



**Joint Emergency Operation – Northern Response**

<b>Report type</b>	Semi-annual Report January 18 to March 31, 2022
<b>Reporting Fiscal Year</b>	FY22
<b>Recipient Organization</b>	Catholic Relief Services - United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
<b>Award Number</b>	720BHA22CA00005
<b>Activity Name</b>	Joint Emergency Operation – Northern Response (JEOP-NR)
<b>Geographic Area</b>	Ethiopia - Tigray and Amhara Regions
<b>Activity Start Date</b>	January 18, 2022
<b>Activity End Date</b>	June 17, 2023
<b>Documents uploaded to ART module in AAMP</b>	Indicator Tracking Table Awards Results Tracking
<b>Recipient HQ Contact person Name, Email, Phone Office Address</b>	Kristina Brayman, Project Support Manager <a href="mailto:Kristina.Brayman@crs.org">Kristina.Brayman@crs.org</a> +1 417-761-9087 228 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD 21201, United States of America
<b>Recipient Field Contact person Name, Email, Phone Office Address</b>	David Orth-Moore, Chief of Party <a href="mailto:David.Orth-Moore@crs.org">David.Orth-Moore@crs.org</a> +251-11-278-8800 Swaziland Street, Gulele Sub-City, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## Acronym List

BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CBEWS	Community-Based Early Warning System
CRS	Catholic Relief Services – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
CHD	Community Help Desk
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
DI	Disability Inclusion
DRMO	Disaster Risk Management Office
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EDRMC	Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Committee
ENDF	Ethiopia National Defense Forces
EWS	Early Warning System
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
ECS	Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat
FDP	Final Distribution Point
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
FHE	Food for the Hungry Ethiopia
FRM	Feedback and Response Mechanism
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICT4D	Information Communication and Technology for Development
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
JEOP	Joint Emergency Operation
MT	Metric Ton
NCE	No Cost Extension
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ORDA	Organization for Rural Development of Amhara
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
PDP	Primary Distribution Point
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Program
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
TDF	Tigray Defense Force
WFP	World Food Programme
YSP	Yellow Split Pea

## Local Terms

<i>belg</i>	A short rain that starts in late February and ends in early April
<i>kebele</i>	Lowest administrative level (village) under woreda
<i>meher</i>	A long rain that starts in June and ends in September
<i>woreda</i>	Government Administration Unit (similar to county or district)

***Table of Contents***

I. Overall Performance ..... 1

II. Changes and Amendments ..... 2

III. Measuring Results..... 3

IV. Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations..... 4

V. Risk Management ..... 5

VI. Coordination ..... 7

VII. Lessons Learned..... 8

VIII. Transition Strategy ..... 8

IX. Planned Interventions..... 9

## I. Overall Performance

Building off a decade of experience implementing emergency food assistance programming in Tigray and Amhara regions of Ethiopia under the Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP), CRS entered into an agreement (720BHA22CA00005) with USAID/BHA on January 18, 2022, to provide support to conflict affected populations for 18 months. The primary activities accomplished during the reporting period included calling forward Title II commodities and solidifying recruitment required for the response.

Eighteen months of armed conflict across Northern Ethiopia has caused a rapid dramatic increase in food insecurity and forced hundreds of thousands of people to seek safety as internally displaced persons (IDPs). The conflict has caused loss of life, severely impacted livelihoods, and disrupted market functionality, exacerbating economic impact of COVID-19, drought in East Africa and recent cereal price spikes associated with war in Ukraine. In this context, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE)'s Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Committee (EDRMC), the Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are providing emergency assistance, coordinated through the national and regional level Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC).

The response builds off a strong foundation of coordinated food assistance. Since 2012, USAID-funded JEOP has provided humanitarian assistance to crisis affected families in Ethiopia. JEOP's caseload reached an all-time high of 8.1 million people during the current crisis as the program flexed to include former Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) clients and IDPs. CRS submitted a proposal in response to USAID's solicitation for JEOP 2.0 (APS 72DFFP20APS00003). CRS and USAID agreed that JEOP 2.0 would not include Tigray or Amhara in its first two years. USAID requested CRS to submit resource needs separately through a BHA Emergency Application, paving way for the JEOP Northern Response (JEOP-NR). Through the JEOP-NR, CRS, and partners operating in Tigray and Amhara (Food for the Hungry Ethiopia [FHE], Relief Society of Tigray [REST]) and Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara [ORDA]) are preparing to target over 2.9 million conflict-affected food insecure people with sufficient nutritious food to meet their dietary needs, mitigating negative coping strategies that erode resilience. JEOP-NR aligns with BHA's mission to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the social economic impact of conflict and disasters by supporting a rapid, context-appropriate response.

CRS and partners are operating in an intensely complex, constantly changing environment. The reporting period saw continued tension in Northern Ethiopia, with severe access restrictions to Tigray. From January to March 2022, while most JEOP-NR implementation areas in Amhara and Tigray were peaceful as Tigray Defense Force (TDF) controlled nearly all of Tigray and the GoE controlled Amhara. TDF occupation of parts of neighboring Afar resulted in humanitarian food convoys being unable to pass through Afar, even after announcement of a "*cessation of hostilities*" in March 2022. Since the 2021 Tigray forces' offensive into Amhara, the Amhara route has also been inaccessible. CRS cannot move commodities from Djibouti port to Tigray regional capital, Mekelle, as well as those stocked in CRS' Primary Distribution Points (PDPs) in other regions. By the end of the reporting period (March 31, 2022), due to disagreement over target figures, the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) had still not been launched by the GoE.

Through a strong Early Warning System (EWS), JEOP-NR contributes to allocation of food assistance at local, regional, and national levels. During the reporting period, JEOP-NR partners participated in hotspot verification exercises under the leadership of the EDRMC. EWS data was used to triangulate the classification of JEOP-NR operation woredas into appropriate hotspot levels. JEOP-NR partners supported multi-agency assessment in conflict-affected areas to assess the impact of conflict in Amhara and inform the 2022 HRP. JEOP-NR partners also engaged in post-harvest assessments at the zonal level led by the DRMO. CRS received and reviewed weekly EWS reports covering information on prices, planting and yields, weather, livestock, and health centers, among other topics. During the reporting period, 105 weekly reports were received from 13 JEOP-NR operational woredas.

## II. Changes and Amendments

CRS and partners focused on start-up activities for the JEOP-NR during the reporting period, while communities continued to be served with cash and commodities under the existing 2012 JEOP award. CRS and partners are ensuring that communities do not experience a pipeline break in relation to a transition from one award to another. CRS processed a call-forward for JEOP-NR's traditional mixed basket of wheat, pulses, and vegetable oil. During the reporting period, CRS processed two call-forwards for a total of 72,400 MT of wheat, 7,204 MT of YSP and 2,180 MT of V.Oil.

Basic services, including education, health, telecoms, transport, electricity, and banking, remain interrupted or destroyed in Tigray through widespread looting and vandalism and GoE blackout of services. Essential services are severely restricted due to lack of fuel, cash, and critical supplies, including food. Meanwhile, in most parts of Amhara, basic services are resuming in conflict areas, except for hotspot areas along the border with Tigray. Against this backdrop, CRS reassessed communities' food preferences considering significant cereal price increases in preparation for potential adaptations under future call-forwards. CRS also processed a modification to the award to include warehouse infrastructure, recognizing the impact of the conflict on the program's physical assets.

Wholesale price index showed strange trends from January to March 2022 as compared to the historical average. Usually, wholesale cereal prices reduce by 11% decrease from January to March as compared to October to December due to improved cereal availability on local markets linked to increased supply from the main harvest season. However, from 2021 to 2022, staple cereals for Amhara showed a mere 1% average increase in Amhara. This early increase could result in an imminent drastic price as harvests deplete in coming months. Ethiopia is facing multiple stresses; the forecasted price shock will exacerbate existing food access and result in significant food insecurity across JEOP-NR operational areas. Looking at wholesale price increases by staple crop as compared to the previous year in Amhara, wheat saw the highest increase (41%), followed by sorghum (24%), and teff (11%) over the reporting period. JEOP implements a retail market monitoring system which looks at the price and availability of similar commodities to the commodities JEOP distributes. Analysis of prices in the retail market of Amhara showed wheat and field pea prices increasing at 45% and 49% respectively as compared to the same period of the previous year.

CRS and partners conducted a market and supply chain survey in Amhara reaching 65 households (60% female-headed) and 143 vendors (28% female). Results were as follows: 71% of households reported that they have insufficient money to buy items on the market. Few households reported issues related to physical access to markets, and almost all households reported that members of the household feel safe at markets. All interviewed households indicated that vegetable oil is unaffordable, while 28% reported that wheat was inaccessible. Meanwhile, 50% of vendors reported that their stocks were lower than usual. In terms of sourcing, 89% reported that they were sourcing from their usual suppliers. Restocking time took longer than usual for some commodities: 22% of vendors reported 1–2-week period to restock sorghum, 18% reported similar challenges for field pea, and 10% for wheat. Regarding pricing, 94% of vendors reported higher prices for food commodities, and 71% of vendors reported higher prices at sourcing destinations. Regarding demand, 70% of vendors reported lower demand for commodities while 37% of vendors reported perceived increased competition with newly joined vendors. Cash remains the preferred exchange method, 99% of vendors reported selling commodities in exchange for cash meanwhile 16% reported flexibility around mobile banking, and 33% reported potential to sell by credit to their customers. Vendors reported operational challenges, including decrease in demand (14%), items too expensive (12%), supplier cannot source (7%), and limited access to financing (3%). Qualitatively, vendors have also mentioned the following challenges (including overland transportation challenges): shortage/expensive transportation, local production decreases, confined working space, security challenges, closed routes, some items are not available, poor roads, longer distances, siege, etc.

JEOP could not conduct a regular and geographically representative market monitoring in Tigray due to barriers of comms, fuel and cash. However, JEOP managed to conduct intermittent market monitoring in Mekelle town. The staple cereal price data collected in February 2022 showed very high increase for maize (68%) and teff (34%) as compared to base price data from June 2021 after the outbreak of conflict. Sorghum and wheat increased by 18% and 13% respectively. Critical supply deficit for some commodities was identified including macaroni, sugar, red pepper, peas/beans, and cooking oil. In addition, a significant price decrease on beef was seen: 40% decrease per kg in January 2022 as compared to June 2021, indicating high supply of livestock to markets by rural households as a cash acquisition strategy to meet household needs.

CRS and USAID agree that in-kind transfers remain the most appropriate modality. CRS has the logistics, infrastructure, and personnel in place to manage large quantities of imported Title II commodities. Cash transfers are not currently appropriate in Tigray due to disruption of financial infrastructure, limited access to functioning markets, market instability, high prices and lack of food production, and disruption of communications infrastructure. Market and EWS data indicate that commodities are not available on local markets at affordable prices and are not expected to be available soon due to crops destruction and missed planting seasons. Financial service providers remain closed in Tigray; yet, have resumed in Amhara. CRS and partners will continue to monitor and reevaluate appropriateness of cash should conditions evolve in a positive direction in Amhara.

### **III. Measuring Results**

Emergency food needs of transitory, food insecure populations are met in an accurate, timely and safe manner: conflict has disrupted livelihoods and has severely limited residents' access to food, markets, and finances. JEOP-NR will target over 2.9 million individuals in Tigray's and Amhara's most food insecure communities for six rounds of humanitarian food assistance. JEOP-NR will distribute the nationwide minimum standard package of quality-tested commodities aligned with that of other food actors. Commodities were not distributed under the JEOP-NR during the reporting period. CRS called forward bulk hard red winter wheat, vegetable oil and yellow split peas.

Food basket: SPHERE standards recommend that food rations supply a minimum of 2,100 kilocalories per person per day, with 10% of energy provided by protein and 17% of energy provided by fat. The standards for daily food rations set by EDRMC are similar, delivering 1,976 kilocalories from which 14.7% of energy from protein and 11.3% by fat. These requirements are met via a basket of 15kg of cereals, 1.5kg of pulses and 0.45kg of vegetable oil per person per round (45 days). The ration will supplement participants' diets by meeting approximately two-thirds of their dietary needs. JEOP has occasionally distributed double rations at the EDRMC's request, often in advance of a pending event that might prevent distribution of the next round (heavy rain, elections, or COVID-19). Such events are unpredictable but at the time of reporting, CRS has not been requested to facilitate double distributions under the JEOP-NR. JEOP-NR is committed to monitoring population sub-groups for deterioration of nutritional status or condition and linking those individuals to the appropriate support (health centers, UNICEF, etc.) as feasible.

Post Distribution Monitoring: rely on a mixed-method approach, inclusive of household surveys, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. These will be conducted by a joint team of CRS and partner MEAL staff, an external data collection firm, and hired enumerators in June and July 2022. PDMs will include tracking of household food consumption, participants' preferences, timeliness of the assistance, perception of gender and protection, safety and security, and other issues associated with transfers. PDMs will also verify that project participants have received support as per their ration, and collect feedback on the use, storage, preparation, and appropriateness of the support received (either cash and/or commodities). All PDM data collection tools will be refined and updated according to feedback received from previous PDMs. Moreover, if changing context and/or routine monitoring suggests the need to change modalities, a

post-modality evaluation with a focus on PWDs, women and youth, will be conducted in place of the subsequent PDM to determine any effect on household dynamics. During the reporting period CRS finalized contracting of a data collection firm to conduct a PDM in June 2022.

#### **IV. Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations**

Complaint and Feedback Mechanism: JEOP-NR s feedback through three channels: suggestion boxes, a telephone line and Community Help Desks (CHDs). Across the larger JEOP, most feedback comes in through CHD members as they are very close and accessible, and because this channel is free. To ensure open communication, CRS is supporting partners to strengthen supervision and training for CHDs. Accountability Focal Points at woreda level will oversee kebele CHDs. Accountability Focal Points observe processes and personnel and supporting CHDs. JEOP-NR partners operating in areas with phone access will be onboarded to the CRS Ethiopia-wide hotline in coming months. Meanwhile, JEOP-NR will develop standard operating procedures for data collection. Efforts to increase the upward flow of data from CHDs to decision makers will be a focus, with teams aiming to collect, record, and analyze data collected at the community level through the YouTrack accountability database more rigorously. CRS also conducts PDMs, these randomized surveys will be conducted throughout implementation. Alongside the accountability mechanism, externally led PDMs will capture protection concerns.

Disability Inclusion (DI): CRS will commence the inception phase of the service contract with Humanity and Inclusion to the benefit of both JEOP-NR and JEOP 2.0. The assessment framework, draft planning, schedule, security, and access-related implementation plan will be refined. Activities will include: (a) meeting to consolidate the consultancy action, DI evaluation framework, and sampling methodology; (b) creation of a DI taskforce with senior representatives of each consortium partner and CRS, and representatives of the Ethiopia Center for Disability and Development; (c) consolidation of assessment methods and tools, selection of offices, and FDPs to assess; (d) creation of regional taskforces with JEOP partners to ensure participation, support, and coordination of local actors through regional-level stakeholder engagement; (e) identification and training of JEOP-NR DI focal points, including the responsibility to facilitate consultancy activities and DI activities in their department; and (f) kick off meetings with partners.

Gender: JEOP-NR team participated in CRS Ethiopia’s gender strategy review, facilitated by the CRS Regional Technical Advisor for Gender and Protection Mainstreaming. The strategy provides a five-year road map for CRS Ethiopia to mainstream gender into all aspects of practices, programming, operations, and organizational culture. A corresponding action plan for the first two years was also developed. All staff have a responsibility to implement the strategy, including adhering to guiding principles and achievement of the objectives. JEOP-NR developed a gender-sensitive recruitment tool which is being utilized for recruitment under the JEOP-NR. The hiring process is underway for a gender technical advisor for JEOP. One of their first tasks will be to conduct a program-level gender assessment and strategy, building upon the CRS Ethiopia level strategy. JEOP-NR continued to collect and analyze sex disaggregated project data. Also, to reflect commitment to gender equality internally and to enhance engagement with female project participants. Over 50% of the enumerators hired for the baseline evaluation were women. Qualitative and quantitative data collection tools were reviewed and refined by CRS’ regional gender technical advisor. JEOP-NR plans to deepen analysis of sex-disaggregated data and what it indicates about vulnerability and access to project benefits and will inform implementation strategies accordingly. Revised household data collection tools to disaggregate gender indicators in EWS and market monitoring surveys. Furthermore, in support of closing the feedback loop with communities on Disaster Risk Reduction information, JEOP ensured equal participation of men and women in the monitoring process, including specific female FGDs to better understand their specific EWS needs. JEOP-NR will mitigate unintended gender and GBV-related consequences of project interventions via monitoring risks (e.g., PDM, Feedback and Response Mechanism, sex disaggregated FGDs). JEOP is seeking to meet the unique needs of women/men/girls/boys and plans to address barriers and risks through integration and refinement of distribution modalities, such

as transport top-ups, which seek to lessen protection risks specifically faced by women. With the upgrade of the EWS, JEOP-NR is integrating gender into the mechanism via household data collection tools and adaption to activities, including analysis and use of sex-disaggregated data, training on gendered risks and vulnerabilities, and a gender-based review of tools.

## V. Risk Management

Commodity Management: CRS conducts monitoring and follow-up visits to review targeting, food distribution, warehouse management, document verification, Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) prevention measures, challenges, and best practices. Monitors support distributions, documentation, targeting, and verification. Compliance specialists followed up on irregularities identified by risk monitors. CRS deployed 17 risk and compliance officers from Kombolcha and Mekelle. FDP monitoring visits are scheduled based on: (a) FDP risk scores (high risk FDPs prioritized), (b) FDPs that not monitored recently, and (c) random FDP selection emphasizing live distribution. JEOP field monitors use ICT4D models plus a parallel paper-based system for areas without connectivity. CRS then uses weighted qualitative factors to assess risk scores. This includes caseload, proximity to a mill, food diversion (attempted, unsubstantiated, confirmed), areas with frequent flood/fires/landslides, instability, low partner capacity, distance of FDP from the nearest partner office, and past low performance. Cash and fuel constraints, coupled with blockage on any commodities entering Tigray between January and March 2022, inhibited significant FDP monitoring. Overall, in JEOP-NR implementation areas, during the reporting period risk monitors conducted 84 monitoring visits, covering 28% of active FDPs in Tigray and Amhara. However, it is important to note that these monitoring visits served to monitor distributions taking place under the concurrent JEOP award, as during the reporting period commodities for JEOP-NR were yet to arrive in Ethiopia. These monitoring visits also served a supportive function to prepare the way for smooth commodity management as commodities arrive under the JEOP-NR, especially in Tigray region where JEOP operates over 90 FDPs. CRS risk monitors closed 338 risk findings in Tigray and Amhara, leaving 613 open. Most closed findings were related to end-use checks and physical warehouse conditions. A total of 417 new and 196 repeat risk findings were recorded. Repeat risk finding cases were related to physical warehouse conditions, end-use checks, and food distribution process, all severely impacted by the lack of cash, fuel and communication access in conflict affected regions. Last known risk scores were calculated using data collected during past monitoring visits. Data collection gaps and known factors (armed conflict) led to high-risk scores in Tigray and Amhara. Administrative structures are weak due to lack of cash, fuel, and communication. CRS deployed monitors to Tigray and Amhara as regularly as possible to support partners in the face of prohibitive cash and fuel constraints. Given the nonexistent local structures, monitors supported targeting, verification, registration, reporting on dispatch and distribution performance, and recording unmet food needs. Risk findings reported excludes FDPs in Tigray and woredas of Amhara bordering Tigray region due to operational constraint limiting field travels to and ability of field monitors to use the online JEOP-NR risk monitoring tool in those locations

Financial: CRS conducted a standard sub-recipient financial monitoring visit and developed a corresponding action plan with JEOP-NR partner, REST. Results showed REST's financial monitoring systems to be relatively strong considering the challenging operating environment and lack of financial services in Tigray. A similar visit was conducted for all partners as part of monitoring to identify gap and work on the internal control mechanism put in place to assess partners performance.

Security: CRS recruited and onboarded a new Security Officer for CRS Mekelle Office, overseen by CRS' Security Manager based in Addis Ababa responsible for monitoring the security environment countrywide. The Security Officer conducted training for staff and guards on security and fire management, interviewed truck drivers entering the region and participated in information sharing forums including Security Cell meetings convened by UNDSS, Area Security Management Team, the Access Working Group,



Government-Agency security meetings, and the INGO Security forum. Staff benefit from CRS' Advanced Personal Security Training and Hostile Environment Awareness Training (APST), a form of high-fidelity stress exposure training that combines theory with highly realistic simulations. In March 2022, a APST training was facilitated in Mekelle. Given the complex, high-stress operating environment in Tigray, this training will support staff to work effectively in challenging settings. It will also support their mental health and resiliency throughout the duration of the project.

Protection: CRS JEOP is an active member of national and regional forums, networks, and clusters led by UN Women for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA). These forums provide training and facilitate coordination of interventions and information sharing. JEOP-NR is involved in the Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme initiated by the PSEA network, a platform to exchange safeguarding-related information during recruitment to prevent the consequences of sexual exploitation and abuse in the humanitarian sector and implement the Core Humanitarian Standards. JEOP is contextualizing standards through observation, interaction, and understanding of field-level practices. In the reporting period, CRS JEOP underwent recruitment for additional protection and accountability staff in Addis Ababa and Mekelle. At the East Africa regional level, CRS also completed hiring a protection technical advisor who will commit 70% of their time to CRS Ethiopia. JEOP-NR partners have provisions for dedicated staffing at head office and woreda level. As the situation deteriorates in Northern Ethiopia from bad to worse, protection threats also persist. Contextual analysis was conducted at the Jarra IDP camp (North Wollo) showing that protection is hugely compromised. Based on these observations, CRS/JEOP has made various recommendations to meet the necessities of the IDPs in general, including preventive strategies for protection threats. JEOP is actively engaged in service mapping of referral agencies. Partners in Amhara worked on service mapping in Wollo. As part of preparedness for deployment of enumerators for the baseline study, JEOP shared referral information with JarCo to facilitate a smooth referral, as required.

Safeguarding: To effectively implement CRS safeguarding policy and procedures, it is critical that all staff and affiliates (including contractors) interfacing with communities are familiar with safeguarding concepts and are aware of prohibited actions to protect staff, affiliates, and communities from harm. During the reporting period, CRS reviewed contractors' agreements with their drivers to include safeguarding clauses. CRS also translated annexed safeguarding clauses into Amharic to improve contractors/service providers understanding on the issue and roll out policies accordingly. JEOP-NR continues piloting orientation sessions with drivers loading commodities from PDPs to FDPs and/or satellite distribution points. During the reporting period, in Kombolcha 36 truck drivers were oriented on safeguarding; threats faced by crisis-affected communities; responsibilities of stakeholders; risky behavior and prohibited conduct; reporting options; and consequences of safeguarding violations. This pilot is a pivotal step in operationalizing JEOP's safeguarding commitments toward preventing potential harm toward staff and community members. CRS kicked off a safeguarding task force for JEOP partners to share lessons learned. Under JEOP 2.0, each partner will have dedicated full-time staff working in these technical areas, at which point, JEOP will launch a full-fledged TWG to serve the JEOP-NR and JEOP 2.0. As an interim step towards this goal, JEOP kicked off a focal point system.

Trauma and First Aid: Psychological and emotional wellbeing of staff is critical to ensuring an effective humanitarian response. CRS hosted self-care, trauma management, and therapeutic sessions for a seriously conflict-affected area: Kombolcha. The session was facilitated for 19 staff (8 female; 11 male). Seven staff (3 female; 4 male) engaged in individual counseling sessions. JEOP By employing various therapeutic techniques, the sessions will help field-level workers ease stress and equip them to become resilient and maintain their psychological wellbeing. Given the limited health services in Tigray and Amhara and the remoteness of the target areas, JEOP-NR is planning to contract expert service providers to deliver emergency first aid training to implementing partners. Content will include first aid skills for emergency scenarios that are common in humanitarian operations. Finally, trauma healing training, conducted by a qualified health professional, will cover key topics of trauma healing, stress management and resilience. It

will involve group therapy and will be staggered over the course of the activity so that staff can participate in appropriately sized groups.

COVID-19: There are currently no pandemic-related limitations on gatherings or movement in Tigray or Amhara. All interventions are implemented according to BHA guidelines, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and World Health Organization guidelines, MoH and federal government regulations, and CRS standard operating procedures for COVID-19. CRS is working closely with partners, communities, and other stakeholders to integrate COVID-19 messaging and considerations in project implementation for as long as COVID-19 is a threat, JEOP partners will continue to employ mitigation strategies. Introduced in March 2020, the JEOP SOPs mandate improved hygiene and prevention practices for dispatch and distribution of both food and cash assistance, including enhanced hygiene measures such as additional handwashing stations at distributions, the presence of MoH staff where possible, masks for staff and encouraging face coverings for all participants, minimizing crowds at FDPs by allowing only registered participants in distribution areas, and increased signage about COVID-19 prevention measures, management of queues, and physical distancing at distributions.

## **VI. Coordination**

Sectoral Integration: At the core of JEOP-NR is the layering and leveraging of multisectoral programming, with food assistance as the foundation for broader support. In Tigray, CRS overlays shelter and support for essential living supplies, WASH, and health and nutrition services with the integration of CRS' protection mainstreaming framework. CRS is scaling up humanitarian support in Amhara through OCHA-funded emergency shelter, NFI and WASH activities that will complement JEOP-NR's support for basic food needs. Wherever possible, CRS and partners layer this programming with JEOP-NR through joint assessments, shared logistics and information exchange. In addition, CRS co-chairs the Food Security Cluster and is an active member the Logistics, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter/NFI and WASH Clusters.

Aligned Staffing: To ensure coordination in Tigray, CRS has introduced additional key staff: a Mekelle-based Deputy Country Representative for Tigray, and two managers, one for Compliance and Risk Monitoring, and one for Program Quality. In Amhara, in addition to scaled up staffing in Kombolcha PDP, CRS has introduced a Senior Project Officer for Operations and Coordination based in Bahir Dar to foster stronger integration, collaboration and communication among USAID-supported activities in registration, referrals, government capacity strengthening and local leadership. Close collaboration will lay the foundation for more effective cross-learning between activities.

Coordination forums: CRS and JEOP-NR partners are active members of key coordination mechanisms at national and federal levels respective to implementation of the award. As a co-chair of the Food Cluster, CRS and JEOP-NR partners are engaged in weekly meetings in Mekelle, Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa, coordinating with government and non-government stakeholders to address collective challenges. Similarly, CRS and partners are present in complementary Humanitarian Clusters including the Protection and Agriculture Clusters, sharing protection risk analysis and early warning information, respectively.

Harmonization of Prioritization: since mid-2021, JEOP has been working with USAID, WFP, and EDRMC to harmonize prioritization practices. JEOP contributed to a paper which put forward recommendations for criteria to calculate prioritization of needs in anticipation of significant resource shortfalls in 2022. The paper defined "*Prioritization*" as the process through which people within a targeted population, who have greater needs and/or are in more vulnerable situations, receive assistance when overall identified needs cannot be met, or when entitlements are reduced due to resource constraints. The population categorized as living under the survival deficit, according to the Household Economy Analysis, or considered as food insecure from WFP-led assessment in Tigray region, should be targeted for assistance. Prioritization is ever more concerning when food operators are faced with significant access issues and resource constraints.

Food operators identified the need for a shared vision on how to prioritize food responses to internally displaced people facing significant food consumption gaps. The paper did not attempt to supersede or modify the “*National Guidelines on Targeting Relief Food Assistance*” (August 2011), whereby woreda administrative bodies identify severity across geographies and population groups and allocating resources to kebeles, and communities identify vulnerable households. Food operators agreed to adhere to the targeting process indicated in the guidelines informed by the available evidence from food security assessments. During the reporting period, JEOP participated in a series of workshops to develop the paper, contributed to several reviews, and presented the paper to the Tigray Food Cluster. The process focused on identifying geographic locations and groups who should have priority support amid the context of limited resources and an expected huge need in 2022. JEOP-NR ensured that appropriate criteria were selected for different contexts in the country. In addition, JEOP-NR shared household targeting experiences with other actors participating in the process. JEOP’s household targeting practices were highly appreciated by other stakeholders. JEOP-NR shared resources with WFP and identified key prioritization criteria particular to the Tigray context in the EWS TWG in Mekelle. The identified criteria were presented to the Food Cluster for feedback and to harmonize criteria at the Tigray regional level.

## **VII. Lessons Learned**

**Data Management:** With consistent attention to the pace of dispatch and distribution in Amhara and Tigray, JEOP-NR continued to utilize the Northern Ethiopia Response online dashboard to track data. JEOP-NR engaged technical partner Project Balance to strengthen the compliance and risk monitoring dashboard and facilitate upgrades to the EWS dashboard. Project Balance changed login procedures, developing a feature allowing each user to create their own username and password. In addition, Project Balance has also improved the design of the dashboard, including restoring the connection between the Power BI and the website. As a next step, Project Balance will create a workspace for each JEOP partner so that partners can post narrative reports for their respective operation areas directly to the website.

**Technical Partnerships:** JEOP-NR explored technical partnerships to streamline and improve operations. For example, JEOP-NR engaged innovative data management firms s YouTrack to support accountability data management and explored IVR technology for reporting under the EWS. JEOP also investigated mobile-friendly video training for the extended roll out of the CBEWS.

**Cycle to Work Scheme:** Fuel prices in Tigray are more than 15 times the price in Addis Ababa and since February 2022, public transport is at a standstill. CRS took creative steps to minimize fuel use and maintain operations. CRS conducted a bicycle assessment looking at price and availability on local markets. CRS purchased an initial nine bicycles, signed in and out for use by CRS and REST staff. The assessment brought to light the concept of a “*cycle to work scheme*”. Terms of reference were developed considering risks and mitigation measures, eligibility criteria, lessons and a practical test, liability, and offering employees four repayment schedules. CRS privately funded the initiative, covering a one-third incentive. Over a maximum six-month period, employees will cover the remaining two thirds. Within the first month, 51 CRS employees signed up and started riding.

## **VIII. Transition Strategy**

JEOP-NR partners strive to strengthen local administrators’ capacity to deliver emergency food assistance in an equitable, safe, dignified, transparent and sustainable manner. JEOP-NR partners are working closely with zonal- and woreda-level government counterparts to prepare for start-up of the response. However, there are large capacity gaps at the kebele and woreda levels. JEOP-NR will support coordination of distribution notifications and greater engagement on ensuring safe distributions, particularly in less secure environments. In the next reporting period. JEOP-NR partners are accompanying local DRM committees during targeting, early warning reporting, seasonal assessments, regular market price assessments, and data

reviews. JEOP is supporting the woreda-level government with capacity strengthening using a curriculum that includes early warning, humanitarian assistance and national targeting guidelines. JEOP partners are continuing to use this curriculum to strengthen local government engagement in humanitarian food interventions. Over the upcoming reporting period, JEOP-NR will identify any gaps in local systems that make it difficult to access data for decision-making or targeting, recommending ways to improve organizational systems. CRS does not anticipate an end to humanitarian food assistance in Tigray and Amhara in the foreseeable future. When the JEOP-NR activity ends and the JEOP 2.0 picks up the caseload, target woredas will become part of the larger JEOP 2.0 transition and exit strategy. It is hoped that the caseload will decrease over the life of the proposed activity as humanitarian access improves, cash and fuel become more widely available, and agricultural production and livelihoods activities resume. As such, when JEOP-NR ends, the remaining caseload will transfer to the larger JEOP 2.0 activity. In the JEOP 2.0 proposal, CRS projected to transition 290,000 people in Tigray and 536,000 in Amhara into its caseload, based on the JEOP's average annual pre-crisis caseload. This projection assumed that the PSNP would continue to serve 817,000 clients in these regions. Yet, if the emergency caseload does not reduce significantly, or if PSNP is unable to resume service, CRS will consult with USAID, the NDRMC and other food operators to determine the best way to serve communities in Tigray and Amhara still facing extreme food insecurity.

## **IX. Planned Interventions**

Targeting: With release of the HRP 2022, JEOP-NR will engage in retargeting in May 2022, providing logistics support and engagement in community validation. JEOP-NR will continue engaging actively in finalization and share out of the harmonization process with WFP, EDRMC, and USAID.

Dispatch and Distribution: JEOP-NR anticipates CY2022 Round 2 launch to be made in July 2022 and with this to start distributing food in Amhara and Tigray regions, following this, in August 2022 CY2022 Round 3 is expected to be launched and JEOP-NR will continue its dispatch and distribution. JEOP-NR will strengthen security protocols to enable monitoring teams to attend distributions, continue to advocate for safe access to hard-to-reach areas, When the security situation improves, JEOP-NR will conduct distributions closer to project participants to avoid long distances travelled and risks incurred to communities reaching FDPs.

Commodity Call-Forward and Land Transportation: CRS anticipates receiving January call-forwarded 72,400 MT of wheat in Djibouti port on May 11 and 23, 2022 and 7,204 MT of YSP and 2,180 MT of V.Oil in June 4-6, 2022. JEOP-NR is identifying additional transport and storage options for commodities as they arrive including exploring a transit hub in Semera, Afar. CRS will prepare for convoys via various available routes in collaboration with the UN Logistics Cluster, other NGOs/WFP, and contract multiple transportation companies for the same areas to avoid any potential gaps.

Baseline: The consultant firm JarCo will conclude quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Data is being collected via online (in Amhara) and paper-based (in Tigray) platforms according to internet connectivity. Data analysis will be conducted for all regions and a report will be drafted and revised.

Gender: JEOP-NR will conduct community consultations to inform protection risk analyses that will identify potential risks to women, girls and other vulnerable groups (such as elderly people and people with disabilities [PWDs]), informing mitigation strategies and project approaches. This will include consultations on approaches to registration that enhance safety and equity, such as registering female heads of households to reduce the potential for intra-household conflict. The consultations will inform orientation/information sessions intended to mitigate risks of conflict and violence within and between households. Findings will inform project adaptations to enhance the safety, accessibility, and convenience of distributions for women and other groups who experience unique risks, including elders and PWDs.

Compliance Risk Monitoring: CRS will provide technical support to partners to improve last mile food dispatch and distribution to ensure timely delivery to targeted food assistance recipients. This will include monitoring, site visits, reports, training, and hands-on support. Many FDPs in Amhara and Tigray were vandalized over the course of the 18-month conflict; warehouse materials and office supplies were looted or destroyed. CRS will support partners with rehabilitation and recovery efforts for effective delivery of food rations to affected populations.

Monitoring and Assessments: in FY22 Q3, JEOP-NR will roll out a PDM household survey coordinated by an independent data collection firm, AZ Consulting. In Q4, the same firm will conduct an Annual Results Survey. This firm will conduct two quantitative surveys across all JEOP-NR and JEOP 2.0 regions. Through a larger sample size, greater geographic coverage, and more detailed questionnaires, this firm will bring higher statistical rigor to PDMs and the ARS. Outsourcing will allow for greater emphasis by CRS and partners on Learning Sessions, where findings will be triangulated against partners' practical experience. The output will be action-based findings for adaptive management.

Market Monitoring: JEOP-NR will maintain and/or restart market monitoring as accessibility increases. CRS is identifying potential technology providers to speed up monitoring which would allow enumerators to send reports directly to a CRS-hosted database. IVR technology will bring this to the EWS. Enhancement of the monitoring system will meet needs of USAID-supported PSNP programs in JEOP operation areas.