

Strengthening Capacities: CAFOD's vision to promote locally-led humanitarian response



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The number, scale and severity of humanitarian crises is posing a big challenge to the international humanitarian system's capacity to respond. The number of crisis-affected people dependant on humanitarian aid is growing as is the funding gap. At the forefront of the response are local organisations who are amongst the first ones to respond, have better knowledge of the context and better acceptance from the crisis affected communities. However, this local capacity is often undermined, ignored or overwhelmed by international humanitarian actors who fail to recognise their critical role, particularly in responding to large scale disasters.

CAFOD is committed to empower local partners and communities to be at the forefront of humanitarian response. This has always been the guiding tenet of CAFOD's partnership principles - that promote an increased and more prominent role for local and national actors. CAFOD has been actively engaged to influence the humanitarian system to enable more effective, efficient and locally-led humanitarian response through various advocacy initiatives like Charter4Change, Missed Opportunities research –supporting the case for localisation of aid besides establishment of [NEAR network](#) – a global network for local and national organisations.

Launch of the Humanitarian Capacity Development (HCD) Programme

In 2012, CAFOD identified capacity strengthening of partners as one of the key corporate priorities and established the Humanitarian Capacity Development (HCD) programme. This pioneering initiative responds to the call made in the Humanitarian Emergency Response Review¹ and in the broader humanitarian sector, to "improve the strategic, political and

¹ 28 March 2011 Chaired by Lord (Paddy) Ashdown

operational leadership of the international humanitarian system," with a particular focus on the global south.

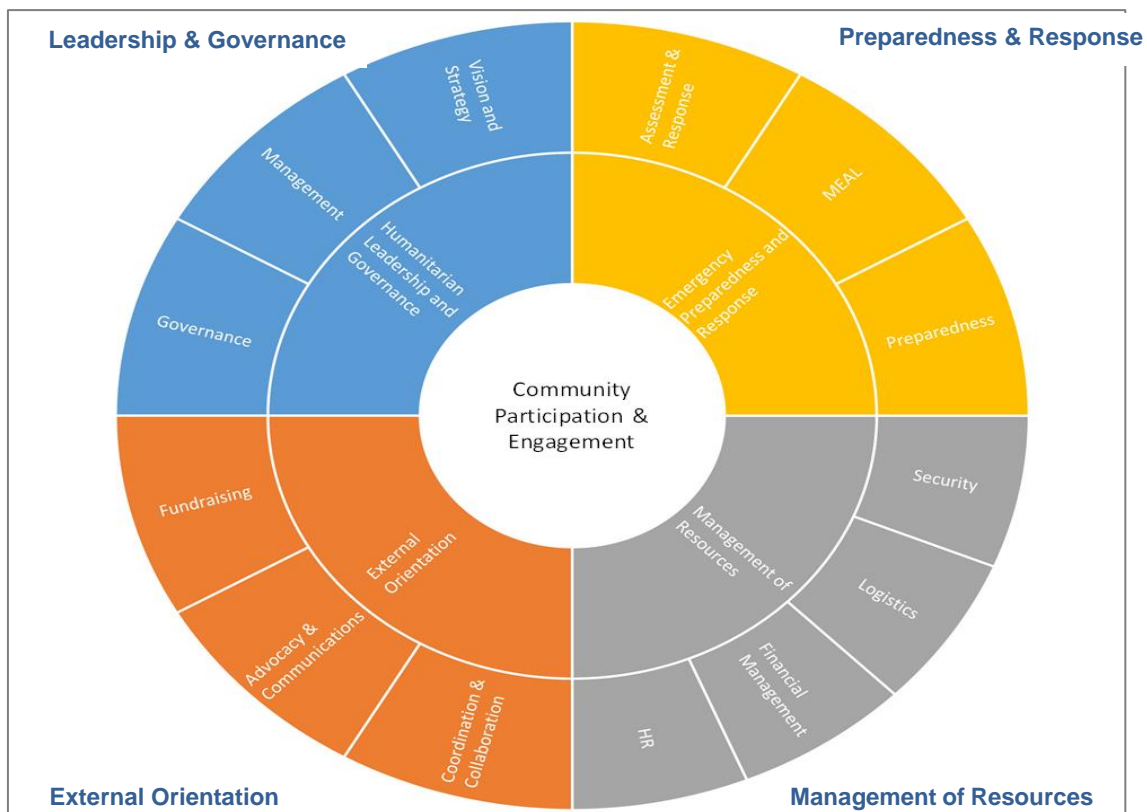
The programme puts affected communities and their participation and engagement in humanitarian response at the centre. It looks at how a quality response can be achieved if the organisation has the required capacity at both the structural and programmatic level. Each partner is supported by a Humanitarian Capacity Development Officer (HCDO) – whose main role is to accompany the selected partner organisations through their "journey of organisational change" – so that the partner is able to plan and deliver emergency responses with minimal external support. Support is provided in a variety of ways, which include partner capacity self-assessments, learning and training sessions, and various types of external technical support. HCDOs are expected to act as coaches and mentors, facilitating support from other organisations and to act as "a critical friend" to the partners.

The Programme Approach

The HCD programme approach is in contrast to one-size fits-all thinking and promotes flexibility and self-determination by partners. The journey of organisational change begins with initial contact with the partner in order to gauge ownership and ensure commitment. This is followed up by gaining a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and supported by an in-depth 3-day participatory self-assessment process facilitated by the HCDO, based on the HCD framework, which establishes the HCD baseline.

The Capacity Development Journey

The self-assessment facilitated by the HCDO helps unpack a range of organisational issues falling under four areas of organisational capacity:




The performance of the organisation in each competency domain is measured against a set of indicators that help in identifying organisation’s strengths and areas of improvement. With the help of guiding questions and examples of evidence, the organisation self-assesses its performance in each competency domain and attributes a score for each indicator according to a level of achievement that progresses from 0 (no achievement at all) to 5 (level of excellence that goes beyond mere compliance). The final scores are then entered in a self-assessment tool that generates an average percentage score of all indicators in each competency domain, a final overall percentage score of the organisation’s performance as well as a percentage score of how the organisation ensures community’s participation and engagement.

Following the self-assessment process, a detailed capacity development support plan is formulated which leads to a formal collaboration agreement between the partner and CAFOD. Concrete actions are planned, including dialogue around how best to address the priority competency areas.

Achievements so far...

In its pilot phase, the programme worked with 15 local organisations in eight countries (Mozambique, Niger, Kenya, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Myanmar, and Cambodia). The partners include national and diocesan Caritas as well as secular organisations/ NGOs some of which have had emergency experiences, others with limited or no humanitarian response experience.

Nairobi-based HCD Officer James Jirm Galgallo helped three local partners in **Kenya** to define their vision and strengthen their financial and human resource systems – which in turn increased the opportunities for these organisations to access a wider range of donor funding than was previously available to them. Before the CAFOD intervention, all three partners were experiencing issues relating to their organisation’s leadership and senior management, and they lacked concrete strategic guidance and direction. There were also gaps in their capacity to raise funds on their own behalf, which was entrenching their dependence on partners to support programmes and projects.

Kenya	Caritas Isiolo
Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HCD Assessment identified a need for leadership and strategic management competence; lack of collaboration with external agencies; weak HR framework and lack of appropriate emergency preparedness as the underlying issues for the organisation.
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed Emergency preparedness Plan and a HR Manual • Developed Organisational Strategic Plan (2015-2020) • Active participation in County level emergency response planning & joint assessments with other organisations • Member of County Peace forum; County DRR Technical Working Group & County Nutrition Technical Forum
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCD programme has enabled Caritas Isiolo to focus their energy to develop a vision for the organisation, join hands with other Caritas organisations to garner financial support and increased confidence within employees due to improved HR structure and strengthened leadership.
	

Provision of an accompaniment by CAFOD based in Isiolo has developed trust of staff, increased confidence, met their aspirations, created a clearer picture of the situation on the ground, and wider acceptance by the diocesan management, including the Bishop (Caritas Isiolo – Kenya)

In the DRC, the backdrop to the programme was even more challenging. The HCD programme intervention involved three partners spread across the eastern regions of the country. For the past two decades, this part of the DRC has seen high levels of conflict, and continues to be affected by the presence of a number of armed groups. The poor state of infrastructure also makes it difficult to travel to remote programme locations within the region. Even though our partners in the eastern DRC had been responding to emergencies for many years, they had never developed the types of internal systems and formal processes that appeal to institutional donors and other major INGOs. The HCDO for this region, Gilbert (based out of CAFOD’s Goma office), helped partners through a review of their structures and policies. This led to better funding prospects (such as START Funding) and opportunities to help a greater number of people affected by crisis in the region.

The el Niño crisis has led to a spike in humanitarian needs around the world. One of the hardest-hit regions of the world was Zimbabwe, where millions of people are being affected by drought and food shortages. CAFOD has a strong country presence in a number of diocese in Zimbabwe, where HCD Officer Luckson Mashiri (working out of our Harare office) helped our partner Caritas Masvingo to improve their needs assessment capacity. This partner can now undertake comprehensive needs assessment and contribute to wider relief efforts. When Caritas Zimbabwe launched their el Niño Emergency Appeal earlier this year, the programme proposal incorporated the outcomes of Caritas Masvingo’s assessments – facilitated as part of the HCD programme support.

Zimbabwe	Caritas Harare
Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caritas Harare was responding to various emergency crises without any strategy or plan to inform the response. Role of staff during emergencies was not clear and not aligned with their job descriptions besides a lack of strong performance management system.
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical support and training provided to strengthen HR processes. • Developed an induction package/ JDs reviewed and revised. • Workshop and simulations facilitated to design the emergency preparedness plan. • Training and technical support provided to establish a complaints handling mechanism.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through continuous support from the HCD Officer, the organisation has now realised the importance of being prepared to respond to emergencies and have an increased confidence to respond to all the likely emergency scenarios. The organisation has also established a complaints handling mechanism which has helped to strengthen its relationship with the community and the local authority.

Similar achievements have been made in Myanmar, Malawi, Mozambique and Cambodia where support of HCD programme provided our partners an opportunity to strengthen their ability to respond to humanitarian crises.

In 2015, there was an independent evaluation of the programme which highlighted that the HCD programme was successful in initiating self-driven change in partner organisations through the use of self-analysis at various levels. It also called the programme as “.....both innovative and bold, having ventured into support areas where there are less available scripts to follow, and with a high emphasis on the self-assessments by partners, which remains a defining, unique aspect”. The evaluation also highlighted how HCD programme had generated interest from many different stakeholders – including the START Shifting the Power (STP) project, which based their organisational capacity strengthening framework on key elements of the HCD framework and overall experience. The evaluation made some key recommendations – which have been largely welcomed by CAFOD and have been used to design of the second phase of the programme.

The HCD programme has assisted us to improve our corporate governance, financial and programming systems. At first I was really wondering why we were being involved as all staff but in the end I appreciated the whole experience. Group exercises were great including the emergency simulations and Board governance training was such an eye opener. (Caritas Harare - Zimbabwe)

HCD Programme-Moving forward

CAFOD will continue to empower partners to lead the process, supporting them to plan how they will build the systems, skills and leadership necessary for emergency response. In March 2016, CAFOD conducted an [independent evaluation](#) of the programme and has already adjusted the programme approach based on the evaluation recommendations. Please read the detailed management response to the evaluation [here](#).

The HCD programme has now expanded its support to more partners, redefined the programme approach based on the recommendations from the evaluation and aligned the programme framework with the [Core Humanitarian Standards\(CHS\)](#), CAFOD’s protection mainstreaming framework and [Caritas Internationalis Management Standards](#). CAFOD is also collaborating with other CI Member organisations and other stakeholders to harmonise support to partners, run joint learning programmes, develop common approaches and tools. CAFOD will continue to invest in partner capacity strengthening – as the action has a dual impact, firstly as an approach to increase the breadth of responding to humanitarian needs and secondly as an approach to move closer towards the vision of localisation of humanitarian response.

For further details on CAFOD’s Humanitarian Capacity Development programme, or the organisation’s emergency response programming generally, please contact us at ergcentralcontact@cafod.org.uk.