

SUMMARY EVALUATION FINDINGS

CAFOD Ukraine Response

CAFOD'S RESPONSE

When the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 commenced, CAFOD launched a unique response aimed to ensure that those in greatest need would be supported with timely, appropriate, inclusive, and ecologically sustainable humanitarian response and recovery.

Key features

Financials

£20.2million distributed via:

£1.3m Caritas Emergency Appeals
£1m Bilateral grant projects
£17.9m DEC grants

£3million

retained for CAFOD support costs

Implementation arrangements

No in country presence
Implemented exclusively through partners, within and beyond Caritas

3 international partners

8 local partners

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

In Ukraine, CAFOD responded swiftly and effectively to meet immediate needs while demonstrating strong commitment to local leadership and equitable partnering in practice.

Key strengths

Equitable partnerships

CAFOD holds equitable relationships with implementing partners, based on trust, shared risk and complimentary value-adding

Effective dynamic advocacy

CAFOD has advocated effectively by fostering horizontal and vertical linkages to help amplify local voices on national and global stages

Tailored capacity building

CAFOD's tailored approach to capacity strengthening meant partners absorbed and adopted more of the learning.

Opportunities for strengthening

Fund local partners directly

Approximately 90% of CAFOD's Ukraine response funding (18.1million) was directed to INGOs partners and sub-granted on to local partners with international affiliations

Transparency of partner selection decisions

Gaps in documentation, process and timely communication of partnership selection decisions impacted trust with some partners

Humanitarian governance processes

Limited documentation of early governance decisions by humanitarian committees meant it was not always possible to assess if fair processes had been followed. This exposed CAFOD to some reputational risk.

"They are never imposing their own ideas from their desk. Always trying to see the real needs on the ground. So I'm learning a lot... seeing how sensitive you can be in listening."

- Local implementing partner



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EVALUATION PURPOSE

The mid-term evaluation explored key learnings for CAFOD from the Ukraine response to inform future work, with particular focus on partnerships, capacity strengthening localisation and resource management.

APPROACH

Undertaken in July-September 2024, the evaluation leveraged the findings of existing reviews and evaluations of CAFOD funded programmes in Ukraine and added depth to the insights through additional key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a wide range of CAFOD partners, staff and stakeholders. The evaluation was limited in scope, it did not speak with community beneficiaries or assess attribution but did explore and seek to understand change pathways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time and insights from CAFOD partners, stakeholders and staff.

Special thank you to the supervision of the evaluation steering group who helped maximise the evaluation's relevance and utility.

CAFOD'S UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

The features differentiating CAFOD's approach from most INGOs

Capacity support breadth & depth

The wide breadth and tailoring of capacity support, driven by partner priorities, went beyond traditional programme areas and was much more effective than the conventional approach

Shared risk and accountability

Risks, accountability and administration were genuinely shared, enabling partners to focus better on implementation/ meeting needs

Flexible programming agreements

CAFOD's partnership agreements were trust-based and flexible, which made partners feel respected, and enabled them to better leverage their local knowledge and adapt to changes

Critical friend

Trusting relationships meant CAFOD's staff could be "critical friends", asking probing questions that were well received, helping partners deeply consider data or feedback and improve

Personality & philosophy of CAFOD staff

Partners commended the approach of specific individuals in the CAFOD Ukraine Response programme as exceptionally supportive or standout in their ability to build genuine, honest and collaborative working relationships.

RESULTS

Strengthened local capacity

Partners were more accepting of CAFOD's style of capacity support than top-down methods, which meant they absorbed and adopted more into their organisational culture and were operationally stronger as a result of CAFOD's support

Differentiated impact

Working with partners that have deep expertise reaching the homeless and forcibly displaced enabled CAFOD to reach different needs in different ways.

Programming continuously improved

Supportive coaching from CAFOD using SADI framework helped partners respond effectively to data/feedback and as a result programme quality has continuously improved

Partners used adaptive management for results

Flexibility and trust enabled partners to make adaptive changes efficiently to increase impact and better meet changing needs



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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

CAFOD's Ukraine Response demonstrated a number of best practices that can be shared and replicated in other responses, including:

PARTNERING PRINCIPLES

Two-way partnership reviews

In Ukraine, CAFOD developed tailored Partnership Principles which helped to build partners trust and alignment through greater transparency. CAFOD piloted running periodic partnership reviews as a mechanism for two way accountability. Partners found this enhanced the equity of the relationship.

ADVOCACY

Fostering local to global civil society coordination

CAFOD was a catalyst in helping local Ukraine civil society come together to formalise and coordinate in order to amplify their voices on locally-led response, for example supporting the formation of the Ukraine Alliance of CSOs and conferences on locally-led response. CAFOD helped propel these voices into national, regional and global forums using its networks and global advocacy platform. CAFOD formed an early strategic advocacy partnership with Caritas Ukraine who played an important leadership role as a spokesperson and ambassador for locally-led response.

PARTNERING & EFFECTIVENESS

Share and replicate successful practices tested in Ukraine

Such as:

- Tailored partnership principles
- Two-way periodic partnering reviews
- Broad and tailored approach to capacity supports

Strategic advocacy with DEC, members & other donors

Advocate for changes that allow members to better support localisation like reviewing UK spend caps and reducing administration requirements

Support partners' to become self-sustaining

Focus next phase on helping partners' mobilise resource, navigate declines and continue to care for staff

LEADERSHIP & PROCESS

Strengthen humanitarian governance and partner selection process

Establish protocols and process to improve documentation of response decisions making, including conflicts of interest and partner selections

Establish, share and revisit response strategy process at each response phase

Establish and revise the response strategy in collaboration with partners for each phase of the response to support adaptive management and transparency

Make partner selections transparent

When partnering arrangements involve large sums, be transparent, inform partners and align with best practice

ADVOCACY & LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Fund local organisations directly

To align with CAFOD's advocacy on localisation, the majority of its funds should be direct to local organisations

Support local partners' advocacy priorities

Help local partners' advocate develop and deliver their own advocacy priorities

Update financial procedures to align with Our Common Homes goals

Revise passporting and other financial procedures to make partnering with less experienced organisations more realistic using tailored financial risk management approaches/supports reflecting the partner capacity

Provide multi-year funding commitments

Test mechanisms for providing partners in recovery phase with indicative multi-year performance-based funding agreements

Expand partnerships to include diversity of local orgs beyond those with international affiliations

Reserve funds and staffing resources for piloting work with diverse local actors without international affiliations. This is key to long-term strengthening of local civil society, meeting diversity of needs, and disrupting the power dynamics that exclude grassroots and volunteer networks from international funding

