

**CARE INTERNATIONAL IN GHANA**

**UPPER EAST EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROJECT**

**After Action Review for CARE Ghana's Response to the 2019 Floods in Upper East Region**



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## **Background**

Torrential rains in the Upper East region of Ghana occurred from the 2nd to the 15th of October 2019. The continuous rains led to flooding in all the fifteen (15) administrative districts/municipalities which resulted in the collapse of buildings, deaths and displacement of a sizeable percentage of the population. The most affected districts were; Builsa North, Kassena Nankana Municipal, Bongo, Kassena Nankana West, Builsa South, Tempene and Talensi.

CARE International in Ghana, collaborated with government agencies namely National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Ghana Health Service (GHS) and Information Service Department in the region to respond to the emergency. Key interventions implemented as part of the emergency response were the distribution of food and non-food relief items, cash disbursements, Covid-19 risk communication to victims in four worst affected districts. The districts are; Bongo, Talensi Builsa North and Kassena Nankana Municipal. The relief items included; rice, oil, gari, sugar, Winimix, maize, beans, fish aqua tabs, sanitary pads, buckets bar soap and cloth. Additionally, cash to the tune of GHC 814.00 per flood affected household was disbursed through mobile money system and physical distribution to a total of 700 flood victims across the four districts in three tranches. The cash transfers were meant to enable beneficiaries rebuild after the disaster.

The response spanned from October 2019 to July 2020. Following the incidence of Covid-19 in the country, the country office integrated Covid-19 response in the implementation of the project. CARE collaborated with GHS, NCCE and ISD to create awareness and increase the knowledge of community members on COVID-19 and facilitated safe physical cash disbursement sessions in adherence to Covid-19 prevention protocols.

Following the completion of activities of the project, the country office carried out an After Action Review (AAR) of the response to capture learning from the response in order to strengthen emergency preparedness and improve CARE Ghana's operational procedures and policies.

## **Methodology:**

The After Action Review was organized through a two-step process; a meeting with external partners and beneficiaries of the emergency response and feedback from program and program support staff from CARE who were involved in the emergency response.

- A one day After Action Review meeting was held on 27<sup>th</sup> August with representatives from government agencies that were involved in the response, project beneficiaries and some members of the CARE team. A total of 21 (11f. 10m) participants attended the meeting; the following institutions were represented; National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO), National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), Ghana Health Service and Information Service Department.

The meeting was held with the objective of soliciting feedback from stakeholders, community members and beneficiaries on success, challenges and lessons learnt from the activities of the response project. A

mix of plenary discussions, group work and gallery walks was used to elicit feedback from participants. The meeting started with a participatory timeline exercise that served as a refresher for participants about main events, both internal and external to the project.

- After the meeting, feedback was collected internally from CARE staff who were engaged with the response from both program and program support teams. An online questionnaire was designed based on key areas of enquiry for the AAR. Staff therefore provided their feedback electronically.

## RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Feedback that has been received through both internal and external consultation processes, have been clustered under key areas of enquiry outlined in the table below.

CLUSTER	WHAT WORKED WELL	NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED
COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Engaged with the directorate and resourced public education efforts of the partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plan adequately with partners to ensure that they are able to strategize effectively e.g. translations.</li> <li>-Timely engagement with GHS will enable the team bring on board their community volunteers.</li> </ul>
PARTNERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Engaged the right partners at the right time i.e NADMO, NCCE,ISD</li> <li>- Capacity building for NADMO team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formally engage partners i.e formal letters, communicate movement and distribution plan in good time.</li> </ul>
PROGRAM QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Neutral and Non Political</li> <li>-Response targeted the right people who were in need.</li> <li>-Process was transparent</li> <li>-Mode of distribution ensured that actual beneficiaries received the items.</li> <li>-Integration of COVID-19. Sensitisation, simulation for prevention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Very strict alternative beneficiary validation process.</li> </ul>
ASSESSMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Detailed assessment and validation was an opportunity for Capacity building for NADMO staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Encourage community people to actively engage in the validation exercise.</li> <li>-Some of the community level NADMO volunteers do not live in the villages and that affects targeting sometimes.</li> <li>-Previous experiences of vulnerable people i.e “registered but did not receive support”, demotivates them from registering as affected people during emergencies.</li> </ul>
PROGRAM SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Approval of emergency procurement procedures ensured timely procurement.</li> <li>-Procurement of most of the items from local markets.</li> </ul>	

	-Warehousing support received from RCC and Extee Hotel was very useful.	
SAFETY AND SECURITY	-Simulation to ensure safety in the midst of Covid-19	-Need for follow up to team to determine outcome of screened beneficiaries who had fever.
TIMELINESS	-Process was tedious but results worth it. -Integration of Covid-19 education was timely.	
Relevance	-Relief items were appropriate, cash for recovery and building back. -Team provided advice to beneficiaries to ensure effective use of the cash disbursement.	- Make provision for furniture for the aged and old so they do not need to carry their own tools to the distribution centre.
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT		-Limited engagement of the media during the distribution of the relief items

Based on the feedback from participants on successes and challenges, four groups were formed to assess the performance of CARE Ghana during response to 2019 flooding in the Upper East Region under the headings;

- How do you feel the response went overall?
- How did you find working with CARE during the response?
- Compared with other INGOs or Donors, how did you find working with CARE?
- What was good about working with CARE?
- What are your three key recommendations to CARE better prepare for the next disaster?
- How timely did you think the response was?
- What factors enabled a timely response?
- What factors limited timeliness of the response?
- What are the three key lessons that were learnt?

<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>NADMO</b>	<b>COMMUNITY REPs</b>	<b>GHS/ISD/NCCE</b>
<b>How do you feel the response went overall?</b>	The response was swift, CARE acted immediately they received information on the flooding.	The response went well. CARE was non-political in the selection of beneficiaries	The response was timely , right partnership between relevant agencies and the right people benefitted from the relief.
<b>How did you find working with CARE during the response?</b>	Difficult but rewarding. The right victims received support and NADMO benefitted from practical training on validation. This is the first time a donor has taken a step to validate data before providing relief.	Information about distribution was received on time and staff were cordial in their relations with beneficiaries.	Participatory, all partners were allowed to bring their expertise on board.
<b>Compared with other INGOs or Donors, how did you find working with CARE?</b>	Priority was given to the aged, disabled. Home delivery service for the aged and disabled.	Through validation of data, the most affected people were selected.	Transparent in their dealings with partners.
<b>What was good about working with CARE?</b>	Inclusion of education on COVID 19. Communities that would not have received education on COVID 19 received it. E.g., Talensi district was the epicenter of COVID-19 infections received education just at the right time.	Education was given to beneficiaries on the use of items ,WASH as well as the incorporation of education on COVID-19	Sensitization on COVID-19 has been provided to larger population in Talensi, Bongo, Kassena Nankana and Builsa North district through working with CARE
<b>What are your three key recommendations to CARE to better prepare for the next disaster?</b>	-Involve media to give visibility to the work of CARE -Provide capacity building trainings to partners -Formally notify partners when their services will be needed.	Partnership between NADMO and CARE should be deepened.	-Deepen partnership with stakeholders. -Notify partners officially for accountability purposes.
<b>How timely did you think the response was?</b>	CARE came in at the right time and immediately started assessment and validation of data provided by NADMO	Very timely, victims received support every month. Cash distribution in July was received just before the farming season and this enabled farmers to buy inputs for farming	Well-timed. Education on COVID-19 and distribution of PPEs were done at the right time.
<b>What factors enabled a timely response?</b>	The use of mobile money transfer and cash distribution and engagement of the right	The use of community volunteers who are in the community and know the affected victims.	Engagement with the right partners such as NADMO, ISD,GHS,NCCE

	partners in the various districts		
<b>What factors limited timeliness of the response?</b>	Very detailed validation exercise	Strict validation exercise delays the response	Assessment process was detailed and time consuming.
<b>What are the three key lessons that were learnt?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration is key and each institution comes with unique strengths.</li> <li>• NADMO has updated the type of data they pick e.g. disability status, widowed etc., inclusion of pictures.</li> </ul>	Validation of data ensures that the right victims receive the needed support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparency of the team helps build trust.</li> <li>• Dedication to duty and due diligence is an exemplary value to portray when working with a diverse team.</li> </ul>

## RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH CARE STAFF

In response to the question about how the response went overall, below is a summary of responses provided;

- The response generally went well; the response was well implemented.
- The beneficiaries were all around and conducted themselves well during the process
- Selection of beneficiaries was excellent since response really targeted the poor and vulnerable people who were in dire need of support.
- The financial support was a great strategy since beneficiaries were sensitized to undertake ruminant rearing in order to maintain a sustaining income flow.
- It was very successful and needs based.

CLUSTER	WHAT WORKED WELL	NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED
HR AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A good cross-section of staff was gathered to play respective roles based on preparedness to support the flood victims.</li> <li>- The required amount of cash was duly released and appropriately disbursed to all the 700 flood victims.</li> <li>- Relevant documentation was duly completed to support payments.</li> <li>- The personnel involved in the response were adequately knowledgeable and resourceful enough to for the action.</li> <li>- Preparation to the field was excellently done regarding procurement process and timely approval process.</li> <li>- The welfare of staff was highly prioritized by putting measures in place to ensure that staff stayed safe in view of the Covid-19.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is the need for ER team to double check the phone numbers of beneficiaries and also do timely follow ups to ensure that all the intended beneficiaries do receive the cash.</li> <li>- Delay in finance providing cash for the disbursement to community beneficiaries should be addressed in future.</li> <li>- The delay in the transfer of advance requests resulted in delays in the start of the actual field work.</li> </ul>
PROGRAM QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The program delivery went well as adequate training was given with simulations exercises. This minimized mistakes that could have occurred with the actual delivery.</li> <li>- The project was well managed by the ER team lead and staff.</li> <li>- The content of the activity was adequately delivered with the desired focus in mind. By making sure that the ideal people for the benefits were actually contacted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The tracking bit, regarding the M&amp;E may require improvement. As it was challenging to us laptops other alternatives could have been explored including hard copy or manual tracking.</li> <li>- As some people left the team earlier, when the activity was over it would have been helpful to share at least summary report with team members.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The response also focused on the disability status of beneficiaries and responded in like manner.</li> <li>- Data from NADMO was verified and further details collected.</li> <li>- Dialectical differences were considered.</li> <li>- NADMO was made to lead the process with CARE supporting and facilitating the process.</li> <li>- The programming approach adopted with stringent measures ensured that the rightful beneficiaries received their package. The validation process before cash were received by beneficiaries was very robust and the whole process was well managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It will also be helpful to conduct post distribution or disbursement monitoring/survey to learn of how beneficiaries may have benefited and feedback they may have to give.</li> </ul>
TIMELINESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What made it timely was the fact that beneficiaries were preparing their farms and received cash when they needed it to facilitate their farming activities.</li> <li>- The delivery of the relief items was very good especially the last batch.</li> <li>- The process was slow from the beginning but ended well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was delay in delivering relief items to victims since, the team started situational analysis around October 2019 and delivery of relief items and cash occurred around December 2019.</li> <li>- Delays in payment did not allow field work to commence quickly.</li> <li>- Recruitment of staff delayed implementation.</li> <li>- There were some delays partly due to CARE internal process in procurement</li> </ul>
PROGRAM SUPPORT/OPERATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The program support did very well especially the drivers.</li> <li>- CARE procured the required quantities of relief items. The procurement team sought proper storage facilities for the relief items, and duly accounted for release of the items to flood victims on the field.</li> <li>- All required PPE's were delivered on even before the team arrived in the response region. Full protection and safety for the entire period for the team and the beneficiaries and their families who brought them to distribution centers.</li> <li>- Logistics flow was very smooth.</li> <li>- The team received all the needed support for the field activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Even though waivers were given in procuring some items, there is still the need for the procurement and finance teams to improve on timeliness on release of needed financial and material logistics.</li> <li>- The branding was not so good among team members. Those who had CARE T-shirts and other branded stuffs wore them while those who did not have put on different attire. For a response activity such as this, all team members should be made to wear CARE branded clothes with petty coats/jackets on them.</li> </ul>

<p>RELEVANCE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The aged and disabled who had to benefit received their relief items at their door steps. There was enough evidence that if help did not come their way they could have been worse off.</li> <li>- The situational analysis and the gender needs assessment prior to the ERP helped the team to identify the core needs of the flood victims.</li> <li>- The very vulnerable people were targeted for the response with massive gender specific support.</li> <li>- The response will enable vulnerable women go into small businesses to improve their livelihood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is the need for us to fast track our assessments on time to help us provide relief items to victims when they need them the most.</li> <li>- In future we can consider the construction of some structures or assisting with foundation concrete blocks for victims.</li> </ul>
<p>RESPONSE LEADEARSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was transparency and fairness in leading and managing the teams.</li> <li>- Active participation from team members was evident of the passion and confidence in the leadership and the management.</li> <li>- CARE leadership did extremely well by putting together a proposal to source for funds to implement the project, provided updates to donors, situational reports.</li> <li>- Good leadership qualities were exhibited; team safety and protection was paramount and the daily logistics prepared ahead of the activity to avoid participants waiting for so long.</li> <li>- Proper checks were done before the disbursement of cash.</li> <li>- Leadership provided timely updates to team members and daily briefing sessions held to strategies for the task ahead.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There was a role conflict at the inception of the ER project. Roles need to be clearly defined for each staff and actor on subsequent ER projects.</li> </ul>
<p>SCALE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The response adequately covered adequately the worse hit areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Even though we intervened in 4 districts covering 700 households. We could have added more victims onto the project.</li> </ul>
<p>PARTNERSHIPS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnership was quite good as all stakeholders played their part well and co-operated well with the leadership and management team.</li> <li>- The collaborations with state agencies played an important role in terms of preparing the community and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Could have done better to harness other efforts from different organizations.</li> <li>- There is the need to constantly update the regional directors of NADMO and GHS, this was not done adequately in the ER project.</li> </ul>

	<p>organizing the people and supporting in the provision of open and clean space for the activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The partnership with government institutions was well managed. Leadership of the team overlooked the shortcomings of NADMO and worked well with them as a team.</li> </ul>	<p>In practice some of the NADMO district directors did not update their regional director.</p>
COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Things were well coordinated.</li> <li>- Government Stakeholders with CARE team coordinated activities very well to ensure its success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly defining and communicating roles of partners ahead of time will also be important.</li> <li>- Inadequate planning prevented other staff from participating fully.</li> </ul>

**KEY LESSONS LEARNT**

- Simulation exercise helps smoothen delivery of emergency relief items
- Involving the community members is key to success of the program
- Effective Collaboration with accredited government agencies encourages project acceptance, active participation of beneficiaries and successful implementation of ER project.
- In the case of an emergency response, a Gender Analysis is imperative component of the response.
- Understanding the needs of victims through a rapid study is key to responding to the needs of the people.
- The use of the ration cards provides detailed records of goods and services provided to victims. This is very useful especially when there are several phases of the same intervention to be rolled out. The ration cards also serve as records of CARE in beneficiary communities for future purposes.
- Partnership reduces stress as GHS staff were there to ensure technical issues around Covid-19 were handled and that helped with minimising anxiety linked to technical uncertainties regarding Covid-19.
- In the wake of a pandemic, sensitization on the disease is paramount before responding in emergency.
- Verifying victims ensures that the right people are served.
- Community leaders need to be involved enough from preparation to implementation stages.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- CARE needs to involve all staff in the preparation towards emergency response even if they are not taking part in an ongoing response immediately.
- Combine gender needs and situational assessment to reduce the number of pre-engagement with victims to reduce expectations.
- Improvement in the procurement process and other bureaucratic processes to avoid delays and ensure timeliness in response activities.

- Schedule for implementation should be shared among team members to enable adequate preparation.
- Increase the level of response, especially the very vulnerable people whose buildings completely collapse.
- Use CARE project structures on the ground eg. Women in Agriculture Platforms and other groups for implementation.
- Improvement in visibility and branding of CARE.
- Engage media in emergency response.
- Government Departments have to be involved in some of CARE's emergency response planning activities.
- Disasters are inevitable in our societies, therefore more staff should be given training on humanitarian support and disaster response to have more staff with the expertise.