dropout and child labor. CRS' *My Rights Matter* program provided accelerated coursework so Debora could advance to her age group. Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS



CRS works to mainstream protection principles into all our emergency and development programs, prioritising the most vulnerable people, seeking their input in program design, and adapting assistance to meet their specific needs. Protection issues often affect women and men, girls and boys differently, which makes gender a cross-cutting theme. *Philip Laubner/CRS*

Our protection programming is multi-faceted and adapted to the local context, and is designed to prevent vulnerable populations from being overlooked. We strive to include protection activities in all countries and programs - as the primary focus, integrated as one focus among many, or mainstreamed into our work. We work to strengthen the capacity of local child protection committees and promote good governance and peacebuilding, with the goal of creating a safe environment that is free of threats to human development and growth.

### STRONG POLICIES

In 2014, CRS implemented one of the most wide-reaching protection policies in our industry. All staff members must help protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, both during their work and in their private lives, including all forms of physical or psychological abuse and exploitation. The policy also requires staff to report abuse when they observe or hear about a suspected case, and to assist with recovery via referral and other follow-up actions. The policy is available in three languages and is accompanied by an extensive training package. To date, more than 3,800 CRS staff in 56 countries have completed training.

Beginning in 2016, CRS will engage with local partners to ensure they establish, maintain or update their own policies and standards to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse or exploitation.

### EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

- In Kenya's coastal communities, where 42% of girls are married before the age of 15, CRS works with the 140-member Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics to fight early marriage and keep girls in school. Project goals include construction of a full rescue home for

children who have been sexually exploited, offering a safe environment that supports their psychological, health, social, and educational needs before they are re-integrated back into the community under the guidance of the government of Kenya's Children's Department.

- Since 2004, CRS has been working in Bosnia-Herzegovina to combat trafficking using economic empowerment, media campaigns, and education to decrease the vulnerability of children. Working in collaboration with the State Coordinator's Office, CRS has assisted 144 schools in implementing integrated counter-trafficking programs into their curriculum, reaching more than 21,000 children.
- In Guatemala, the three-year *My Rights Matter* project sought to reverse child labor trends by educating children and adults on a child's right to education, play and development; protecting children from exploitation and abuse; and helping them fully participate in family, cultural and social life. Working through local schools, the program decreased children's working hours from 24 to 15 hours per week, and 6,618 former child workers no longer engage in harmful forms of labor.
- Hundreds of Christian groups provide funding for Haitian orphanages that often are not accredited by the state, maintain substandard conditions, and house children who are not, in fact, orphans. CRS issued guidance for churches in the United States that already support orphanages or are considering doing so, advising them to ensure that the institution is accredited and maintains a strong child protection policy. The guidance has been distributed to more than 1,200 Catholic institutions and leaders with programs in Haiti.



To learn more about our protection work, contact [pqpublications@crs.org](mailto:pqpublications@crs.org).  
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