

CAFOD Management Response to the Mid-term Evaluation of the Ukraine Crisis Response Programme, October 2024.

In February 2022, in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, CAFOD set out to deliver a humanitarian response which would fulfil the humanitarian imperative to save lives and meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The decision to respond in Ukraine was taken despite Ukraine being outside of CAFOD's priority countries and areas of operation, in part because of the unprecedented generosity of CAFOD supporters, and the UK public in general. As a result, CAFOD's Ukraine programme was established as a stand-alone, time bound emergency response programme, and its inception and development happened in a context in which CAFOD had limited prior programmatic experience.

At a strategic mid-point in their Ukraine Crisis response CAFOD commissioned an independent evaluation to identify lessons and understand what if anything has made CAFOD's approach unique, the difference it has made and how could that inform the way forward. This reflects the organisation's commitment to learning and accountability in line with our strategic framework. CAFOD's management accept and agree with the majority of the findings and recommendations in the report, and are taking steps to make the necessary changes in our policies and practices. We do however find it useful to clarify three points raised in the report:

The evaluation found there was lack of clarity around decision-making processes at the start of the crisis and recommends that CAFOD update the templates and procedures for the decision-making structures, specifically to improve clarity of decisions, delegations, conflicts of interest, and formal sign-off for decisions in an emergency. Management accepts this finding and agree with the recommendation noting that the procedures, guidance and templates around emergency response are currently being updated.

As part of the recommendations on leadership and process, the Evaluation recommends establishing standard practices to manage conflict of interest, specifically in the context of partner selection. CAFOD partially accepts this recommendation. CAFOD has a Conflict of Interest Policy as part of its suite of organisational policies. However, this Policy was never intended as a detailed operational procedures document and therefore although it contains examples relevant to International Programmes, it does not specifically cover partner selection. The CAFOD Supply Chain Manual also covers conflict of interest considerations, however there is no real detail on how to ensure best selection and avoid/manage conflicts of interest in partner selection. CAFOD is therefore looking into how conflict of interest considerations can be more explicitly integrated into our partnership selection procedures.

Finally, the report recommends that CAFOD should intentionally engage in its partner selection process more widely beyond its networks. Although we recognise the need for increased clarity particularly with regards to conflicts of interest, transparency and communication around partner selection, it is important to note that CAFOD is part of a membership network of sister agencies that has a primary constituency and therefore partner selection is necessarily centred on this.