



## Catholic Relief Services 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fact Sheet

**Founded:** Catholic Relief Services was established January 15, 1943, as War Relief Services in response to growing concern from Catholics in the United States about World War II survivors and refugees. The year 2018 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the agency's founding.

**Mission:** CRS assists poor and vulnerable people overseas and is motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to cherish, preserve and uphold the sacredness and dignity of all human life, foster charity and justice, and embody Catholic social teaching. Although its mission is rooted in the Catholic faith, its operations serve people based solely on need, regardless of their race, religion or ethnicity. Within the United States, CRS engages Catholics to live their faith in solidarity with the poor and suffering people of the world.

**Leadership:** Sean Callahan is president and CEO of CRS. As a 28-year veteran of the agency, Sean previously held a variety of leadership roles overseas and at headquarters, including Executive Vice President for Overseas Operations and Chief Operating Officer, before being named CEO in 2017.

**Size:** Since its founding, CRS has expanded to serve more than 136 million people in over 100 countries across five continents. The agency has grown to over 7,000 employees worldwide.

**World Headquarters:** Baltimore, Maryland

**Programming Areas:** CRS uses a holistic approach called integral human development, or IHD, to help people reach their full potential in an atmosphere of peace, social justice and human dignity. Its work includes programming in agriculture; emergency response and recovery; health; education; microfinance; water and sanitation; justice and peacebuilding; partnership and capacity strengthening; and youth.

**CRS History at a Glance ([Timeline](#)):**

- **Jan. 15, 1943:** In an outpouring of concern from Catholics in the United States, War Relief Services is created by the U.S. bishops to help thousands of World War II survivors and refugees.



- **July 1, 1943:** CRS' first project helps shepherd some [1,500 Polish refugees into Colonia Santa Rosa, Mexico](#), where CRS sets up a safe haven for education, training and rehabilitation.
- **July 28, 1945:** A twin-engine U.S. Air Force [plane crashes into CRS offices](#) in the Empire State Building, killing 11 employees.
- **1950s:** War Relief Services becomes Catholic Relief Services, reflecting a shift in our mission from war relief to long-term development. By the late 1950s, CRS is providing more than half of all U.S. government food shipped by private organizations, making us the largest provider of food aid in this category.
- **1961–1966:** CRS partners with the National Catholic Welfare Conference to resettle nearly 500,000 Cuban refugees to Miami. In 1966, Migration and Refugee Services and Catholic Charities take over this work, making it CRS' last refugee resettlement project in the United States.
- **1977:** The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopt Operation Rice Bowl as CRS' official Lenten program. Since then, [CRS Rice Bowl](#) has become a Lenten tradition in thousands of parishes and schools across the United States, providing a tangible way for families to pray, fast, give and learn about their poor brothers and sisters around the world.
- **1994:** CRS is forced to evacuate Rwanda during a genocide that kills more than 1 million people in 100 days. Within weeks of leaving, CRS staff operating from Burundi and Uganda deliver emergency relief to thousands of traumatized people. Introspection after the genocide moves CRS to re-examine our role in world events and rediscover Catholic social teaching.
- **October 26, 1998:** CRS responds to Hurricane Mitch, one of the worst hurricanes to hit Central America, killing 10,000 people. Emergency response and recovery programs in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador are the first to use our new justice-focused approach to help impoverished communities.
- **2004-2013:** After making HIV and AIDS a strategic priority in 2001, CRS takes a lead role in implementing the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR. The United States commits more than \$70 billion through PEPFAR to fight HIV in 60 countries. It is the largest commitment by a single nation to address a single disease.
- **January 12, 2010:** After a 7.0-magnitude earthquake slams Haiti, CRS and Church partners lead a comprehensive 5-year relief and recovery effort.
- **2010–2011:** In early 2010, violence threatens the run-up to South Sudan's national elections for secession on July 9, 2011. In addition to providing emergency, agricultural, health and educational assistance, CRS and its local Church partners provide programs in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. In the United States, CRS raises awareness among Catholics to fund critical projects. Against all odds, the election is peaceful and South Sudan gains independence.



- **March 15, 2011:** Protests in Syria lead to a massive conflict and large-scale displacement of the country's population. CRS launches support for Caritas and local partners to meet the diverse needs of 1.4 million Syrian refugees as they flee violence, landing across the Middle East and Europe.
- **April 2014:** After the first reported case of Ebola emerges in December 2013, CRS launches a multi-country response to the deadly outbreak across West Africa. With Caritas and local partners, CRS focuses on disease prevention, support to local health systems, safe and dignified burials and community healing across the region. The World Health Organization declares the end of the outbreak on January 14, 2016.
- **February 15, 2017:** CRS launches Changing the Way We Care, its bold plan to take children out of orphanages, and support families and communities to care for them, starting in seven demonstration countries.

For additional resources on the CRS 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, visit: [75.crs.org](http://75.crs.org). Visit the press center at <https://www.crs.org/press-room>.