2025

CAFOD
A better world needs all of us

"BUILDING BRIDGES FOR THE FUTURE" SUMMARY PAPER

CAFOD INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES PROGRESS PAPER - 2025

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Cover picture shows CAFOD's partner CENDA's work on sustainable farming techniques with local families in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

ACRONYMS

ARA	Annual Review and Adaptation Process
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Plans
IEC	Integral Ecology Characteristics
IEPM	Integral Ecology Programme Model
IP	[CAFOD] International Programmes
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
Teams	CAFOD IP Core Programme Teams
UN	United Nations
VSLA	Villages Loans and Savings Associations
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

OUR COMMON HOME ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

In 2020, CAFOD launched its strategic framework 'Our Common Home', which takes its name from Pope Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si' - On Care for Our Common Home. CAFOD's strategy calls upon us to focus on the interconnected *Cry of the Earth* and the *Cry of the Poor*, prioritising those who experience poverty and the most vulnerable and excluded, especially women and girls. We do this by working with our partners to understand the interconnected root causes of the problems we seek to address, and working with and for people and communities to find solutions to those problems.

At regional and country level, CAFOD International Programme teams and partners have developed core programme strategies through which we seek to implement the commitments set in OCH Strategy. These programme strategies highlight the context-specific issues we want to address with our partners, and the programmatic approaches we will adopt to achieve change.

CAFOD'S ANNUAL REVIEW AND ADAPTATION PROCESS

CAFOD captures the results and impact of its International Programmes each year using the Annual Review and Adaptation process. This process supports CAFOD International Programme teams to analyse data they have collected during the year, and draw conclusions on the impact and results that have been achieved. The Annual Review and Adaptation process also helps us identify areas of commonality across our international programmes, and reveals what progress has been made towards the outcomes in our strategy. During the Annual Review and Adaptation Process, teams reflect on:

- How they are progressing with their core programme strategies
- What changes and outcomes are being achieved
- How their programming is contributing to those changes
- What they are learning and what adaptations are needed
- What challenges (internal and external) they are experiencing
- What their priorities will be for the coming year

This is done by exploring a set of critical learning questions alongside diverse sources of evidence collected from their programmes. There are two sets of critical learning questions. Team-specific questions based on IP Core Programme Theories of Change encourage in-depth discernment and learning on specific themes and outcomes at programme level. Organisational level questions help to identify commonalities across CAFOD's work and draw conclusions on the collective results and impact of our programming. The reflections happen at different moments during the year and involve a mix of implementing partner staff and IP Core Programme team members. Peers from different teams within the organisation also join in the reflections, which helps the validation process.

The outputs from team level reflections are analysed by a central team of technical advisors to draw out insights on how CAFOD International Programmes are contributing to Our Common Home. This progress paper is based on the analysis of the 2024 reflections.

RESULTS AND PROGRESS FOR 2024

Reach

1 Haowa Begum shows her crops in Barishal Region, Bangladesh.

Between 2024 and 2025, CAFOD and our 313 partners[1] reached 1,545,620 people[2] through a wide range of projects, focused on emergency preparedness and anticipatory action, emergency response, agroecology and livelihoods, gender equality, women's economic empowerment, community conflict resolution, protection of environmental and human rights defenders, and strategic litigation. In addition, 333.433 people experienced tangible benefits from successful advocacy leading to policy change.

Outcomes

Together with our partners, we have achieved the following outcomes:

- **Local and national policy and legislative change**.
  We contributed to changes in policy and legislation in various contexts. Partners strengthened their networks and bridged gaps between stakeholders (including policy makers and legislators/regulators) and communities, resulting in citizens becoming stronger activists in their communities. Examples of our advocacy results include:
    - Legal protections and policy support for agroecology and seed sovereignty in Zimbabwe, Bolivia, Sri Lanka.
    - Legal safeguards and protection for natural resources, parks, aquifers and water access in Central America.
    - Increased health budgets and potential reforms through health and budget advocacy in Sri Lanka.
    - Creation of farmer-policy dialogue platforms in Zimbabwe and Liberia, connecting local farmers with policymakers and creating a space for them to express their concerns about the food system challenges they experience.

- **Successful Strategic Litigation**.
  We successfully submitted cases to local and national courts resulting in the protection of the environment. Successful legal actions led to:
    - Halting environmentally harmful extractive projects that were polluting agricultural land or rivers, or destroying landscapes in Central America and Sri Lanka.
    - Protection and reparation for environmental and human rights defenders in Bangladesh, Colombia, Sri Lanka, and the Middle East.

- **A shift towards greater local leadership in the humanitarian sector.**
  We positioned CAFOD partners to advocate for greater local leadership agency and voices in the humanitarian sector. Successful examples of our advocacy include:

[1] 130 in Africa, 69 in Asia and Middle East, 67 in Latin America and 47 in Europe.
[2] Project participants either engaged in project activities or receiving a product or service.

- CAFOD Ukraine team and local partners from Ukraine helped to align efforts of local CSO networks to mobilise and draw on wider humanitarian funding and support. As a result, the UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) committed funds to support the establishment of a new fund available only to local and national actors in Ukraine[3].
- CAFOD's advocacy efforts were key to the FCDO White Paper on International Development published in 2023, which endorsed locally led humanitarian models. We partnered with the FCDO Humanitarian Department and local embassies on an in-depth FCDO dialogue about locally-led humanitarian action. Our joint work with the FCDO and the British Red Cross for the report Locally-Led Humanitarian Action also fed into the White Paper.

2 *Alhaji harvests tomatoes grown in Tawuya farm, Sierra Leone.*

- **Increased awareness of the need to change food systems and adoption of agroecology practices.**
Our programming increased the awareness and use of agroecology practices by farmers and households in Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Sierra Leone and Liberia. We documented the impacts of this on better soil management and increased use of organic fertilisers and alternative pest control.
  - Research commissioned by our partners demonstrated a decreased use of chemical pesticides and chemical fertilisers in Bangladesh and scalability of organic fertilizers in Sri Lanka.
  - The Seed Flow register in Bolivia was used to demonstrate and showcase nationally and internationally the impacts of agroecology.
  - In the Sri Lanka programme, agroecology has become an entry point to reduce conflicts between communities and increase peaceful dialogue. Thanks to this work, partners have documented a breakthrough in intra-community trust and cohesion, and levels of cooperation not seen since before the war.

- **Increased household incomes through holistic and tailored livelihoods.** We implemented income generation and diversification initiatives, from Villages Loans and Savings Associations (VSLA) and cooperatives to the development of small businesses which have resulted in increased savings and/or household income, increased partner capacity in integrated livelihoods programming, increased community awareness and increased leadership from communities as they seek to influence stakeholders on sustainable farming practices. The interconnected nature of these efforts led to strengthened community resilience in various ways: by diversifying food sources (e.g. by growing kitchen gardens), improving preparedness and response to climate-related disasters, expanding access to WASH services and livelihood opportunities, and fostering greater collaboration in managing natural resources and engaging in advocacy initiatives. Examples of successes include:

  - In Sierra Leone and Liberia our partner Green Scenery led the creation of Village Saving and Loans Associations and Farmer Field Schools which have enabled local farmers to come together to share knowledge and take leadership roles within their communities.

[3] The fund is co-hosted by an international and a Ukrainian entity – Start Network and National Network for Local Philanthropy Development – with aims to transition to full Ukrainian management and a pooled fund mechanism in the next phase. As a result of multiple engagements with donors, INGOs and UN agencies, there is an increased of actors recognising that fair overheads cost support to local actors is a priority and acting on it through developing new policies and practices.

Community members became important advocates for sustainable farming practices, such as intercropping, use of organic fertilisers and a shift away from harmful practices like slash-and-burn agriculture.
  - In Zimbabwe, we documented how integrated livelihood interventions have resulted in families being able to support their children to go back to school.
  - In Brazil, an evaluation of our COVID emergency agricultural productive initiative demonstrated high levels of community satisfaction and recorded improved income and food security for families, freeing up household resources to meet other needs like medicine, energy and access to water.
  - In Bangladesh, the inclusive nature of the livelihoods programme resulted in people with disabilities being able to engage in income generating activities and agroecological practices, with an evaluation showing positive impacts of the inclusive programme approach.

- **Improved community access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).**
  We helped improve communities' knowledge on how to better prepare and deal with the impacts of climate change like flooding and drought on water supplies. Examples of success include:

  - In South Sudan communities and households have also increased and maintained access to potable water thanks to the creation of boreholes.
  - In Zimbabwe, improved natural resources and water management systems also resulted in evidence of reduced conflicts and strengthening of peace dialogue.
  - Instances of communities leading the development of action plans and water management systems, and establishing early warning systems for water-related disasters in DRC, Brazil and Bangladesh.

- **Greater participation of women and girls in decision-making.**
  Women and girls in multiple contexts strengthened their leadership skills and participated meaningfully in community decision-making spaces, including engagement with duty-bearers at different levels (local and national). Examples of success include:

3 Building resilience among indigenous female farmers with our partner ASUVI in Quiche, Guatemala.

  - In Bangladesh we saw the appointment of two women directors from CAFOD partner organisations into the new interim government.
  - In DRC we documented increased political participation of youth and women in decision-making spaces at local and national levels.
  - In Brazil, support given to the Black Women's network in São Paulo helped black women to lead, lobby and advocate for safe, dignified and inclusive neighbourhoods and housing for homeless and vulnerable people.
  - In Zimbabwe, partners are ensuring that leadership roles are given to women in different decision-making spaces, like Water Point Committees, Environmental Management Committees and Garden Committees (e.g. in Chinhoyi 70% of leadership roles in these committees are taken by women).
  - In Bolivia, partners documented an increase in and strengthening of women participating in decision-making spaces on agroecology issues at the community level.

- **Changing negative gender and social norms.**
  In Zimbabwe, we saw the beginning of a shift in negative gender and social norms and a change in behaviours within communities and households, with reports from project participants of a reduction in gender-based violence at the family level.

- **Community conflict resolution through increased social cohesion.**
  Our partners' work strengthened social cohesion, reduced community conflict, and increased the adoption of peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms in Zimbabwe, DRC, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone and Liberia. These outcomes were achieved through a combination of capacity strengthening for community members and local authorities in conflict early warning and resolution, and creating enabling environments and spaces for peace dialogues.

- **Partner Capacity Strengthening.**
  We documented improved organisational capacities of partners through the use of structured assessments and capacity building support in Ukraine, Mozambique, South Sudan, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Central America, the Middle East and across the Church in Africa.

  Evidence-backed examples include adoption of new policies and codes of conduct, and establishment of feedback and complaints mechanisms. Some examples of success include:
  - In Ukraine, a programme evaluation emphasised the positive impact of CAFOD's partnership model on organisational capacity of partner organisations particularly in the area of programme quality.
  - In Mozambique, the support provided by CAFOD for some Diocesan Bishops was an opportunity to involve their entire dioceses in the capacity strengthening initiative.

- **UK Community Mobilisation.**

4 Signing Salina's letter to the World Bank.

Under the "Fix the Food System campaign" campaign, CAFOD successfully mobilised 70,000 UK supporters around food sovereignty issues, resulting in greater visibility for these topics in public discussions. The Salina Letter, signed by many parishioners, coupled with supporters engaging with UK government representatives, helped bring attention to seed sovereignty and food system issues during pre-election conversations. By fostering this public support, CAFOD strengthened its advocacy aims and established itself as a key voice in national discussions on food sovereignty.

It is important to highlight that CAFOD's International Programme teams adopt an integrated programming approach, which means that there are strong connections between each outcome reported above and outcomes in other thematic areas. For example, a livelihoods focused intervention in Zimbabwe recorded impacts on women's empowerment and community cohesion as well as improving household incomes. This is a positive finding and validates the strength of taking an interconnected approach to socioeconomic, political and environmental as outlined in our strategy, Our Common Home.

Successful ways of working

In addition to the illustrative outcomes shared above, the Annual Review and Adaptation exercise for 2024 highlighted some important successes in CAFOD's signature ways of working, including our commitments to a culture of encounter, local leadership agency and voices and inclusive, gender sensitive programming.

Within the Latin American and Asia and Middle East programmes, partner-led learning and partner-to-partner are becoming a key programmatic approach. Through the Asia and Middle East Regional Agroecology Project, partners in Occupied Palestinian Territory, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh organised a series of farmer-to-farmer and partner-partner exchanges on agroecology in which they shared their experiences and transferred learning on new methods. This project also incorporated strong focus on how to work with and for women farmers. The exchanges have helped partners strengthen their networks and build an evidence base to engage with farmers and policy makers, for example, by capturing and documenting the positive impact of organic compost production for small-scale farmers and the environment and advocating for wider adoption of this method. This partner-to-partner approach is now being explored by some teams in Africa.

The Food Systems Global Advocacy Programme[4] is a strong example of how CAFOD is knitting together our commitments to a culture of encounter, local leadership agency and voices, and influencing systemic change. We recorded important successes in partner-led policy change and campaigns promoting the use of agroecology practices in various communities around the world and united our partners with UK-based supporters to advocate around the issue of food systems in global spaces. The Food Systems Global Advocacy Programme has published a number of reports on impacts and lessons learned from their work, which are available for sharing.

Next steps

The Annual Review and Adaptation process will continue to be implemented annually in CAFOD. Some adaptations to the process have already been introduced to help capture outcomes from our programming more systematically. The organisational critical learning questions for 2025 will focus on core programme outcomes, progress with implementation, challenges (internal and external) and adaptations. The organisational questions will be complemented by team-specific critical learning questions, and teams will be invited to participate in learning journeys looking at specific sub-themes in environment and climate adaptation, gender justice and emergency preparedness response. IP Core Programme teams are also developing programme level monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks that bring together data that is collected by partners at individual project level. These changes are based on the learnings from the 2024 analysis.

The Annual Review and Adaptation in combination with the core programme MEL Frameworks will strengthen CAFOD's ability to evidence the impacts of our partners' work, help to demonstrate the effectiveness of our integrated programme approach, and highlight areas where adaptations are needed. The information generated from the exercise will also be useful for engaging with supporters, donors, and relevant stakeholders.

Through continual refinement, the Annual Review and Adaptation will ultimately contribute to CAFOD's aspirations to be an organisation that embraces learning through a culture of encounter with partners, communities, supporters and donors.

[4] The Food Systems GAP brings together Bolivia, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Liberia, Brazil and Bangladesh.