

CRS Responds to Concerns About Programs in Guinea and Madagascar

July 26, 2013 by [John Rivera](http://newswire.crs.org/author/jrivera/)

CRS works in many countries throughout the world to protect human life and human dignity. Within each of the countries where we work, we approach our mission of serving the poor and vulnerable very seriously. Committed to our Catholic identity, we review all organizations via a vetting process that begins with our local Bishops in-country. At times, we do work with organizations that may not share all of our Catholic values; we approach each of these situations very carefully and individually in order to ensure that we are continuing to promote human life within complex environments.

CRS has recently been criticized for working with PSI on a Global Fund malaria grant in **Guinea**. The critics have accused CRS of selecting PSI as a partner and then lying about this. CRS did not select PSI to be a Sub-recipient (SR) for malaria programming in Guinea. In fact, the proposal even clearly states, "For implementing interventions, SRs have been selected by an independent board made up of a research office, a representative from the country coordinating mechanism (CCM), a representative from the WHO, and a representative from the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS based on their experience and ability to intervene in one or more service delivery areas. Each SR will work in direct collaboration with the national NGOs and existing community based organizations in the various localities of the project's zone." The proposal was written by a large group of stakeholders under the CCM, and ultimately, CRS was selected by this group to be the principal recipient. The sub-recipients were also selected by an independent board outside of CRS.

Critics also suggested that CRS working with PSI meant that CRS was building PSI's capacity to implement activities outside of malaria. CRS is not strengthening the capacity of PSI as part of the Global Fund grant in Guinea. The malaria project does seek to build the capacity of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), as outlined in the Round 10 proposal. PSI is registered in the US as an international organization and all international organizations are expected to have existing capacity in their areas of expertise and are not targeted with capacity building support. The proposal states, "As part of the effort to boost primary health care, the completion of the activities planned within the present grant will contribute to achieving the objectives of "The New Vision for Community Participation Centered Around the Appropriation of Basic Healthcare Services" (Appendix 23). The strengthening of national OCBs (Community based organizations in French) and ONGs (NGO in French) in terms of training (SDA 1.3 and 2.1), computer equipment, and logistics (SDA 4.2) will make it possible to enable them to conduct malaria-fighting activities (caring for cases by CAs, awareness-building, leadership, etc.)."

Critics have also suggested that PSI might use this funding from CRS to promote family planning services or other activities not in line with Catholic teaching. Note that the grant is very strictly monitored and has tight controls in place. The grant states, "Sub-Recipient shall ensure that all Funds are prudently managed and shall take all

necessary action to ensure that Funds are used solely for the performance of Activities and the achievement of Targets and Objectives consistent with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.” All activities in this grant are related solely to malaria.

Critics have recently pointed out PSI activities in other parts of the world that violate Catholic teaching on the sanctity of life. CRS is deeply concerned with promoting human life from conception until natural death and at every point in between. In Guinea, before moving forward, we received the local Bishop’s approval with the understanding that we had the possibility of saving lives under this grant.

Other attacks recently have focused on CRS work in **Madagascar**. Contrary to a recent “report” by the Population Research Institute, none CRS’ programs in Madagascar involves family planning and certainly not any support for abortion services. All of our programs in that country are in areas such as water and sanitation, food aid, child vaccination, nutrition and malaria prevention. **The “report” is just plain wrong.**

Population Research Institute charges that CRS, along with other international aid groups, distributes family planning materials. This is not the case. We are puzzled by quotes saying we do “the same work” in family planning as secular organizations since none of the work that CRS does in Madagascar is in this area.

CRS does work with community health workers, volunteers who are not CRS employees, in compliance with government directives to work through existing local structures. We focus specifically on educating these community workers on nutrition, water and sanitation, and malaria prevention. CRS in no way participated in the training of anyone on topics of contraceptives.

The Population Research Institute “report” makes reference to a project CRS undertook with CARE in Madagascar, but contrary to the allegations made, the partnership with CARE involved water and sanitation, nothing else. It also quotes one official from USAID, but his name is not known to any members of the CRS staff. We are trying to determine his identity and role.

The report goes on to quote one person who is anonymous, identified only as a “zone supervisor” for CRS, saying that the agency does family planning work. We do not know who this person is, but if he is accurately quoted, he is wrong. It should be noted that the vast majority of those who work for CRS are natives of Madagascar. Their first language would be Malagasy, their second French. We do not know the linguistic abilities of the investigators responsible for the “report.”

There is also a reference to the previous employment of a CRS employee. Without confirming those details, we can say that all work done while in the employ of CRS is in compliance with church teaching whatever an employee’s previous affiliation.

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