



FINAL REPORT EVALUATION OF CAFOD'S AFGHANISTAN CRISIS RESPONSE PROGRAMME, 2022-23



FGD, Nazar Baig Village, District Yangi Qala, Takhar



Shah Toot village, Namak Ab District, Takhar



Shah Toot village, Namak Ab District, Takhar



FGD, Langar Olia Village, District Khoram Wa Sarbagh, Samangan

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
DFA	De-facto Authorities
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSAC	Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
HH	Household
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organizations
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KII	Key Informant Interview
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
NFIs	Non-Food Items
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSDO	Navid Social Development Organization
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
TORs	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNOCHA	UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The change of government in Afghanistan in August 2021 following months of violent conflict led to mass displacement and loss of life and livelihoods. The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) projected in December 2021 that in 2022, 22.8 million Afghans (55% of the population) would experience crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity. Since then, despite significant volumes of emergency assistance, there has been little improvement in the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. In response to the crisis, the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) launched an emergency appeal for funds to the public in December 2021 (<https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/afghanistan-crisis-appeal>). CAFOD also made funding available from its own Afghanistan Crisis Appeal. CAFOD's DEC-funded response has been implemented in two phases, beginning in December 2021, in partnership with an international agency (main partner henceforth), which worked through four local implementing partners. Phase one of the response targeted Samangan, Takhar and Daikundi provinces that were heavily affected by drought, conflict, and food insecurity. The second phase in the same provinces included a greater focus on resilience-building through cash for work activities. In July 2023, external factors prevented the main partner's local partners from working in Daikundi. CAFOD funded another partner for a food aid project in Balkh, using the remaining DEC funds. Meanwhile, CAFOD's broader Afghanistan appeal has supported emergency projects implemented by seven of CAFOD's national and international partners working in Afghanistan, which have focused on cash, food, non-food items, resilience, water and sanitation work.

Evaluation Overview

The purpose of the evaluation is to reflect on the programme, learn lessons, and ensure accountability to donors, partners and project participants. The key objectives are: i) To objectively assess effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability; ii) To assess how projects engaged the affected population and the application/adherence to commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standards and SPHERE standards, and other National clusters standards like Cash and Voucher Working Group and FSAC; iii) To identify examples of good practices, challenges, lessons learned and critical gaps in the project implementation with the focus of providing recommendations for programme quality improvement in future project, as well as for general organizational learning, iv) To reflect on CAFOD's wider programme and portfolio in terms of complementarity, ultimate impact of the programme and the changes it made to the lives of project participants, and its alignment with and contribution to the strategic objectives of CAFOD's response and how these in turn supported the strategic objectives of CAFOD's long-term Afghanistan programme, v) To evaluate the efficacy of CAFOD partnership approach and model and added value in supporting the response, the impact of the response for partners' organizations, the extent to which partnerships were transformational and had lasting impacts, and the extent to which CAFOD's programming was supportive of partners' strategic directions; vi) To evaluate the response of CAFOD and CAFOD's partners in the emergency appeal, to changes in the political context and the dilemmas these posed for ethical and effective programming, and to identify specific lessons for CAFOD's future work with partners in the challenging context in Afghanistan.

The review used the four humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity¹ and the nine CHS commitments as the main pillars of its analytical framework. In addition, the review integrated the following standards and frameworks at the sub-questions level or as additional dimensions to guide the analysis: External challenges and advocacy, visibility, and access issues; Grand Bargain Commitments; Sphere standards; and Do No Harm/Safeguarding.

¹ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/who/european-consensus_en

The review team developed a light and flexible information collection approach which included a documents review, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with six CAFOD and 28 partner staff, twenty (12 with men and eight with women) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and a household survey with 237 men and 244 women in Balkh, Samangan, Takhar and Daikundi. The field work focused on DEC-funded work with the exception of Balkh which included two projects implemented through CAFOD funds (088 and 090). The evaluators took steps to ensure that the review respects and protects the rights and welfare of the people and communities involved and to ensure that the review is technically accurate and reliable, is conducted in a transparent and impartial manner, and contributes to organizational learning and accountability. The review team also adhered to the NGO and CAFOD Codes of Conduct². The key challenges faced during the evaluation included delays in permission for the evaluation from national and provincial authorities; problems in transferring funds to Afghanistan due to global financial restrictions on Afghanistan; the rough terrain during the winter that made the movement of local evaluation teams in the communities difficult and time-consuming; initial problems in hiring female enumerators; and high levels of illiteracy, particularly among women.

Findings

The analysis during the evaluation on the nine CHS commitments and other issues shows that the CAFOD response has largely been relevant, timely, efficient, and effective. The key conclusions for the CHS standards and other key issues reviewed were as follows:

CHS 1: Appropriate and relevant aid

All the projects focused on the most vulnerable groups in communities. However, the focus on the most vulnerable regions, communities and families must be documented more clearly in needs assessment reports and proposals to ensure transparency and accountability, especially CAFOD-funded national partners.

CHS 2: Timely and effective aid.

There were some delays in some communities in receiving time-bound services such as support for kitchen gardening for women due to late approvals by authorities. Following the global financial restrictions faced after the fall of the Ghani regime, partners faced delays in transferring funds to Afghanistan. Some delays also occurred due to lack of agency emergency preparedness plans among both DEC and CAFOD-funded partners, time required to develop consensus on programming and the lack of clear policies on using alternative funds transfer options.

CHS 3: Do-no-harm and increased resilience.

Both DEC and CAFOD funded partners have strong safeguarding policies and communities largely reported no harm to them from project work. There were conflicts in one DEC-funded province with non-recipient families which suggests the need for clear selection criteria and their communication. The different projects helped communities become more resilient against future emergencies, e.g., flood mitigation structures and drought-resistance income activities such as in DEC funded projects. However, given their high vulnerability to multiple hazards, much more DRR work is needed to build their resilience to future shocks.

CHS 4: Access to information, communication and participation.

² <https://www.ifrc.org/our-promise/do-good/code-conduct-movement-ngos>

The establishment of community-based organizations helped immensely in mobilizing communities, helping in identifying the most deserving beneficiaries, assisting in distribution of services, maintaining project infrastructure and resolving problems. In all provinces the majority of respondents expressed at least partial satisfaction on “Access to Rights, Information and Participation.” A key FGD observation was that after the start of the project and formation of village committees, interaction of agencies with the rest of the community decreased considerably though committees kept them informed. Men and women expressed similar levels of satisfaction with participation across all provinces.

CHS 5: Access to complaint mechanisms

Household survey responses on complaint mechanisms reveal satisfaction in all provinces across both men and women though most men in Takhar expressed dissatisfaction with the redressal of their complaints which mainly related to inadequate aid due to budget constraints. People were usually more satisfied where multiple complaint methods were instituted, as in DEC projects. Thus, some improvements are needed in terms of use of multiple channels of complaints, and summarizing, and analyzing complaints. Finally, it is also critical to make people aware about the broad range of issues that they can make complaints on, including gender and inclusion, community respect and dignity, technical standards and quality issues so that the complaints are not just focused on delays, inadequacy and non-provision.

CHS 6: Coordinated and complementary assistance

The UN-led working groups in Kabul and provinces are the main platform for coordination on technical, logistical, informational and strategic issues of relevance for all aid agencies. The other key platform is ACBAR which is a national, independent, non-government organization (NGO). Partners used these platforms for identifying pressing needs and ensuring geographical coordination. However, in terms of gaining access and approval from the authorities, partners were still largely on their own. More engagement among CAFOD partners for information sharing, joint programming and capacity building and representation could help improve programme quality and reduce costs. At least two-thirds of both men and women in all provinces reported no duplication or lack of coordination among different agencies in the household survey while the rest reported some issues, such as on differing aid amounts.

CHS 7: Organizations learn from experience and reflection

Most agencies extensively used their learning from past programming in Afghanistan to inform their current response. With respect to documenting learning from the current crisis for the future, many partners undertook written learning exercises, especially national partners funded by CAFOD appeal, a summary of key learnings being as follows: importance of accurate beneficiary selection, community mobilization, strong coordination and use of effective complaint mechanisms. However, more systematic attention to learning issues by using globally used approaches such as those under CHS may help improve the quality of partners’ learning activities. Community-level data shows that there seems to be a need to monitor changing needs in communities more closely and make changes in project work accordingly.

CHS 8: Competent and well-managed staff and volunteers

CAFOD partners have all still managed to retain competent and skilled Afghan staff despite a large exodus of staff abroad after the fall of the Ghani regime. A key challenge has been in recruiting women staff after the ban imposed on women from working in the aid sector in 2022. CAFOD partners have all worked creatively to still retain their women staff. At the Kabul level, women staff work remotely and come to office occasionally. At the field level, field female staff don’t come to the office and go straight to the field accompanied by a close male relative. Communities were happy with the quality of staff and their competence. There is a need to have staff with adequate linguistic skills to work with Uzbek and Pushto-speaking communities among all partners.

CHS 9: Managing resources effectively, efficiently, and ethically

The global restrictions imposed on Afghanistan after the fall of the Ghani regime led to delays of several months initially until CAFOD was able to develop alternative fund transfer modalities. There are also restrictions imposed by the authorities on the amounts that agencies can withdraw from banks within a month and cumbersome financial reporting requirements. Finally, some agencies also reported pressure from some government officials, often those retained from the last regime, to offer them bribes in return for obtaining work authorizations. The vast majority of men and women in all provinces were highly satisfied that there was no wastage of resources or misuse of funds. The funds were used well and spending was near 100% on DEC projects and all targeted outcomes were achieved

CAFOD partnerships

Given the shortage of high-capacity local partners and CAFOD's global emphasis on working through local partners, it has developed a strategy to respond to the 2021 crisis that strikes a balance between ensuring a rapid and large response to the huge crisis by working through its main partner for the larger DEC funds and working through local partners for CAFOD's own funds and building their capacity. CAFOD gives space to implementing partners in identifying programme areas and strategies in line with the CAFOD partnership principles of shared partnership objectives, equitable relationships, subsidiarity and participation. CAFOD requires national implementing partners to get major programme decisions such as procurement, programme areas and beneficiary selection, approved by CAFOD. In a few cases, some delays were reported by CAFOD-funded staff during a crisis. The longer-term national partners also mentioned the extensive capacity-building that CAFOD had undertaken for them in the past. However, given the high dislocation and high staff turnover since the crisis, the national partners especially all expressed the need for further capacity-building in key areas like accountability and climate-resilient work.

Based on the conclusions provided above, a few key recommendations are presented to CAFOD for implementation with its key partners in Afghanistan under the different CHS standards:

CHS 1: Ensuring focus on the most priority needs of the vulnerable groups

1. Provide technical assistance to the implementing partners, especially the smaller national ones funded through CAFOD funds, to undertake in-depth assessments and analysis to ensure a focus on the most vulnerable regions, communities and families and document their outcomes in detail in needs assessment reports and proposals to ensure transparency and accountability.
2. Encourage partners to prioritize community projects with long-term benefits, such as providing equipment for livelihoods (e.g., carpentry tools, tailoring machines, wheelbarrows, or livestock) rather than short-term food packages; address the urgent need for basic health clinics in villages with difficult terrain and remote locations to ensure timely access to medical treatment directly or through referrals; tailor the kitchen gardening component of the programme to be more effective in semi-urban areas, where beneficiaries can sell their produce in vegetable markets; consider alternative solutions for rural areas with limited market access.

CHS 2: Ensuring timely and effective aid through emergency preparedness plans

3. Develop detailed emergency preparedness plans in partnerships with key long-term emergency partners and communities that include a clear identification of key partners, key programme modalities, approaches and sectors; clear policies on using alternative funds transfer options and other key programme and programme support issues to ensure timely and effective aid. Provide help particularly to the smaller national partners in this regard.
4. Distribute goods, services, or aid directly to beneficiaries' villages, avoiding placement in other villages or district centers to alleviate travel burdens on vulnerable populations.

CHS 3: Increasing community resilience through climate smart resilience work

1. Develop a long-term resilience programme along with key partners to strengthen the resilience of communities and reduce their vulnerability to disasters covering aspects such as establishment and capacity-building of community resilience committees, early warning systems, construction of community infrastructure and strengthening of climate-smart and disaster-resilient livelihoods options. Activities could include building water harvesting channels, protection walls, and training communities on community-level disaster preparedness.

CHS 5: Enhancing the effectiveness of complaint mechanisms

5. Provide technical assistance to partners to develop complaint mechanisms which provide multiple channels of complaints; summarize and analyze complaints for review by senior management and CAFOD to ensure that complaints made to the organizations are monitored by senior managers and donors to guarantee proper and attentive resolution; make people aware about the broad range of issues that they can make complaints on, including gender and inclusion, community respect and dignity, technical standards and quality issues so that the complaints are not just focused on delays and non-provision; and encourage beneficiaries and community members to voice complaints and suggestions with confidence that their feedback is confidential and will not adversely affect them.

CHS 6: Improving coordination among CAFOD partners

6. Encourage more collaboration among CAFOD partners for information sharing, joint needs assessments and programming, capacity building and representation to improve quality and reduce costs for all partners, especially in Kabul where almost all partners are based.

CHS 7: Encouraging the use of more systematic learning and monitoring by partners

7. Provide technical assistance to partners to give more systematic attention to learning issues by using global approaches that may help improve the quality of partners' learning and monitoring activities and ensure greater convergence in the quality of learning activities undertaken by different partners using CHS guidelines.

CHS 8: Deploying staff with appropriate language skills

8. Encourage partners to deploy project staff who speak the language of the majority in specific communities, especially in Uzbek and Pushto speaking communities.

CAFOD partnerships

9. Develop clear timelines for providing feedback and approvals to partners on key project decisions during emergencies and track adherence to it.
10. Given the high staff turnover since the crisis, develop a comprehensive plan for national partners for further capacity-building in key programme areas based on a detailed needs assessment.

CHAPTER I: EVALUATION BACKGROUND

I.1 EMERGENCY OVERVIEW

On 15th August 2021, Taliban forces seized control of the Afghan government, following months of violent conflict across the country that led to mass displacement and loss of life and livelihoods. By the end of 2021, the convergence of conflict, drought and COVID-19 had left thousands of people in Afghanistan unable to meet their basic needs and get through the winter with dignity. In December 2021, the United Nations (UN) Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) projected that in 2022, 22.8 million Afghans (55% of the population) would experience crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity. Since that time, despite significant volumes of emergency assistance, there has been little improvement in the humanitarian situation facing Afghanistan.

I.2 OVERVIEW OF CAFOD RESPONSE

In response to the crisis, the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) launched an emergency appeal for funds to the public in December 2021. CAFOD's DEC-funded response to the Afghanistan Crisis has been implemented in two phases, beginning in December 2021, in partnership with its main partner, which worked through four local implementing partners. Phase one of the response targeted Samangan, Takhar and Daikundi, provinces heavily affected by drought, conflict, and food insecurity. The second phase, implemented in the same provinces with the same partners, broadened to include a greater focus on resilience-building – through cash for work activities (focusing on projects developing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), irrigation and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure), In July 2023, following contextual changes that prevented the main partner's local partners from continuing to work in Daikundi province, CAFOD identified an alternative partner to absorb the remaining unspent funds. CAFOD therefore agreed with another agency Afghanistan that they would complete a short-term food distribution project in the final five months to December 2023 in Balkh province, using the remaining DEC funds. Meanwhile, CAFOD also made funding available from its own CAFOD Afghanistan Crisis Appeal. CAFOD's broader Afghanistan appeal has supported emergency projects implemented by a range of CAFOD's national and international partners working in Afghanistan. Table I provides an overview of the CAFOD programmes from both DEC and its own appeal funds:

Table I: Overview of CAFOD Programmes

Project Name/Budget-	Sectors	Provinces
AFG079 GBP 1,833,159	Cash for work (focusing on projects targeting DRR and irrigation and WASH infrastructure), Kitchen gardening support for women; Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) for women & people with disabilities. Hygiene awareness and hygiene kits and preparation of urea treatment for ruminant animal in Daikundi	Takhar and Samangan
AFG 084: GBP 926,185	Winterization cash (260 USD per Household (HH)), cash for food (180 USD per HH), 11,388 bars of soap (6 bars per HH) and awareness sessions on COVID-19 and sanitation, to a total of 1,898 HHs in 93 communities.	Samangan, Daikundi and Takhar
AFG098 GBP 277,710	1,695 women received training on safeguarding and nutrition, and 2 months' worth of Food Security and Agriculture Cluster (FSAC) standard food baskets.	Balkh
CAFOD Appeal-Funded		
AFG078:	Cash for food and essential needs of 400 HHs. Priority was given to women-headed households,	Paktika

\$159,000	widows, PWDs, households with orphans and large families. 15 July, 2022 to 15 February, 2023	
AFG 080 \$41,775	350 households (2,450 people) with food distributions; Jan - Mar 2022	Balkh
AFG081 \$264,000	Emergency cash assistance to about 943 households (approximately 6,600 people) 02/11/2021 – 31/01/2022	Herat
AFG083 GBP 23,600 (CAFOD)	Cash for food to 675 HHs; 42 HHs were also paid cash for work to construct a protection wall and clean irrigation canals. 15-Nov-2021 to 31-05-2022	Nangarhar
AFG087: \$51,444	Food parcels and hygiene kits vouchers to 25 families in each province. Vouchers for winterization, Non-Food Items (NFIs) (e.g., winter clothing and blankets. Participants also received MPCA for other expenses. Capacity building for women on women's rights under Sharia law. 20-Sep-22 to 20-Jan-23	Bamyan and Kunduz
AFG088: \$200,000	1,625 HHs (11,375 people) received a food basket or cash, based on FSAC standards. Mar-Aug 2022	Balkh
AFG089 \$75,000	Hygiene kits and hygiene promotion sessions; menstrual hygiene management (MHM) trainings; training for lactating and pregnant women on infant and child nutrition/hygienic practices for breastfeeding. 1 March to 31 May 2022	Patika/earthquake-July 2022
AFG090 \$97,097 (CAFOD)	Unconditional cash peace building workshops for 490 household heads. 01/11/2022 Up to 01/11/2023	Balkh and Herat
AFG093: \$85,150	450 households received food and winterization packages; 1st November 2022 to 31st January 2023	Balkh

CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION OVERVIEW

2.1 PURPOSE AND AIMS

The purpose of the evaluation is to reflect on the programme, learn lessons, and ensure accountability to donors, partners and project participants. The evaluation will assess the implementation and results vis-à-vis the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) criteria and Core Humanitarian Standards, as well as more specific questions relating to CAFOD's ways of working with partners and success in meeting the objectives of the appeal. Findings of the appeal are intended to inform future programming. Key objectives:

- I. To objectively assess effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact and sustainability,

2. To assess how projects engaged the affected population and the application/adherence to commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standards and SPHERE standards, and other National clusters standards like Cash and Voucher Working Group and FSAC,
3. To identify examples of good practices, challenges, lessons learned and critical gaps in the project implementation with the focus of providing recommendations for programme quality improvement in future project, as well as for general organizational learning,
4. To reflect on CAFOD's wider programme and portfolio in terms of complementarity, ultimate impact of the programme and the changes it made to the lives of project participants, and its alignment with and contribution to the strategic objectives of CAFOD's response and how these in turn supported the strategic objectives of CAFOD's long-term Afghanistan programme,
5. To evaluate the efficacy of CAFOD partnership approach and model and added value in supporting the response, the impact of the response for partners' organizations, the extent to which partnerships were transformational and had lasting impacts, and the extent to which CAFOD's programming was supportive of partners' strategic directions;
6. To evaluate the response of CAFOD's partners in the emergency appeal, to changes in the political context and the dilemmas these posed for ethical and effective programming, and to identify specific lessons for CAFOD's future work with partners in the challenging context in Afghanistan.

The following is a list of suggested questions and outlines linkages between the nine Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) quality criteria and the seven OECD-DAC criteria. These questions were further refined in consultation with the evaluation stakeholders with an aim to identify priority questions.

DEC project priority questions	CAFOD appeal priority questions
<p>CHS 1: was the assistance provided appropriate and relevant?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent was the project relevant to target groups' needs and priorities? - How did the projects adapt to local and political characteristics of the context? - To what extent did the project assess risks and vulnerabilities of the target population and aid corresponding to the assessed vulnerabilities and needs? 	<p>To what extent are CAFOD and partners reaching the poorest, most vulnerable and most marginalised, with an emphasis on gender justice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is this support relevant to participants' needs and adapted to the local cultural political characteristics in the context? - To what extent did the projects assess risk and vulnerabilities of the target populations and aid corresponding to these needs and vulnerabilities? - To what extent do partners feel that CAFOD are supporting them to engage safely and meaningfully with women in the CAFOD appeal-funded response in Afghanistan, and adapt to the changing context? <p>- To what extent is CAFOD's emergency response in Afghanistan coherent with or linked to longer-term development response and strategies – fostering a holistic approach to response and recovery?</p> <p>- To what extent were the projects aligned with the policies and strategies of CAFOD and partners and building on their ongoing strategic aims in Afghanistan?</p>
<p>CHS 2: was the response effective and timely?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent did the project achieve its planned objectives and outcomes? Which objectives (if any) were not met and why? - How could the project's approaches and strategies have been improved to achieve expected results? - Were the resources and inputs converted to outputs in a timely and cost-effective manner? 	<p>Has the response through the CAFOD-funded appeal been effective and timely and achieved its intended impact?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What difference have the projects made to the project participants? - To what extent are the project results likely to continue after the end of the projects? - How could this be improved?

<p>CHS 3: did the response strengthen capacity and avoid negative effects?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent, and how were local capacities of partners and communities strengthened by the project? - To what extent, and how, were negative effects to the environment anticipated, identified and mitigated? - Did the project have unanticipated negative effects observed on its participants? What were they and how did they affect participants? 	<p>Have CAFOD's appeal-funded projects helped to strengthen capacity and avoid negative effects?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent, and how were local capacities of partners and communities strengthened by the project? - To what extent, and how, were negative effects to the environment anticipated, identified and mitigated? - Did the project have unanticipated negative effects observed on its participants? What were they and how did they affect participants? - To what extent has CAFOD been able to strengthen partner capacities to manage safe and dignified humanitarian programmes?
<p>CHS 4 – Was the response based on communication, participation and feedback?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were the community engagement strategies (communication, participation and feedback loops) relevant and appropriate to the context? - Did the community members feel that they were consulted and engaged during design, implementation and monitoring? Were community members provided with information regarding the results of the project? Did community members feel any level of ownership in the projects and their outcomes? 	
<p>CHS 5: Were complaints welcomed and addressed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were the complaints mechanisms relevant and appropriate to the context? Did community members use the complaints mechanisms? Were there any barriers to using the complaints mechanisms, and if so, are there other ways community members may feel more comfortable giving feedback? - To what extent were the complaints mechanisms implemented, effective and timely? 	
<p>CHS 6 – was the response coordinated and complementary?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were the coordination architecture and the collaborative strategies relevant to the context and effective? - To what extent did partnerships create synergies and opportunities for resource sharing in the delivery of assistance? - Were there any gaps in the coordination of the response? 	<p>To what extent did CAFOD's wider programme reflect coordination with a broad range of appropriate partners and projects?</p>
<p>CHS 7: Are the actors in the response continuously learning and improving?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent did project design incorporate previous experience from the context and global lessons learnt? - To what extent did the monitoring and evaluation systems support reflection and learning during project implementation? Did learning lead to any adjustments or improvements in the projects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent did the monitoring and evaluation systems support reflection and learning during project implementation? Did learning lead to any adjustments or improvements in the projects? - To what extent did the response proactively share lessons learned and best practices with other actors?
<p>CHS 8 – Are staff supported to do their job effectively and are they treated fairly and equitably?</p>	<p>Are staff supported to do their job effectively and are they treated fairly and equitably?</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were staff expertise and competencies adequate to implement the project? - How were staff supported to improve their capacity or supported to strengthen the response? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were staff expertise and competencies adequate to implement the project? - How were staff supported to improve their capacity or supported to strengthen the response?
<p>CHS 9- were resources managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent were strategies and approaches cost-effective? Would other strategies achieve better results for the same costs? 	

2.2 **OVERALL REVIEW FRAMEWORK**

The review methodology was guided by the following principles for real-time reviews and learning during major emergencies:

- Appreciative inquiry and listening deeply and respectfully.
- Participatory approaches, especially towards those usually not heard and most marginalized.
- Sensitivity, confidentiality, objectivity and respecting agencies' time and constraints.
- Building on and eliciting existing tacit and formal knowledge.
- Pro-active, experimental, flexible and adaptive.
- Rapid, actionable learning as the main objective that helps to capture individual staff and agency learning to inform the wider network.
- Focus on processes and critical events affecting the response.
- Provide safe spaces for staff to pause, reflect and share.
- Provide practical, replicable and flexible recommendations

The methodology also reflected the following contextual challenges:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of partners • Geographical spread of staff across Afghanistan and globally • Multiple field provinces in a logistically difficult country • Multiple review sub-teams for different provinces • Unique social, political and security challenges in Afghanistan |
|--|

The review used the four humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity³ and the nine CHS commitments as the main pillars of its analytical framework for guiding the review as follows:

1. Communities receive relevant and appropriate aid.
2. Communities receive timely and effective aid.
3. Communities are not harmed & made more resilient.
4. Communities have access to rights, information, and participation.
5. Communities have access to complaint mechanisms.
6. Communities get coordinated and complementary assistance.
7. Agencies improve aid through learning.
8. Communities get assistance from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.
9. Organizations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently, and ethically.

³ https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/who/european-consensus_en

In addition, the review integrated the following standards and frameworks at the sub-questions level or as additional dimensions to guide the analysis:

- External challenges and advocacy, visibility, and access issues.
- Grand Bargain Commitments.
- Sphere standards.
- Do No Harm/Safeguarding issues

2.3 **REVIEW METHODOLOGY**

The review team used the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) learning and Real Time Evaluation (RTE) guidelines⁴, the Good Enough Guidelines⁵ and other real-time review guidelines to develop a light and flexible information collection approach. The tools for the evaluation included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and household surveys. The review took a constructive and **participatory approach** to engaging programme staff and other key informants (including the programme beneficiaries, partner organizations and relevant government agencies).

1) **Review of documents**

The evaluation team went through a large body of CAFOD and partner proposals, progress reports, monitoring and accountability data and other reports related to this crisis. Since the field-level primary data collection was undertaken for only a few partners due to time and budgetary constraints, the evaluation relied especially on such documents review and staff interviews to review the work of the remaining partners according to the evaluation criteria.

2) **Key informant interviews**

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were held with CAFOD staff online and face to face with Afghanistan-based partner staff individually or in groups. For face to face interviews, the Team Leader visited Kabul from November 4-9, 2023 to hold half-day group interviews with each of the eight direct CAFOD partners. On the fifth day, a joint meeting was held with the downstream Caritas partners. The KIIs focused on the following issues:

- Plans and assessments
- Progress to-date
- What worked well and what are Challenges
- Future plans
- Collection of additional documents

The summary of KIIs is as follows:

• CAFOD staff	6
• Partner staff	28
Total	34

The community-level primary data collection covered the following projects and partners.

⁴ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/real-time-evaluations-of-humanitarian-action-an-alnap-guide>

⁵ <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/good-enough-guide-impact-measurement-and-accountability-in-emergencies>

Table 2: Projects Covered Under Primary Field Work

Provinces	Project Codes
Balkh	088-CAFOD-funded
Balkh	090-CAFOD-funded
Samangan	079, 084-DEC-funded
Takhar	079, 084-DEC-funded
Daikundi	079, 084-DEC-funded

Thus, Balkh data does not cover DEC funds. Extensive participatory exercises were held with communities. Each data collection exercise began after explaining the purpose of the review to the communities and obtaining the participants' informed consent and were conducted in local languages (Push-to and Dari). The data collection was conducted by Navid Social Development Organization (NSDO) directly in Balkh, Samangan and Takhar while in Daikundi it was done by the monitoring staff of Caritas's local implementing partners based on guidelines provided by NSDO. The responses to the household survey from there are much more positive along most questions and as such the result may be viewed with some caution.

3) **Right-holders' Survey**

A survey was conducted with household adults focused on "what and when" issues related to each review dimension and sub-dimensions. Various social categories such as gender, religion, age, disabilities, and displacement status were equitably covered in the sample. Around 100-120 interviews were conducted for each province, divided between males and females and other social categories based on convenience sampling. The survey provided "yes/no" or Likert-scale responses of right-holders' perceptions on multiple items on each review dimension. The key issues covered related to the nine CHS standards and some additional issues. The team used Computer Assisted Personal interviewing method using SurveyCTO Collect offline collection through mobile or tablets.

4) **Focus Group Discussions**

Open-ended Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held face-to-face in secure locations in communities to ensure privacy. Beneficiaries covering all the socio-economic categories were be selected through convenience sampling to explore the "how and why" for each review dimension and sub-dimension. FGD responses provide qualitative information on key issues, quotes, case studies and stories on right-holders' perceptions on multiple items on each review dimension.

The summary of the FGDs and household interviews for different provinces, projects and partners were as follows:

Table 3: Summary of the FGDs and Household Interviews

S.No	Province	HH Surveyed	Men Respondents	Women Respondents	FGDs Conducted	FGDs with Men	FGDs with Women
1	Balkh	130	64	66	5	4	1
2	Daikundi	120	54	66	5	2	3
3	Takhar	108	58	50	5	3	2
4	Samangan	123	61	62	5	3	2
TOTAL		481	237	244	20	12	8

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

After the completion of data collection, the review team:

- Summarized key informant interview notes and coded them according to themes relevant to the review.
- Prepared tally sheets in Excel identifying the themes that emerged in the document review and key informant interviews to facilitate systematic and rigorous data analysis aimed at identifying key review findings.
- Compared responses of different stakeholder groups with each other and information provided in project documents in order to triangulate.
- Compared information provided by project staff with information provided by the respondents (beneficiaries) and address factual discrepancies as well as differences across stakeholder groups in consultation with CAFOD and partners
- Analysed the quantitative data by preparing crosstabs and frequency distributions from the household survey, which were processed and analysed using Excel.
- All qualitative and quantitative data is disaggregated by sex and location.
- Standard protocols were applied to ensure data quality, including adequate training of enumerators, cross-checking in data entry and rechecking by Deputy Team Leader for a sample of data. Enumerators were hired locally.

The evaluators took steps to ensure that the review respects and protects the rights and welfare of the people and communities involved and to ensure that the review is technically accurate and reliable, is conducted in a transparent and impartial manner, and contributes to organizational learning and accountability. The review team also adhered to the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and CAFOD Codes of Conduct⁶. Finally, the team prepared a detailed outline summarizing key findings, based on all the data analysis, and conclusions for each review question and overall recommendations. The methodology relies on triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity and reliability of results.

Data quality was given particular attention as follows:

- Development of methodology in collaboration with and approval of client M&E staff
- Adequate training of all team members on evaluation aims and other issues
- Triangulation of information from multiple primary and secondary sources
- Use of rigorous data collection and analysis tools
- Adequate feedback from client on findings, regular coordination meetings with country and regional staff, the assessment coordination group and a debrief presentation of findings to key agency staff.

The following steps were taken to do so:

- Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of all respondents by not quoting them without permission, especially from DFA officials
- Obtaining informed consent from all persons and not interviewing those who cannot give it
- Ensuring the confidentiality and protection of all data collected, especially from DFA officials
- Ensuring independence, impartiality, credibility and avoiding conflict of interest
- Not using photos and images of respondents without their permission and ensuring the images are not misused
- Avoiding sharing results in ways which may harm respondents through thorough training of enumerators and using experienced trainers.

⁶ <https://www.ifrc.org/our-promise/do-good/code-conduct-movement-ngos>

- Ensuring the safe storage of all data by restricting access to it to only the assessment team and relevant client staff.
- Providing feedback mechanisms for respondents to report any concerns or issues.

2.5 KEY DATES

Inception report submission	October 23, 2023
Inception report feedback	October 30
Final inception report	November 4
Field work preparation and permissions	November 1-10
Field work	November 11-December 15
Data cleaning, translation etc./write-up	December 15-January 3, 2024
First report submission	January 3, 2024
Final report due:	January 25, 2024

The key challenges faced during the evaluation were as follows:

- 1) Permission from Kabul and provincial authorities to conduct the evaluation took over a month in some cases and led to delays in completing it.
- 2) Transferring funds to Afghanistan was a major challenge due to global financial restrictions and money could only be transferred in small sums with gaps, which led to some delays.
- 3) Rough terrain during the winter made the movement of local evaluation teams in the communities difficult and time-consuming. In one area, the team had to travel for one hour on foot to reach the evaluation site.
- 4) In Takhar, the non-availability of respondents posed a challenge. In a few villages where the number of beneficiaries was 30 and the target sample was 20, the partners were only able to locate ten or fewer respondents. Consequently, the team had to make additional efforts and include more villages in the sample from the contingency list.
- 5) Local authorities refused female enumerators initially but did ultimately give permission, leading to some delays.
- 6) High levels of illiteracy, particularly among women, posed difficulties as respondents struggled to understand questions, necessitating additional explanations.
- 7) Evaluations are designed to be carried out by a third party; however, due to limitations of time and budget, in Daikundi, the project staff conducted it. The responses to the household survey from there are much more positive along most questions and as such the result may be viewed with some caution.

CHAPTER 3: EVALUATION FINDINGS

This chapter provides the main findings of this evaluation which are presented along the CHS evaluation criteria as identified in the evaluation terms of reference (TORs). The discussion triangulates the information collected from the documents review, household survey, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and internal and external KIIs and the online survey. The focus is on overall response findings rather than each agency separately. The data from Balkh relates only to CAFOD funds while the other three provinces had DEC funds. To facilitate easy reading and review, the tables based on the household survey are color-coded. The questions on which:

50% or more persons expressed high satisfaction are shaded green	
50% or more persons expressed at least medium satisfaction are shaded yellow	
50% or more persons gave negative responses are shaded red.	

3.1 CHS 1: RELEVANT AND APPROPRIATE AID

The key issues under this commitment were whether the response targeted the worst affected and priority geographical areas, population groups and needs (services/sectors) and was adequate and good quality in line with community expectations. Good quality needs assessments are generally the main tool which agencies use to ensure relevant and appropriate aid. For Afghanistan, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis undertaken regularly by the UN provides an in-depth measure of emergency needs for the whole country. The report for October 2021, the one closest to the start of the emergency, shows the following percentage of people in phases 3 (crisis) or 4 (emergency) in CAFOD provinces:

Table 4: Percentage of people in IPC phases 3 (crisis) or 4 (emergency)

Area	Phase 3 (%)	Phase 4 (%)	Total (%)
Afghanistan	30	17	47
Balkh	35	20	55
Bamyan	30	20	50
Daikundi	30	20	50
Herat	35	25	60
Kunduz	25	15	40
Nangarhar	30	15	45
Paktika	35	15	50
Samangan	35	20	55
Takhar	15	10	25

Thus, in all CAFOD provinces except Takhar, Nangarhar and Kunduz, the percentages of people in phases 3 or 4 were higher than the average for Afghanistan (Table 4). Most CAFOD provinces were among the most affected provinces in Afghanistan back in 2021 at the start of the crisis. However, there were also ten other provinces not covered by CAFOD partners in which the total percentage of people in phase 3 or 4 were 55% or above back then. The decisions by agencies to work in certain regions is affected by factors other than just absolute needs, such as their past geographical work history, the presence of other agencies and new shocks such as earthquakes as in the case of Paktika. These factors can influence agencies to select provinces where the total percentage of people in the two phases may be lower than other provinces, especially if they chose sub-regions in the selected provinces which are still highly affected. In such cases, it is advisable for agencies to document adequate evidence to justify their decisions. The evaluation team reviewed all the eleven project proposals and seven needs assessments provided by four out of the eight partners and interviewed all the eight partners for the presence of such

Table 5: CHS I-Relevant and Appropriate Aid												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
1. Were the project services relevant to the most important needs of your family keeping in view your local culture?	Fully/A lot	76%	82%	94%	98%	48%	89%	70%	71%	97%	24%	79%
	Partially/little	22%	17%	6%	2%	52%	8%	27%	29%	2%	66%	21%
	No	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	2%	10%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
2. Were the project services adequate given the immediate needs of your family after the 202 crisis?	Fully/A lot	44%	49%	31%	74%	22%	70%	40%	30%	83%	20%	19%
	Partially/little	49%	45%	67%	26%	62%	21%	54%	67%	12%	66%	74%
	No	6%	6%	2%	0%	16%	8%	6%	3%	5%	10%	6%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%
3. Has the project given adequate and equal attention to the needs of women?	Fully/A lot	74%	67%	86%	70%	57%	54%	81%	94%	88%	50%	84%
	Partially/little	24%	30%	14%	28%	40%	38%	19%	6%	11%	50%	16%
	No	2%	3%	0%	2%	3%	7%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4. Has the project given adequate and equal attention to highly needy groups like children, elderly, persons with disabilities?	Fully/A lot	76%	71%	89%	80%	69%	46%	80%	97%	88%	34%	92%
	Partially/little	22%	26%	11%	20%	28%	46%	19%	3%	12%	64%	6%
	No	1%	3%	0%	0%	3%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	No answer	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	2%	2%

Table 6: CHS 2- Timely and Effective Aid												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
5. Were the agency services timely given your immediate relief or recovery needs after the crisis?	Fully/A lot	56%	65%	58%	96%	33%	77%	46%	32%	89%	18%	39%
	Partially/little	40%	32%	41%	4%	67%	15%	48%	64%	6%	72%	58%
	No	3%	3%	2%	0%	0%	8%	4%	5%	5%	4%	3%
	No answer	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	6%	0%
6. Were project services provided in a convenient way for you?	Fully/A lot	90%	92%	98%	100%	79%	89%	88%	82%	100%	86%	82%
	Partially/little	9%	6%	2%	0%	19%	5%	12%	18%	0%	14%	18%
	No	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
7. Are you satisfied with the quality of services?	Fully/A lot	92%	87%	100%	100%	66%	84%	96%	98%	100%	90%	94%

Partially/little	7%	10%	0%	0%	33%	8%	4%	2%	0%	10%	6%
No	1%	3%	0%	0%	2%	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 7: CHS 3- Do-No harm and Resilience												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
8. Did this agency's work harm your family, community or local environment in any way?	Fully/A lot	3%	5%	5%	0%	16%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%
	Partially/little	2%	3%	2%	0%	7%	2%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%
	No	95%	92%	94%	100%	78%	95%	98%	100%	97%	100%	97%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
9. Has the agency helped build the capacities of your family to become stronger to deal with future emergencies?	Fully/A lot	30%	30%	8%	54%	14%	49%	29%	6%	61%	12%	34%
	Partially/little	64%	64%	91%	41%	81%	41%	64%	83%	32%	82%	65%
	No	5%	5%	2%	6%	5%	8%	5%	9%	7%	2%	2%
	No answer	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	4%	0%

Table 8: CHS 4- Access to Rights, Information and Participation												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
10. Did the project consult your family to understand its needs and risks before starting the project?	Fully/A lot	66%	65%	6%	96%	72%	92%	68%	41%	95%	70%	65%
	Partially/little	24%	22%	52%	4%	21%	7%	26%	38%	5%	30%	34%
	No	10%	14%	42%	0%	7%	2%	6%	21%	0%	0%	2%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
11. Did the project consult your family during the implementation of the project?	Fully/A lot	73%	69%	13%	91%	86%	93%	77%	59%	92%	80%	77%
	Partially/little	16%	14%	33%	9%	9%	5%	17%	18%	8%	20%	23%
	No	11%	16%	55%	0%	5%	0%	6%	23%	0%	0%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
12. Was your family given adequate information about the project activities?	Fully/A lot	77%	82%	69%	98%	72%	90%	73%	56%	100%	72%	61%
	Partially/little	21%	16%	30%	2%	24%	5%	27%	44%	0%	28%	37%
	No	1%	2%	2%	0%	3%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	No answer	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

evidence. However, none of the proposals or needs assessment reports provide strong evidence that the regions chosen within the selected provinces were the most affected ones within each province nor make reference to the IPC data in explaining the geographical choices. In all cases, sub-regions where assessments were conducted were mentioned without explaining why they specifically were selected rather than other ones. However, during key informant interviews all partners explained that they selected the most affected sub-regions in coordination with government officials and other agencies. Thus, overall, geographical targeting seems focused on the most affected regions though there is a need to document stronger evidence of this in proposals and needs assessment reports.

The need assessment reports that were made available show that Main partner's partners, and to a lesser extent other, undertook a thorough job at identifying the most important needs of the communities selected and in general the specific packages selected for those projects were based on the specific needs articulated during the assessments which included both individual surveys and focus group discussions. Main partner's needs assessments also helped in identifying the most needy families or groups within the communities, such as small farmers and herders and landless people and women-headed households in Samangan under APBHO assessments. Such information was missing from some of the other assessments. About half of the partners also shared beneficiary selection criteria which generally focused on household status (e.g., number of household members, women-headed households etc.) and in some cases also financial criteria such as income and expenses. The former are more objective, easier to verify and more permanent. The latter give a better picture of vulnerability but are harder to verify and change rapidly too. In case of multiple criteria, some agencies assigned weights to them to get a total score. Interviews with partner staff also confirmed that the most needy families were selected in participation with committees established in each community by the agencies based on such criteria.

Table 5 (page 11) reflects the opinions of the respondents on relevant and appropriate aid in the household survey in the four provinces. On the question of whether project services were relevant to the most important needs of their family, more than 50% of the men and women in all provinces except Takhar, expressed full satisfaction. Even in Takhar, more than 50% were at least partially satisfied. On the question of adequacy of aid, more than 50% of men and women in Daikundi and only men in Samangan expressed full satisfaction though more than 50% of both men and women were at least partially satisfied in other provinces. On the question of whether the project had given adequate and equal attention to the needs of women, more than 50% of both men and women in all provinces expressed full satisfaction. Similarly, on a similar question related to other marginalized groups like elderly, more than 50% of all groups except men in Samangan and Takhar expressed full satisfaction. The percentages of those with negative answers were 10% or less on all four questions in all provinces.

FGDs provided more in-depth information to supplement the quantitative information. In almost all villages, the participants appreciated the focus on their most important needs and the degree to which agencies determined them through community participation and discussions. The services mentioned positively most frequently were cash distributions, DRR work and income opportunities, especially kitchen gardening was highly appreciated by women FGD participants in all provinces. Another key observation mentioned repeatedly in FGDs, especially by men, was the positive role of village committees in helping agencies decide the services to be provided and in identifying the most needy families. The main gaps identified in the FGDs were around the issue of adequacy which took three forms: inadequacy in terms of the quantity of services in a sector relative to the family's needs, inadequacy in terms of key sectors left unaddressed such as health and income, and inadequacy in terms of needy families left out due to limited budgets. Communities also prioritize fundamental community projects with long-term benefits and expressed a preference for sustainable initiatives over only temporary relief.

The different projects and their sectoral focus fit in well with CAFOD’s Afghanistan strategy 2022 whose main outcome is: Vulnerable Afghan households are supported by CAFOD partners to meet their immediate needs and are better able to improve their resilience, reduce inequalities, and achieve local-level peace within the wider Afghan context of conflict, economic collapse, discrimination, and exclusion. The focus of all the projects is well within two intermediate outcomes as follows (CAFOD Thematic Description Afghanistan programme presentation):

- Households can meet their immediate needs and are supported to increase their resilience to recurrent shocks and eroding/eroded livelihoods through work on Natural Resource Management (NRM) and sustainable livelihoods.
- Afghan women are influencing local power dynamics which impact their lives; Afghan men are supporting and advocating for women’s rights; Partners are supported to adapt women’s rights work to be effective in the current context.

Table 9: Start Dates of CAFOD Projects

Project	Partner	Start Date	Provinces
DEC-Funded			
AFG 079	Main partner	January-June 2022	Takhar and Samangan
AFG 084:	Main partner	July 22-December 2023	Samangan, Daikundi and Takhar
AFG 098	Other partner	July 22-December 2023	Balkh
CAFOD-Funded			
AFG 081	Other partner	November 2021 – January 2022	Herat
AFG 083	Other partner	November 21-May 2022	Nangarhar
AFG 080	Other partner	January – March 2022	Balkh
AFG089	Other partner	March -May 2022	Paktika
AFG 088:	Other partner	March-August 2022	Balkh
AFG 078	Other partner	July 2022 – February, 2023	Paktika
AFG 087:	Other partner	September 2022 – January 2023	Bamyan and Kunduz
AFG090	Other partner	November 2022 – November 2023	Balkh and Herat
AFG093:	Other partner	November 2022 – January 2023	Balkh

3.2 CHS 2: TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE AID

With respect to timeliness, the analysis is complicated by the fact that the emergency in Afghanistan was a slow-onset one mainly caused by the impact of on-going conflict and drought and to a lesser extent by sudden-onset shocks like earthquakes in some provinces. Thus, unlike for emergencies caused by sudden-onset natural shocks, it is more difficult to identify a clear starting point and measure timeliness against that. DEC launched its Afghanistan emergency appeal in December 2021. Thus, that date is used to review timeliness. Table 9 shows the start date of all the CAFOD projects from DEC and CAFOD appeal funds. Nearly 60% of the DEC funds were spent in DEC Phase I through Main partner from January 1-June 30, 2022 and narrative reports show that the actual distributions occurred between March 26-June 8, 2022. The CAFOD appeal funds were spent in a more staggered manner, with four of the nine projects starting between November 2021 to March 2022 in the first six months of the crisis. According to key informant interviews with both CAFOD and partner staff, delays occurred due to several key reasons. Firstly, the appeals were launched near the end of 2021, when harsh weather made travel difficult in many mountainous areas. Secondly, there were initial difficulties in transferring funds to Afghanistan due to the imposition of global financial restrictions after the fall of the Ghani regime and lack of clear policies on using alternative transmission modes such as Hundi, Western Union, Amanacard and Hesabpay. The third reason was the prolonged delays caused by the unclear and evolving rules for NGO work under the new

Table 10: CHS 5-Complaint Mechanisms												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
13. Did the project give adequate opportunities to make complaints in case of problems in implementation?	Fully/A lot	81%	81%	78%	98%	59%	92%	82%	42%	100%	96%	92%
	Partially/little	16%	15%	20%	2%	33%	5%	17%	55%	0%	2%	8%
	No	2%	3%	2%	0%	9%	2%	1%	3%	0%	2%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
14. Were the methods for making complaints easy to use?	Fully/A lot	89%	90%	88%	98%	81%	95%	89%	67%	98%	94%	97%
	Partially/little	7%	7%	11%	2%	12%	3%	7%	20%	0%	6%	3%
	No	3%	2%	2%	0%	7%	0%	3%	12%	0%	0%	0%
	No answer	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	2%	2%	0%	0%
15. Did your family make any complaints to the agency?	YES	4%	5%	5%	7%	7%	0%	4%	2%	12%	0%	0%
	NO	96%	95%	95%	93%	93%	100%	96%	98%	88%	100%	100%
16. Were complaints made to the agency promptly solved?	Fully/A lot	65%	55%	67%	100%	0%	0%	83%	0%	100%	0%	0%
	Partially/little	18%	18%	33%	0%	25%	0%	17%	100%	0%	0%	0%
	No	18%	27%	0%	0%	75%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 11: CHS 6- Coordinated and Complementary Assistance												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
17. If you received aid from more than one agency, was there any duplication in their work?	Fully/A lot	3%	3%	5%	0%	0%	5%	3%	5%	2%	0%	5%
	Partially/little	14%	18%	17%	33%	19%	3%	11%	18%	18%	4%	2%
	No	82%	77%	78%	67%	81%	82%	86%	77%	80%	96%	93%
	No answer	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Authorities. Finally, neither CAFOD nor any of the partners shared emergency preparedness plans for Afghanistan with the evaluators and it took time for CAFOD to develop a common response approach across different global units and levels.

Table 6 (page 11) provides the household survey data related to CHS 2 issues on timeliness, convenience and quality of aid. On the question of whether project services were timely, the responses of men were most positive with more than 50% of men fully satisfied in all provinces except Takhar even where more than 50% of men were at least partially satisfied with timeliness. Among women, only in Daikundi did more than 50% of women express full satisfaction while in the other three provinces, a majority of women were at least partially satisfied. This likely relates to some delays mentioned in the distribution of inputs for kitchen gardening. On the remaining two questions related to convenience of delivery and quality of services, more than 50% of both men and women in all four provinces expressed high satisfaction with the percentage of negative respondents being less than 10% across all groups.

FGD data revealed that people were generally happy with the timeliness, especially with respect to basic needs goods such as food, NFIs and water, the main reason mentioned by people being that in recent times there is a high need for such services throughout the year in Afghanistan. However, there were a small number of complaints about delays related to more time-bound services such as seeds for kitchen gardening in some places by women FGD participants which led to delayed cultivation. Some people also requested for aid to be delivered closer to their villages.

3.3 CHS 3: DO-NO HARM AND RESILIENCE

The focus of analysis under this commitment is on safeguarding and do-no-harm issues and building and use of local capacities. Six out of the eight CAFOD partners shared their safeguarding policies with the evaluation team which were comprehensive in terms of defining risks, providing mitigation strategies and ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to secure complaint mechanisms in case of any issues. Interviews with partner staff also revealed that all partners are fully aware with safeguarding and protection principles and standards for communities and place a high degree of emphasis in protecting communities during project work against sexual and physical exploitation and abuse.

Table 7 (page 12) shows that more than 75% of both men and women in all provinces reported that they suffered no harm due to project activities. In Takhar around a quarter of the respondents reported some harm due to project activities. However, FGDs from Takhar suggest that this was only related to the fact that the provision of aid to some families and not others created some friction within families and loss of community cohesion, suggesting the need for clearer communication of objective selection criteria to communities. On the questions of whether the agency helped build the capacities of their family to become stronger to deal with future emergencies, only in Daikundi did more than 50% of both men and women express high satisfaction while in all other provinces among both men and women 50% of the respondents expressed partial satisfaction on this issue. FGD data reveals a wide range of ways in which different projects helped communities become more resilient against future emergencies, including greater access to water near their homes, information on how to deal with diarrhea and

other diseases during crises, construction of flood protection structures, improved agricultural practices, capacity building of village committees on DRR, training on community cooperation during crises and building up of assets such as livestock which could be used as cash buffers during emergencies. Respondents in all provinces also mentioned that the agencies used local resources to provide additional help such as using local labor for cash, buying local material in some cases and using local volunteers.

3.4 CHS 4: ACCESS TO RIGHTS, INFORMATION, AND PARTICIPATION

The main approach used by partner agencies to ensure rights, information and participation of communities was the establishment of community-based organizations. In some places, these entities consisted of Community Development Committees established by local authorities while in other cases they were established at the initiative of partner agencies and included both men and women. The committees played a crucial role in mobilizing communities, helping in identifying the most deserving beneficiaries, assisting in distribution of services, maintaining project infrastructure and resolving problems. Partners used these committees to disseminate information about the agencies, project work, complaint mechanisms and other issues. Community responses on “Access to Rights, Information and Participation” varied considerably across the questions and provinces (Table 8; page 12). On the question of community participation and consultation before the start of the project work, more than 50% of both men and women in all provinces except Balkh expressed high satisfaction while in Balkh 50% of both men and women expressed at least partial satisfaction. On the question of participation, consultation and communication during project implementation, more than 50% of both men and women in all provinces except men in Balkh expressed high satisfaction while among men in Balkh, more than 50% actually expressed dissatisfaction. However, on the question of adequate communication and information from the agencies, more than 50% of men and women in all provinces expressed high satisfaction.

FGD data supplemented the household survey data and again there was less satisfaction with participation and information in Balkh compared with other provinces. Another key FGD observation was that after the start of the project and formation of village committees, interaction of agencies with the rest of the community decreased considerably. However, there were few gender differences in satisfaction with participation and in all villages men and women expressed similar levels of satisfaction with participation. FGD responses on the topics on which agencies provided information also varied. While project information was seen to be provided adequately in all provinces, respondents in Daikundi reflected the most satisfaction regarding broader information on agency values, aims and strategies followed by those in Samangan.

3.5 CHS 5: ACCESS TO COMPLAINT MECHANISMS

All agencies confirmed during staff meetings that they had complaint mechanisms in place. About half of the agencies shared detailed complaint policies while none shared summaries of the type of complaints made and how they were redressed. Household survey responses on complaint mechanisms were generally satisfactory in all provinces across both men and women (Table 10; page 15). On the question on whether the project gave adequate opportunities to make complaints in case of problems in implementation, more than 50% respondents expressed high satisfaction among all groups except women in Balkh where more than 50% respondents expressed at least partial satisfaction. On the question of ease and convenience of the complaint methods provided, more than 50% of men and women in all provinces expressed high satisfaction, the high satisfaction being close to 100% in Daikundi. However, except among 12% of women in

Daikundi, the percentage of families which said they made complaints was less than 10% among all other groups. Nearly 75% of the men in Takhar who made complaints expressed dissatisfaction with the redressal of their complaints.

FGD data shows that the broadest range of complaint mechanisms were provided in Daikundi, including an agency hotline number, agency complaint box, the number for the UN-managed AWAAZ complaint systems as well as direct interaction with agency staff. In other provinces, 1-2 methods were mentioned such as hotline numbers and direct interaction with staff. People were usually more satisfied where multiple complaint methods were made available by agencies as this increased options.. The limited mobile access in some areas limits the efficacy of the telephone helpline as right-holders must travel to public call offices in towns to make complaints, which is difficult for women and other mobility-restricted persons. The low literacy levels, especially among women, restricts the use of complaint boxes. The regular meetings by agencies during project implementation help overcome these problems. Since informal communication is preferred in rural areas, people preferred informal means of complaints like meetings. But meetings were often held when people were busy. For many communities, the best timings are early in the morning or late in the afternoons. But those times are not possible for project staff due to security issues and distances. In many villages, the communities contact village committees if they have any problem related to services. However, village committees and volunteers should document complaints properly and communicate them to the agency. Thus, some improvements are needed in terms of use of multiple channels of complaints, providing complaint instructions in local languages, summarizing, and analyzing complaints and ensuring adequate use and access by the most marginalized sections of the community like illiterate persons, women, older persons, and persons with disability. Finally, it is also critical to make people aware about the broad range of issues that they can make complaints on, including gender and inclusion, community respect and dignity, technical standards and quality issues so that the complaints are not just focused on delays, inadequacy and non-provision. This is especially important as in a few villages people said that they were hesitant to make complaints to avoid the risk of alienating agency staff.

3.6 CHS 6: COORDINATED AND COMPLEMENTARY ASSISTANCE

All partner agencies are coordinating extensively with UN agencies and NGOs through different platforms and structures at the Kabul and provincial levels. The UN-led working groups in Kabul and provinces are the main platform for coordination on technical, logistical, informational and strategic issues of relevance for all aid agencies. The other key platform is the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR) which is a national, independent, non-government organization (NGO) that provides a platform for information-sharing and networking for national and international NGOs in Afghanistan. All CAFOD partners engage with these platforms. According to partners, the main benefits from them are as follows: coordination and information on development and application of global technical standards in different sectors such as food security, health and water; information sharing and coordination on geographical dispersion of work to avoid duplication and ensure complementarities; strategic engagement with donors to keep them informed on emerging needs; and representation with the authorities on humanitarian and access issues. Partners mentioned these platforms as a key means for identifying pressing needs and ensuring geographical coordination. However, most partners also felt that in terms of gaining access and approval from the authorities, they were still largely on their own. Thus, coordination is effective on technical and informational axes but less so on access issues. A key opportunity for further coordination could be more engagement among CAFOD partners for

information sharing, joint programming and capacity building and representation which could help improve programme quality and reduce costs.

In terms of coordination at the community levels, there were very few cases of other agencies working in or near the same villages as CAFOD partners. People mentioned Aga Khan and World Food Programme (WFP) most frequently as the other agencies that were or had been working earlier in the same areas. In such cases, people reported no problems of duplication or lack of coordination and felt that the agencies were coordinating well with each other. At least two-thirds of both men and women in all provinces reported no duplication or lack of coordination among different agencies in the household survey (Table 11; page 15).

3.7 CHS 7: ORGANIZATIONS LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION

Organizational learning leads to better programme quality. Such learning takes two forms. The first aspect is applying learning from the past to the current programming and the second aspect is to capture and document learning from the current programming for the future. Interviews with staff show that most agencies extensively used their learning from past programming in Afghanistan to inform their current response. The main areas where past learning was especially useful for agencies were the importance of community mobilization and participation and specific tools and approaches for this purpose; the value of extensive coordination with government and other agencies; the need to establish representative community committees and using them extensively to reduce conflicts and improve decision-making; the importance of using do-no-harm principles and ensuring safeguarding and building the resilience of communities.

With respect to documenting learning from the current crisis for the future, many partners undertook written learning exercises, a summary of key learnings being as follows:

Key Learnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collect more accurate secondary information about villages before assessment to increase accuracy. -Coding house doors with high quality markers prevent double registration and easy to locate families during voucher distribution -Checking kitchens and living rooms to identify number of families living in one compound was crucially helpful. Team could find several cases where people put a piece of carpet and mattress in a room, but there was no kitchen, food items and utensils,. -Design of voucher was good (hotline number, amount of cash and unique family code). The voucher was not easily replicable, detailed enough and good quality. It can be used in the future, but with different colour coding. -To find real beneficiaries during voucher and/or cash distribution, staff asked participants the full list of information about family, then compared to the registration database. If all the information was correctly told, voucher and/ or cash was given. This way no voucher and cash went to the wrong people because most beneficiaries do not have NID to check. In security challenging areas, number of staff visits in each village should be reduced as much as possible. This can be done by increasing number of teams, specially, during distribution. -In any project, no matter if emergency or development, registration in online system of MoEc must be started immediately, because registration takes time until approvals cascade from capital to the province.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engagement of local communities, government and other stakeholders in the whole process of project implementation helps in improving quality. Pre-verification of the selected participants as per the criteria is essential to ensure the eligibility of the participants and to improve accountability and transparency within organizational practice. -Effective information sharing about the CRM mechanism with project participants and other stakeholders is vital for a robust CRM mechanism. -It also helps in developing trust between the community and the organization aiding on the ground and ensures the intervention is responsive to the needs.

-Cash assistance empowers the affected community in better meeting their needs as they can use it for food and other essentials. It also strengthens the local economy.
-Some project beneficiaries are illiterate and cannot use the phone numbers given for them to share their feedback/complaint with organization, also in remote areas where there is not network coverage. the team increased its monitoring visits from project beneficiaries in both remote and close project areas and especially from those who are illiterate to collect their feedback/complaints. -Some eligible families who were living in rental or temporary houses, were missed. This criterion was later added. -Initially we engaged only CDC leader or head of community in introducing eligible HHs. Later we recognized that this increase the level of selfishness, nonparticipator and competitions. So, we now establish HHs introduction committee to engage all parties in introduction process, make the process participatory and avoid any fraud in the process
-Poverty and low literacy rates are fundamental causes of conflicts within families and communities. Moreover, they have taken a toll on the mental well-being of individuals residing in these areas, Agencies must address them to improve welfare. Supporting income generation activities can serve as a potent response to address these pressing issues

Thus, the key lessons related to accurate beneficiary selection, community mobilization, strong coordination and use of effective complaint mechanisms. While partners are documenting lessons and undertaking monitoring, there is considerable variation in the quality and depth of such work. Thus, more systematic attention to learning and monitoring issues by using globally used approaches such as CHS ones may help improve the quality of partners' learning activities. Table 13 on page 23 shows that on the question of whether the agency adapted its work in the light of changes in community needs, among all groups except men in Daikundi and Samangan, more than 50% of the respondents agreed partially that agencies did so. In Daikundi, the majority of men disagreed while in Samangan the majority of men agreed strongly. In Daikundi, the negative responses were also affected by the fact that Main partner decided to discontinue the project after the local authorities asked it to work without women staff and beneficiaries which was against its principles. However, there seems to be a need to monitor changing needs in communities more closely and make changes in project work accordingly.

3.8 CHS 8: COMPETENT AND WELL-MANAGED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Given the historical high poverty and illiteracy and high degree of recent dislocation in and migration from Afghanistan, the country suffers from acute shortage of skilled human resources, including in the humanitarian sector. Many of the local partners faced a large exodus of staff after the fall of the Ghani regime as many aid workers left Afghanistan. However, CAFOD partners have all still managed to retain competent and skilled teams largely consisting of Afghan staff. The strategy has been capacity-building and hiring of staff from other provinces for working in human-resource deficit provinces. However, a key challenge has been in recruiting women staff after the ban imposed on women from working in the humanitarian sector in 2022. Given the strong emphasis of CAFOD and its partners on gender equity, they have all worked creatively to work round this ban and still retain their women staff. At the Kabul level, this has included having women staff work remotely and coming to office occasionally. One local partner has even obtained permission for its female Executive Director to continue working from the office though meetings with authorities are held usually by male staff. At the field level, all the partners have managed to obtain permission to retain their field female staff on the condition that they don't come to the office and go straight to the field accompanied by a close male relative. The only problem was in Daikundi where authorities refused to allow women to work, which led to the suspension of work by the concerned partner and reallocation of CAFOD funds to another province. Some partners also reported pressures from authorities to hire persons recommended by the authorities. Table 14 on page 23 shows that communities were happy with the quality of staff and their competence and close to 100% of both men and women appreciated the interaction with the staff a lot across

all provinces. There is a need to deploy project staff who speak the language of the majority in specific communities, especially in Uzbek and Pushto speaking communities.

3.9 CHS 9: MANAGING RESOURCES EFFECTIVELY, EFFICIENTLY, AND ETHICALLY

The key challenge CAFOD and its partner agencies faced in using resources efficiently related to sending money to Afghanistan due to the global restrictions imposed on Afghanistan after the fall of the Ghani regime. This led to delays of several months initially until CAFOD was able to develop alternative fund transfer modalities, including Hawala, Amanacard, Hesabpay, Moneygram and Western Union. Main partner utilizes the UN system for funds transfer where dollars are flown to Afghanistan every week and distributed to NGOs which are part of the system. There are also restrictions imposed by the authorities on the amounts that agencies can withdraw from banks within a month. There are also cumbersome financial reporting requirements for agencies imposed by authorities. Finally, some agencies also reported pressure from some government officials, often those retained from the last regime, to offer them bribes in return for obtaining work authorizations. Most partners also shared detailed financial and procurement policies to ensure ethical and transparent use of funds while minimizing wastage and corruption.

Table 12: Utilization of Funds

Project Name/Budget-	Partner	Burn Rate
	DEC Appeal	
AFG079 GBP 1,833,159	Main partner + downstream partners	60%
AFG 084: GBP 926,185	Main partner + downstream partners	Above 100%
AFG098 GBP 277,710	Other partner	??
	CAFOD Appeal	
AFG078: 159000 USD	Other partner	96%
AFG 080 41775 USD	Other partner	99%
AFG081 264000 USD	Other partner	N/A
AFG083 GBP 23,600 (CAFOD)	Other partner	99%
AFG087: 51444 USD	Other partner	100%
AFG088: 200000 USD	Other partner	99%
AFG089 75000 USD	Other partner	99%
AFG090 97097 USD	Other partner	32%
AFG093: 85150 USD	Other partner	100%

Table 12 shows that the utilization of funds was close to 100% for almost all projects. It was 60% for one of the DEC projects through the main partner. However, this was due to problems in

continuing in Daikundi due to restrictions imposed on working with women after which the remaining funds were allocated to another partner in Balkh. Thus, utilization of funds after the initial delays was high and all the targeted outcomes for both Phase 1 and 2 of DEC funding were achieved. Finally, Table 15 (page 23) shows that the vast majority of men and women in all provinces were highly satisfied that there was no wastage of resources or misuse of funds.

3.10 CAFOD PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership is central to CAFOD's vision and mission. It is explicitly named as one of the core values in CAFOD's 2010-2020 organizational strategy, *Just One World*. CAFOD has three levels of engagement with partners: a **project partnership** is defined by a set of specified deliverables on behalf of the actor with which CAFOD engages; a **solidarity partnership** is largely driven by CAFOD's engagement with the core values and vision of the partner; while a **strategic partnership** is driven by joint strategizing, and both deliverables *and* engagement on core values. Finally, CAFOD's relationships with partners are governed by six partnership principles: shared partnership objectives, mutual accountability, equitable relationships, subsidiarity & participation, capacity strengthening and innovation (CAFOD International Partnership Manual).

CAFOD's Afghanistan programme was a small one before the 2021 crisis with three local partners which has expanded hugely after the 2021 crisis. Given the shortage of high-capacity local partners and CAFOD's global emphasis on working through local partners, it has developed a strategy to respond to the 2021 crisis that strikes a balance between ensuring a rapid and large response to the huge crisis by working with Main partner for the larger DEC funds and working through local partners and building their capacity for the CAFOD funding.

Table 13: CHS 7-Agencies Learn from their Experiences												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
18. Did the agency adapt its work in light of changes in community needs?	Fully/A lot	40%	46%	27%	37%	34%	84%	35%	36%	45%	10%	44%
	Partially/little	45%	41%	73%	9%	64%	11%	49%	64%	17%	78%	44%
	No	13%	14%	0%	54%	2%	3%	12%	0%	38%	8%	0%
	No answer	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	0%	4%	12%

Table 14: CHS 8- Competent And Well-Managed Staff And Volunteers												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
19. Did the project staff deal with you politely in delivering services?	Fully/A lot	98%	97%	100%	100%	93%	97%	98%	98%	100%	100%	92%
	Partially/little	2%	3%	0%	0%	7%	3%	2%	2%	0%	0%	8%
	No	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 15: CHS 9 - Managing Resources Effectively, Efficiently, And Ethically												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
20. Did the agency use the project money without wasting money?	Fully/A lot	80%	85%	97%	98%	50%	93%	75%	73%	97%	78%	52%
	Partially/little	11%	11%	0%	2%	43%	0%	11%	6%	0%	6%	30%
	No	7%	3%	3%	0%	7%	2%	10%	20%	3%	16%	3%
	No answer	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%	5%	4%	2%	0%	0%	15%
21. Did you notice any misuse of funds or resources by agency staff?	Fully/A lot	4%	7%	2%	0%	26%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Partially/little	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	No	90%	91%	98%	100%	71%	95%	89%	100%	100%	100%	56%
	No answer	6%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	11%	0%	0%	0%	44%

Table 16 gives an overview of the background of the eight CAFOD partners involved in the crisis response. Thus, these partnerships reflect both project partnerships with the larger International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that may end after the end of the crisis and strategic partnerships with smaller national NGOs that may continue in the long-term.

Table 16: Overview of CAFOD Partnerships

Agency	Status
Main partner	INGO working through local partners
Other partner	INGO
Other partner	INGO working through local partners
Other partner	INGO registered in Pakistan
Other partner	Local affiliate of global network
Other partner	National NGO
Other partner	National NGO
Other partner	National NGO

The current response through the different partners relates to a crisis and largely consists of short-duration projects during which it is difficult to implement fully the six partnership principles mentioned above. However, adherence to them to some extent is apparent even in current projects and especially in partnerships with the national NGOs. Partners appreciated the space that CAFOD gives to implementing partners in identifying programme areas and strategies in line with the principles of shared partnership objectives, equitable relationships, subsidiarity and participation. Long-term partners also said that the space given to them increases with time. At the same time, to ensure mutual accountability, CAFOD requires implementing partners to get major programme decisions such as procurement, programme areas and beneficiary selection, approved by CAFOD to ensure transparency and adherence with CAFOD values and procedures. Most partners mentioned that such approval is quick and mutually beneficial as CAFOD provides constructive feedback that helps partners improve their programme processes. However, in a few cases, some delays were reported beyond the feedback time period required during a crisis. Thus, it may be helpful for CAFOD to develop clear timelines for providing such feedback during emergencies and tracking adherence to it.

As part of mutual accountability, CAFOD also encourages constructive feedback from partners through regular meetings and by prioritizing feedback from partners on the efficacy of its partnership model in reviews like this evaluation. The TORs for this evaluation explicitly prioritized feedback on this aspect and CAFOD staff during interviews with the evaluation team explicitly expressed deep interest in getting feedback. The longer-term national partners also mentioned the extensive capacity-building that CAFOD had undertaken for them in the past in different areas such as accountability, safeguarding, programme design and formulation and programme support functions. However, given the high dislocation and high staff turnover since the crisis, the national partners especially all expressed the need for further capacity-building in these areas. Many partners also felt that CAFOD understands the local context better than other donors.

Table 16: Impact and Sustainability												
Questions	Options	Over All	Men					Women				
			Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan	Total	Balkh	Daikundi	Takhar	Samangan
22. Has the project helped improve the socio-economic status of your family?	Fully/A lot	33%	33%	11%	61%	7%	57%	32%	11%	61%	12%	42%
	Partially/little	65%	64%	89%	39%	90%	36%	65%	88%	35%	86%	56%
	No	2%	3%	0%	0%	3%	7%	2%	2%	5%	2%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
23. Has the project helped improve the socio-economic status of women in your family?	Fully/A lot	29%	26%	13%	48%	16%	31%	32%	12%	59%	10%	42%
	Partially/little	69%	70%	88%	52%	79%	61%	67%	86%	39%	88%	58%
	No	2%	3%	0%	0%	5%	7%	1%	2%	2%	2%	0%
	No answer	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
24. Will the positive impact, if any, sustain for more than a year after the project?	Fully/A lot	28%	28%	0%	74%	7%	36%	27%	3%	76%	8%	18%
	Partially/little	49%	38%	36%	19%	40%	56%	59%	88%	18%	72%	61%
	No	20%	34%	64%	7%	53%	7%	6%	9%	6%	10%	0%
	No answer	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	7%	0%	0%	10%	21%

3.11 OVERALL OUTCOMES

Given the high level of needs and limited aid provided during major emergencies and the short duration of projects, impact and sustainability issues are not part of the CHS framework. However, a few preliminary questions were included in the household survey related to them. Table 16 shows that more than 50% of both men and women in Daikundi and men in Samangan reported that their socio-economic improved a lot as a result of the project assistance while in other provinces more than 50% respondents reported that it improved somewhat. The percentage that reported no improvement was less than 10% in all provinces. On the question of whether the project had improved the socio-economic status of women, except women in Daikundi, more than 50% of men and women in all provinces reported some improvement. Finally, on the issue of sustainability of the impact for more than a year, more than 50% of women in Daikundi felt strongly that it would while the majority of men in Takhar and Balkh felt it would not last due to the types of services or their adequacy while in the remaining groups, a majority felt it may last more than a year to some extent.

Gender issues: The impact on women was also high in both DEC and CAFOD-funded projects despite the severe restrictions imposed on working through women staff and in working with women in communities. The analysis earlier has shown that partners were able to find creative solutions to the barriers imposed on working through and with women in all provinces except Daikundi. The responses to the survey and FGDs show that the satisfaction of women with services and the positive outcomes created for women were generally in par with those for men in both funding streams. Women exhibited a keen interest in being engaged in income activities such as kitchen gardens. However, the restrictions imposed on women are increasing and there is a need to engage with donors and authorities to overcome this constraint.

Environmental stewardship: Although the focus of the projects was on humanitarian needs, some positive impact on the environment was noticeable in some of the projects. The activities related to hygiene promotion in several DEC projects improved environmental health and communities learnt the importance of keeping their environment clean. The activities related to DRR were also instrumental in reducing soil erosion and deforestation. Partners also made sure not to harm the environment in providing services, e.g., by using local goods where possible.

A few case studies collected during the field work are shared here to give a flavor of the ways in which families benefited from CAFOD-funded work in general and in terms of gender and environment.

Takhar Case Studies

Abdul Wadud's Struggle: A Turnaround Through Aid

Abdul Wadud, a 35-year-old man from Shah Toot village in the Namak Ab district of Takhar province, endured economic hardships while working as a shepherd to sustain his livelihood. In his own words, Abdul Wadud shares, "I had to work hard with my young sons to make ends meet and save for paying off debts. Unfortunately, this meant my sons couldn't attend school." The challenges faced by Abdul Wadud mirrored the difficulties experienced by many in his economically distressed village. Abdul Wadud's story is one of several emotional narratives within this community. The turning point in Abdul Wadud's life came when the survey team from the partner organization arrived to identify individuals in need. Abdul Wadud was recognized as a deserving beneficiary, and he received aid, including food for his family. Reflecting on the impact of the aid, Abdul Wadud states, "After receiving the aid, my life problems lessened. I could continue my job alone, and most importantly, my sons were able to go to school to learn science." The aid extended

to Abdul Wadud had broader implications for the entire village, composed of a hundred families, with approximately 90 percent living in poverty. These interventions succeeded in bringing about a positive change in the lives of those who received aid, illustrating the transformative potential of targeted assistance in economically challenged communities

Najiba's Journey: A Tale of Resilience and Transformation

Najiba, a 30-year-old woman from Shortoghi Momand village in Khwaja Bahawuddin district of Takhar province, faced a challenging period in her life. Ignored by her husband and sent to her father's house, Najiba experienced neglect as her husband focused on his second wife. In her own words, she recounts, "He did not pay much attention to me after marrying the second wife. Our differences grew, leading me to my father's house." While residing with her father, Najiba caught the attention of the survey team from the partner organization, tasked with identifying deserving individuals. Recognizing her plight, Najiba was deemed deserving of aid, receiving financial assistance. Najiba reflects, "The aid from NGO made a significant difference. It made my husband invite me back home, and now we enjoy a good life together." The challenges faced by women in this village were not unique to Najiba. Before the intervention, women often endured violence, discrimination, and economic struggles. However, the establishment of home gardens brought about positive changes. Najiba notes, "Now, with the home gardens, women in our village can earn income, improving our families' economic status." This transformation highlights the impact of targeted aid, not only mending relationships but also empowering women economically. It underscores the broader significance of poverty alleviation in addressing multifaceted challenges within communities.

Anisa's Story: Overcoming Challenges for Economic Stability

Anisa, a 31-year-old homemaker from Deh Bala/ Shah toot village in the Namak Ab district of Takhar province, faced significant challenges in her life. She is a mother of four children, and two of them have disabilities—one born with a birth defect and the other, a boy, became disabled due to a mountain rock slide that impacted his foot. Living in a village with approximately 300 families along the valley of Del Sakhreh, Anisa found herself in a challenging economic situation exacerbated by the various hardships she encountered. Recognizing her circumstances, the survey team from the partner organization identified Anisa as a beneficiary deserving of aid. The village, situated in a less favorable geographical location, presented economic difficulties for its residents. The aid provided to the village included hygiene training, health packages, and cash for living expenses. Upon receiving this support, Anisa demonstrated resourcefulness by establishing a small chicken farm using the cash assistance. This initiative not only contributed to the well-being of her family but also led to a modest improvement in their economic situation. Anisa's experience is reflective of a larger trend in the village, where a select number of individuals, both women and men, utilized the aid judiciously and innovatively. These individuals managed to enhance their economic status and that of their families. It is important to note that, given the village's size and the limited number of beneficiaries, the overall impact of the aid on the entire community may not be conclusive. However, for those who received assistance, including Anisa, there was a discernible positive effect in terms of a slight improvement in economic conditions for themselves and their families.

Samangan Case Studies

Faghan Gul's Resilience: Rebuilding After the Floods

Faghan Gul, a resident of Chahar sang Village in the Khoram wa Sarbagh District of Samangan province, faced a devastating flood that wreaked havoc on their land and yard. Faghan Gul recalls, "Seven months ago, our land and yard were destroyed by the floods, and before our house was damaged, my father, brother, sisters, and I tried to take advantage of the flood advance towards our houses, even though we were terrified." In the midst of the crisis, the family took proactive measures, filling sacks with soil and strategically placing them to mitigate the impact of the flood. After the waters receded, they returned with difficulty to find their homes barely standing amidst the deep mud. The aftermath left them unemployed, with nearly everything destroyed. After two months, they received aid, including support from the partner. This aid

included the construction of a green garden for them. They were able to grow and sell vegetables, bringing a sense of satisfaction. Faghan Gul expresses gratitude, saying, " Now she can build a green garden herself." This narrative of resilience and recovery reflects the transformative impact of aid interventions, providing not only immediate relief but also sustainable solutions for families affected by natural disasters.

Bibi Muharram's Case: Navigating Hardships Alone

Bibi Muharram, a 59-year-old widow residing in Langar olia village, Khorram wa Sarbagh District, Samangan province, faces profound challenges. Living with her son, who is married, Bibi Muharram endures neglect from her daughter-in-law in her son's absence. She shares, "Life is so hard; I haven't even eaten proper food for four nights." Also, she is sick. In the absence of proper care, Bibi Muharram's plea for help echoes through her words, "The organization's aid to her was cash, she was able to spend some time comfortably, but at the moment her living situation is very bad, she can't even find food properly." The stark reality of her situation is evident as she hopes for assistance, expressing her distress during the interview, "They should pay attention to me and help me." This emotional story illuminates the harsh reality faced by individuals like Bibi Muharram, emphasizing the urgency of providing not just financial aid but also holistic support to those navigating life's challenges alone.

Abdul Ahmad's Story: A Life Shaped by Challenges

Abdul Ahmad, a resident of Langar olia village in the Khorram wa Sarbagh District of Samangan province, the son of Baba Kalan, is 82 years old. When I did a personal interview with him, his hands and head were shaking. He and his 72-year-old wife live alone. He and his wife have disabilities. . As seen, Abdul Ahmed's hands and feet are bent, and he is unable to do anything. Abdul Ahmad's vulnerable state is intense in his plea for assistance, He received the aid in cash. When I asked if the money you received solved your problems, he put his hand on me and said with a helpless face, "Yes, I was in debt to the shopkeeper. I gave him the money, and the rest I bought rice, oil, flour, etc. But now we need a garden, land, and I don't have livestock." "These same neighbours help us from time to time, and I am very satisfied with the help that has been given to me, and we are waiting for more help from the said Organization. I hope you will not forget us. And another thing, by the grace of God, we were not damaged by the flood." Abdul Ahmad's moving narrative underscores the critical need for ongoing support and intervention, addressing not only immediate financial concerns but also addressing the broader challenges faced by vulnerable individuals like him.

Haq Nazar: Rebuilding Amidst Challenges

Haq Nazar, a 79-year-old resident of Kolor Bala village in the Khorram wa Sarbagh District of Samangan province, faces unique challenges as he cares for his sick son, whose upper lip is naturally divided, affecting his speech. In his family of 5, Haq Nazar expresses gratitude for the aid received. He shares, 'After the flood destroyed his house, he was able to put his life back in order with the help of his neighbor. When he was helped by this organization, he was able to pay off his loans and buy food for his home, which they still use.' Haq Nazar emphasizes his gratitude for the aid given and expresses hope for more assistance in the future. His story reflects the resilience of individuals in the face of adversity and the positive impact that targeted Aid can have in rebuilding lives and providing ongoing support.

Balkh Case Studies

Case Study: Islamuddin's Struggle for Survival

Islamuddin, son of Chari Bai, resides in Mazar-e-Sharif, Nasim Mahdi residential area, having been displaced from Faryab province due to the enduring civil war. Living in a rented house without electricity, Islamuddin, a Mullah at a nearby mosque, lacks a salary and struggles to sustain his family. His mother, who is blind and suffers from a long-term illness, requires daily medication. For the past 10 years in Balkh province, the family has faced severe economic hardships, often managing only three meals a day and occasionally going without dinner. Last year, the organization (Project 088) identified Islamuddin's family as deserving recipients of a food package through their area representative. The timely assistance provided essential relief for 20 days. Reflecting on the impact, Islamuddin stated, "During those 20 days, we felt a sense of relief. It was the first

time in 10 years that we received support. My economic situation is dire, and sustaining my family is a constant challenge.” Expressing gratitude for the assistance, he highlighted that it was the first time in the past decade that they had received aid since migrating to the area. No other welfare organization had visited their area during this time. Now, facing ongoing financial challenges, Islamuddin earnestly appeals to humanitarian organizations, saying, “We need sustained assistance to overcome our financial challenges. The one-time food package was helpful, but we require ongoing support to ensure our family’s well-being in the long run.” This case study underscores the immediate impact of the organization’s assistance and sheds light on the persistent challenges faced by Islamuddin’s family, emphasizing the need for sustained humanitarian aid.

Case Study: Mohammad Tahir’s Struggle for Livelihood

Mohammad Tahir, a 63-year-old resident of Arghandab Bala village in Balkh district, faces significant challenges in providing for his family. Living with his four daughters and coping with the loss of his wife to illness, Mohammad Tahir’s physical frailty prevents him from engaging in work to support his family. The daughters, constrained by village traditions, sew female clothes within their village to make ends meet. However, due to the village culture, they are unable to seek employment outside their homes. Situated in a remote area far from the district center, the family grapples with the absence of basic facilities. The village’s remoteness makes it financially impractical for them to commute to the district center to acquire materials for their sewing. Additionally, the lack of electricity further compounds their daily hardships. Last year, the village elders introduced Mohammad Tahir’s family to the organization. Within two weeks, they were invited to the office, where they underwent a one-day training session. At the end of the training, they received cash assistance along with transportation costs. Reflecting on the impact, they expressed gratitude, stating, “We were very glad, and this assistance eased our problems for a while.” Acknowledging the immediate relief provided, they emphasized the ongoing need for such assistance to meet their basic needs. In conclusion, the family thanked the organization for their support and appealed for continued assistance to alleviate their ongoing struggles. This case study highlights the positive impact of the intervention while shedding light on the enduring challenges faced by Mohammad Tahir’s family in their quest for a sustainable livelihood.

Case Study: Durkhani’s Struggle with Disabilities and Despair

Durkhani, a 38-year-old woman residing in Arghandab Bala village of Balkh district, faces profound challenges due to physical disabilities and mental health issues. Having lost her father some years ago, Durkhani depends on her ill mother for care. Unfortunately, her mother is also sick, compounding the difficulties they endure. Living alone, Durkhani and her mother struggle to meet their daily needs. Durkhani’s brother, though married, lives separately and offers minimal attention and support. The family relies heavily on the generosity of neighbors, who often provide them with food and assistance. The precarious nature of their situation prompted the village representatives to introduce them to the organization. Within two weeks of the introduction, the organization provided them with much-needed cash assistance. The amount offered addressed their most pressing needs, providing a relief for approximately one month. Reflecting on the impact, it is evident that this assistance has brought temporary relief to Durkhani and her mother. However, their desperate situation persists, and any form of assistance could make a significant difference in their lives. This case study underscores the challenges faced by Durkhani and her family, emphasizing the impact of timely assistance from the organization while highlighting the ongoing need for support in their difficult circumstances.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The analysis in the last chapter on the nine CHS commitments and other issues shows that the CAFOD response has largely been relevant, timely, efficient, and effective. Out of the twenty-four questions posed in the household survey, the majority of respondents gave negative responses in one province on three questions and in two provinces on one question related to sustainability of impact. On an overall basis across men and women in all four provinces, the majority of respondents expressed high satisfaction on eighteen questions and partial satisfaction on six questions, three of them related to impact and sustainability which are difficult to achieve in emergencies. Satisfaction across men and women was comparable.

The key overall conclusions for the CHS standards and other key issues reviewed were as follows:

CHS 1: Appropriate and relevant aid

All the projects focused on aims in line with CAFOD's strategy and critical needs of the most vulnerable groups in communities based on needs assessments conducted by partners. However, there is a need to document the focus on the most vulnerable regions, communities and families more clearly in needs assessment reports and proposals for CAFOD-funded partners.

CHS 2: Timely and effective aid.

All the communities reported that the aid was timely for them given that communities remain vulnerable throughout the years given the increased shocks from drought, conflict and other hazards. There were some delays reported from some communities in receiving time-bound services such as support for kitchen gardening. Most of the projects started within 3-4 months of the launch of DEC and CAFOD appeals. Agencies faced long delays due to issues with transferring funds to Afghanistan following the global financial restrictions faced after the fall of the Ghani regime and due to delays in granting of approvals by the new authorities. Some delays also occurred due to lack of emergency preparedness plans among both DEC and CAFOD funded partner agencies and the lack of clear policies on using alternative funds transfer options.

CHS 3: Do-no-harm and increased resilience.

Both DEC and CAFOD-funded partners have strong safeguarding policies and communities largely reported no harm to them from project work beyond conflicts in one province with families who were not given aid. Communities also mentioned a wide range of ways in which different projects helped communities become more resilient against future emergencies, e.g., flood mitigation structures, DRR activities and drought-resistance income activities under DEC funding. However, communities also mentioned that given their high vulnerability to multiple hazards, much more work is needed in terms of resilience and DRR.

CHS 4: Access to information, communication and participation.

The main approach used by partner agencies to ensure rights, information and participation of communities was the establishment of community-based organizations in both DEC and CAFOD-funded projects. The committees played a crucial role in mobilizing communities, helping in identifying the most deserving beneficiaries, assisting in distribution of services, maintaining project

infrastructure and resolving problems. Partners used these committees to disseminate information about the agencies, project work, complaint mechanisms and other issues. Community responses on “Access to Rights, Information and Participation” varied considerably across the questions and provinces but in all provinces the majority of respondents expressed at least partial satisfaction. A key FGD observation was that after the start of the project and formation of village committees, interaction of agencies with the rest of the community decreased considerably. However, there were few gender differences in satisfaction with participation and in all villages men and women expressed similar levels of satisfaction with participation.

CHS 5: Access to complaint mechanisms

All agencies had complaint mechanisms in place while about half of the agencies shared detailed complaint policies but none shared summaries of the type of complaints made and how they were redressed. Household survey responses on complaint mechanisms were generally satisfactory in all provinces across both men and women though nearly 75% of the men in Takhar who made complaints expressed dissatisfaction with the redressal of their complaints. People were usually more satisfied where multiple complaint methods were used, as in DEC-funded projects. Thus, some improvements are needed in terms of use of multiple channels of complaints, providing complaint instructions in local languages, summarizing, and analyzing complaints and ensuring adequate use and access by the most marginalized sections of the community like illiterate persons, women, older persons, and persons with disability in CAFOD-funded partners. Finally, it is also critical to make people aware about the broad range of issues that they can make complaints on, including gender and inclusion, community respect and dignity, technical standards and quality issues so that the complaints are not just focused on delays, inadequacy and non-provision.

CHS 6: Coordinated and complementary assistance

All partner agencies under DEC and CAFOD funding are coordinating extensively with UN agencies and NGOs through different platforms and structures at the Kabul and provincial levels. The UN-led working groups in Kabul and provinces are the main platform for coordination on technical, logistical, informational and strategic issues of relevance for all aid agencies. The other key platform is ACBAR which is a national, independent, non-government organization (NGO). Partners mentioned these platforms as a key means for identifying pressing needs and ensuring geographical coordination. However, most partners also felt that in terms of gaining access and approval from the authorities, they were still largely on their own. A key opportunity for further coordination could be more engagement among CAFOD partners for information sharing, joint programming and capacity building and representation which could help improve programme quality and reduce costs. At least two-thirds of both men and women in all provinces reported no duplication or lack of coordination among different agencies in the household survey.

CHS 7: Organizations learn from experience and reflection

Most agencies extensively used their learning from past programming in Afghanistan to inform their current response on the importance of community mobilization and participation and specific tools and approaches for this purpose; the value of extensive coordination with government and other agencies; the need to establish representative community committees and using them extensively to reduce conflicts and improve decision-making; the importance of using do-no-harm principles and ensuring safeguarding and building the resilience of communities. With respect to documenting learning from the current crisis for the future, many partners undertook written learning exercises, a summary of key learnings being as follows: importance of accurate beneficiary

selection, community mobilization, strong coordination and use of effective complaint mechanisms. While partners are documenting lessons, there is considerable variation in the quality and depth of such work. Thus, more systematic attention to learning issues by using globally used approaches may help improve the quality of partners learning activities. Community-level data shows that there seems to be a need to monitor changing needs in communities more closely and make changes in project work accordingly.

CHS 8: Competent and well-managed staff and volunteers

Many of the local partners faced a large exodus of staff after the fall of the Ghani regime as many aid workers left Afghanistan. However, CAFOD partners have all still managed to retain competent and skilled teams largely consisting of Afghan staff. However, a key challenge has been in recruiting women staff after the ban imposed on women from working in the humanitarian sector in 2022. Given the strong emphasis of CAFOD and its partners on gender equity, they have all worked creatively to work round this ban and still retain their women staff. At the Kabul level, this has included having women staff work remotely and coming to office occasionally. At the field level, all the partners have managed to obtain permission to retain their field female staff on the condition that they don't come to the office and go straight to the field accompanied by a close male relative. Communities were happy with the quality of staff and their competence and close to 100% of both men and women appreciated the interaction with the staff a lot across all provinces. CAFOD-funded national partners expressed a desire for more capacity-building activities in the future in key programming areas such assessments, accountability and resilience.

CHS 9: Managing resources effectively, efficiently, and ethically

The key challenge CAFOD and its partner agencies faced in using resources efficiently related to sending money to Afghanistan due to the global restrictions imposed on Afghanistan after the fall of the Ghani regime. This led to delays of several months initially until CAFOD was able to develop alternative fund transfer modalities. There are also restrictions imposed by the authorities on the amounts that agencies can withdraw from banks within a month and cumbersome financial reporting requirements. Finally, some agencies also reported pressure from some government officials, often those retained from the last regime, to offer them bribes in return for obtaining work authorizations. The vast majority of men and women in all provinces were highly satisfied that there was no wastage of resources or misuse of funds. The funds were well-utilized with nearly 100% spending on the DEC projects and all DEC target outcomes were achieved.

CAFOD partnerships

CAFOD's Afghanistan programme was a small one before the 2021 crisis with three local partners which has expanded hugely after the 2021 crisis. Given the shortage of high-capacity local partners and CAFOD's global emphasis on working through local partners, it has developed a strategy to respond to the 2021 crisis that strikes a balance between ensuring a rapid and large response to the huge crisis by working through Main partner for the larger DEC funds and working through local partners for CAFOD funds and building their capacity. Partners appreciated the space that CAFOD gives to implementing partners in identifying programme areas and strategies in line with the CAFOD partnership principles of shared partnership objectives, equitable relationships, subsidiarity & participation. CAFOD requires national implementing partners for CAFOD funds to get major programme decisions such as procurement, programme areas and beneficiary selection, approved by CAFOD. In a few cases, some delays were reported beyond the feedback time period required during a crisis by some national partners for CAFOD funds. Thus, it may be

helpful for CAFOD to develop clear timelines for providing such feedback during emergencies and tracking adherence to it. The longer-term national partners also mentioned the extensive capacity-building that CAFOD had undertaken for them in the past. However, given the high dislocation and high staff turnover since the crisis, the national partners especially all expressed the need for further capacity-building in these areas.

DEC funding overview: The best responses among the four provinces were from Daikundi, followed by Samangan and Takhar, the three DEC-funded provinces. The DEC projects did particularly well in the assessments quality, targeting of the most needy beneficiaries and targeting of priority needs (CHS) with the majority of beneficiaries satisfied. Their performance on timeliness (CHS2), resilience and do-no-harm (CHS 3) and access to information and participation was generally good with the majority of respondents at least partially satisfied. There were some issues in Takhar with the resolution of complaint mechanisms though satisfaction in Daikundi and Samangan even on complaints was high. DEC funded partners used coordination mechanisms well in Kabul and provinces (CHS 6). On learning and reflection (CHS 7), DEC-funded partner staff mentioned that they have used past learning extensively and are documenting learning from this response though they did not share any documents to reflect that. Also, in Daikundi, the majority of felt that the agency did not adapt its programming based on changing needs. DEC-funded partners handled staff issues well, including the issue of women staff, though the issue of linguistically appropriate staffing applies to them too. Finally, the use of financial resources was efficient and close to 100% and the achievement of targeted outcomes high.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions provided above, a few key recommendations are presented to CAFOD for implementation with its key partners in Afghanistan under different areas:

CHS 1: Ensuring focus on the most vulnerable groups

2. Provide technical assistance to the implementing partners, especially the smaller national ones funded through CAFOD funds, to undertake in-depth assessments and analysis to ensure a focus on the most vulnerable regions, communities and families and document their outcomes in detail in needs assessment reports and proposals to ensure transparency and accountability.
3. Encourage partners to prioritize community projects with long-term benefits such as providing equipment for livelihoods (e.g., carpentry tools, tailoring machines, wheelbarrows, or livestock) rather than short-term food packages); address the urgent need for basic health clinics in villages with difficult terrain and remote locations to ensure timely access to medical treatment directly or through referrals; tailor the kitchen gardening component of the programme to be more effective in semi-urban areas, where beneficiaries can sell their produce in vegetable markets; consider alternative activities for rural areas with limited market access.

CHS 2: Ensuring timely and effective aid through emergency preparedness plans

4. Develop detailed emergency preparedness plans in partnerships with key long-term emergency partners and communities that include a clear identification of key partners, key programme modalities, approaches and sectors; clear policies on using alternative funds transfer options and other key programme and programme support issues to ensure timely and effective aid. Provide help particularly to the smaller national partners in this regard.

5. Encourage partners to distribute goods, services, or aid directly to beneficiaries' villages, avoiding placement in other villages or district centers to alleviate travel burdens on vulnerable populations.

CHS 3: Increasing community resilience through climate smart- resilience work

6. Develop a long-term resilience programme in partnership with key partners to strengthen the resilience of communities and reduce their vulnerability to future disasters covering aspects such as establishment and capacity-building of community resilience committees, establishment of early warning systems, construction of community infrastructure and strengthening of climate-smart and disaster-resilient livelihoods options. Activities could include building water harvesting channels, protection walls, and training communities on community-level disaster preparedness.

CHS 5: Enhancing the effectiveness of complaint mechanisms

7. Provide technical assistance to partners to develop complaint mechanisms which:
 - provide multiple channels of complaints;
 - summarize and analyze complaints for review by senior management and CAFOD to ensure that complaints made to the organizations are monitored by senior managers and donors to guarantee proper and attentive resolution;
 - make people aware about the broad range of issues that they can make complaints on, including gender and inclusion, community respect and dignity, technical standards and quality issues so that the complaints are not just focused on delays and non-provision.
 - encourage beneficiaries and community members to voice complaints and suggestions with confidence that their feedback is confidential and will not adversely affect them.

CHS 6: Improving coordination among CAFOD partners

8. Encourage greater coordination and collaboration among CAFOD partners for information sharing, joint needs assessments and programming and capacity building and representation on delays in approvals by authorities and their reporting requirements which could help improve programme quality and reduce costs for all partners, especially at Kabul level where almost all partners are based.

CHS 7: Encouraging the use of more systematic learning among partners

9. Provide technical assistance to partners to give more systematic attention to learning issues by using globally used approaches that may help improve the quality of partners' learning activities, using CHS guidelines.

CHS 8: Deploying staff with appropriate language skills

10. Encourage partners to deploy project staff who speak the language of the majority in specific communities, especially in Uzbek and Pushto speaking communities.

CAFOD partnerships

11. Develop clear timelines for providing feedback and approvals to partners on key project decisions during emergencies and track adherence to them to ensure timely aid.
12. Given the high dislocation and high staff turnover since the crisis, develop a comprehensive plan for national partners for further capacity-building in key programme areas such as climate-resilient DRR and livelihoods work to reduce environmental harm based on a detailed needs assessment.

