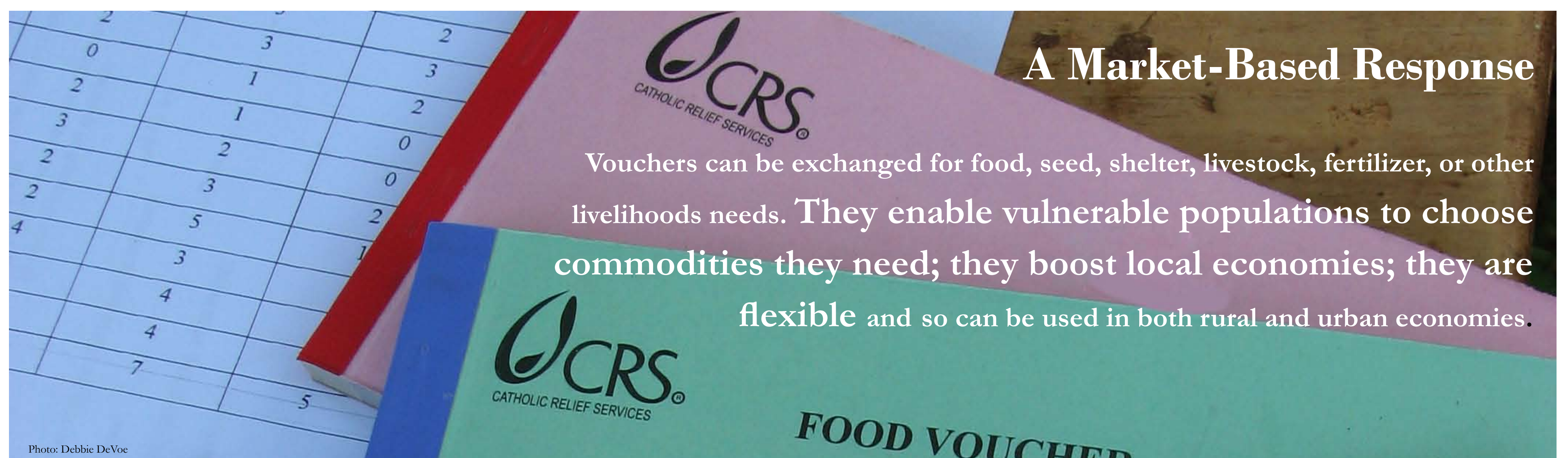


Feeling the effects of high food prices

- Over a 6 month period in 2008, the price of rice, the main staple food for urban populations, rose from \$28 for a 50 kg sack in January 2008 to \$46 by early June, a 63% increase.
- Effects of high prices were especially harsh for people still recovering from flooding in July 2007 and early cessation of the rains. These shocks had affected over 100,000 people. Farm family production dropped from 8 to 2 metric tons.

Despite high prices, markets were still functioning, and food, seeds, and other essential household goods were still available. In this context, CRS/Burkina Faso began six voucher-based projects in urban and rural areas.



1

Short-term disaster response

CRS first responded to the most immediate needs of communities by distributing vouchers with a value of \$50 to 1,271 flood-affected households. Vouchers were used to purchase construction materials, food, and household goods. Later, when an assessment determined that there was moderate seed insecurity, 8,650 households received vouchers with a value of \$20 that they exchanged for seed of their choice in time for planting. (Funders: OFDA, US Embassy)

Action

- Using vouchers in exchange for seeds and household items after an emergency

Lessons Learned

- Coupons enabled affected people to quickly purchase the materials needed to re-establish their lives.
- The seed fairs enabled farmers to access locally available seeds, as well certified seed of new varieties as recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Local economies can benefit: more than \$236,000 was directly injected into local economies

2

Promoting rice profitability

In two projects in rural Burkina Faso, vouchers were given to 12,900 rice farmers for fertilizers and seeds, to increase productivity, production and profitability of rice (Funders: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CRS)

Action

- Assisting rice producers to become more competitive and earn higher incomes by capitalizing on high rice prices
- Using vouchers to distribute 25 kg each of NPK and urea
- Leveraging timely financing and good partnerships with the Church and Ministry of Agriculture to respond quickly to the crisis

Lessons Learned

- The fertilizer supply chain is weak in Burkina Faso, and urban wholesalers resisted the voucher approach; CRS distributed fertilizers directly to farmers. Moving forward, CRS aims to support rural input retailers by connecting them with farmers through vouchers.
- To increase profitability it is important to address the entire rice value chain—not production alone.

3

“Shopping” with vouchers

In two projects in the urban centers of Bobo Dioulasso and Ouagadougou, 23,267 households (56% women) received vouchers for exchange for locally-available foodstuffs and basic livelihoods goods (Funders: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, World Food Program)

Action

- Using vouchers in an urban setting to increase purchasing power
- Targeting urban working poor as beneficiaries

Lessons Learned

- The bi-monthly distributions allowed for readjustment of procedures and preferred commodities; the methodology is flexible and can be easily adapted to beneficiaries’ needs and the market situation.