



**OUR COMMITMENTS TO STRENGTHEN  
LOCALISATION AND PARTNERSHIP  
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

Democratic Republic of Congo - Isabel Corthier/Caritas



## INTRODUCTION

Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of 165 national Caritas organisations<sup>1</sup>, working in more than 200 countries and territories all over the world. Each Caritas is established by and accountable to the national Catholic bishops' conference, and is an independent national entity. Each national Caritas has sub-national/territorial structures at the diocesan and parish level<sup>2</sup> working with and supporting communities in promoting integral human development, including humanitarian assistance in a crisis.

The Grand Bargain Commitment to Localisation, *More support and tools to national and local actors*<sup>3</sup> is an affirmation and acceptance of the principle of fraternal cooperation and partnership, at the heart of Caritas. The localisation agenda is an opportunity for the confederation to renew and improve already existing collective commitments to partnership.

“The localisation agenda may be an approval and acceptance of our traditional partnership principle and may serve as an impetus to continue and widen the principle of partnership. A localised response is deeply rooted in our organisational DNA.” **Caritas organisation operating internationally**

Prior to the World Humanitarian Summit, Caritas Internationalis published a position paper<sup>4</sup>, outlining its humanitarian commitments with specific reference to the importance of localisation. The paper affirmed that:

- Caritas organisations will continue to strengthen the model of local/international cooperation and partnership in humanitarian response – subsidiarity in action.
- Caritas' commitment to reducing the impact of humanitarian crises by enhancing disaster preparedness and response is set out in its Strategic Framework.
- Caritas will continue to support Catholic Church leaders in order to engage on conflict and promote inter-faith collaboration where it can increase protection of people.
- Caritas commits to the promotion and application of humanitarian principles, especially since they are coherent with Catholic teaching that serves as the basis of its mission and action in the humanitarian field.

Advancing these commitments, Caritas Internationalis has developed this position paper on how it supports the collective commitments made under workstream 2 of the Grand Bargain<sup>5</sup>: *More Support and Tools to national and local actors*.

This paper outlines the organisational and global governance structures of confederation members and the commitments members have made to further strengthen localisation and partnership in humanitarian action. The commitments to strengthen localisation and partnership in humanitarian action outlined in this paper are based on a consultation across the confederation in 2018<sup>6</sup>.

## CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS: A CONFEDERATION OF NATIONAL MEMBERS

Caritas organisations incorporate humanitarian, health and social services, and integral human development, with a moral mandate to respond to humanitarian and other human needs without distinction as to origin, nationality, creed or sex. Caritas members play a pivotal role in humanitarian emergencies, in conflict settings and in natural disaster contexts.

Rooted in Catholic teaching, Caritas Internationalis maintains humanitarian relief and protection of the most vulnerable,

1 - Caritas Internationalis member organisations (CIMOs)

2 - Both are administrative entities: dioceses are supervised by bishops, parishes by priests

3 - <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>

4 - <https://www.caritas.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/WorldHumanitarianSummit16Position.pdf>

5 - Two confederation members, CAFOD and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), are signatories to the Grand Bargain.

6 - In February 2018, Caritas Internationalis commissioned a survey on localisation, focusing on CI's 165 member organisations (CIMOs). The survey gathered specific quantitative data based on the commitment of workstream 2 (localisation) of the Grand Bargain, and on qualitative views and perceptions of CI Member Organisations on localisation, as well as on the modes of collaboration within the Caritas network and the nature of engagement between CIMOs. The survey was conducted online in March 2018 and was shared widely within the Caritas network in CI's three official languages – English, French and Spanish. In total, 127 people from CIMOs and diocesan Caritas in 80 different countries on all six continents responded to the survey. In terms of the respondents, the views of 31 internationally operating Caritas organisations were gathered, 27 of which are CIMOs and 4 diocesan Caritas. Of locally operating Caritas, 63 responded, of which 45 are CIMOs, 13 diocesan Caritas, and 5 other organisations, including parish organisations. While for many of the responding Caritas organisations only one person within the organisation responded, several others provided more than one response from different people within the same organisation.

at the heart of its action. Caritas members on the ground are essential actors in the humanitarian community in which they are rooted, reaching out to people in local communities in the most remote parts of the world. Caritas Internationalis supports and promotes universal humanitarian principles, and upholds SPHERE standards and principles and norms in accordance with international humanitarian law. In addition to individual members' efforts, Caritas as a confederation responds to major humanitarian crises around the world<sup>7</sup>.



Mongolia - Katie Orlinsky/Caritas

## GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Founded in Rome in 1951 during the pontificate of Pius XII, Caritas Internationalis operates within the Catholic Church and gathers together the national Caritas organisations supported by their respective bishops (local Roman Catholic episcopal conferences) in order to foster reciprocal knowledge, coordination and collaboration, by carrying out charitable and social activities throughout many parts of the world<sup>8</sup>. The autonomy of each national Caritas member is enshrined in Article 5h of the Rights of Member Organisations of the Caritas Internationalis Statutes and Rules<sup>9</sup>, – that they will “have their autonomy respected by Caritas Internationalis and its organs within the legal framework of Caritas Internationalis”. In 2004 Pope John Paul II underlined the autonomy of Caritas members, stating that the confederation is “far from limiting the autonomy to which these [national] branches are entitled”<sup>10</sup>. Article 1.3 of Caritas Internationalis’ Internal Rules prescribes that: “Member Organisations must meet minimum standards of governance, organisational infrastructure, financial viability and accountability, and compliance with ethical codes of conduct, as decided by the Representative Council. They remain autonomous in their juridical, financial and contractual status.”<sup>11</sup>

The collaborative nature of the confederation promotes a variety of approaches to cooperation and partnerships to deliver humanitarian assistance, via the following modes of implementation and funding modalities.

- **Caritas Emergency Appeals** are a pooled funding mechanism, whereby Caritas organisations can pledge and allocate funding (private and institutional) for a particular humanitarian crisis in one country.
- **Bilateral funding** is a bilateral agreement between internationally and locally operating Caritas organisations to fund and support the humanitarian work of the latter.
- **Direct self-implementation** is another mode of implementation whereby the international operating Caritas organisations delivers directly to affected people, locally.

7 - <https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/>

8 - Letter of John Paul II, During the Last Supper to Caritas Internationalis for the acquisition of a public, juridical and canonical personality, 16 September 2004. [https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/2004/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_20040916\\_caritas-internationalis.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/2004/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20040916_caritas-internationalis.html)

9 - Caritas Internationalis Statutes and Internal Rules, <https://www.caritas.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/StatutesEN.pdf>

10 - Ibid

11 - <https://www.caritas.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CodesEthicsConduct.pdf>

The Caritas Internationalis' General Secretariat is not an operational organisation.

Its members are operational at international, national, diocesan, parish and community level. This gives the confederation a far-reaching structure of influence, which can range from local level to the global stage. It also means that its national and local branches have the capacity to respond to humanitarian disasters within hours.

Staff and volunteers are members of the local communities, understand best local contexts and populations, representing different ethnic groups and belief systems, and their cultures and elites, possible tension spots and the best way to encourage community participation in their own rehabilitation.

National Caritas organisations and their diocesan and parish entities fall into the Grand Bargain-agreed IASC definitions of "National NGO/CSOs" or "Local NGOs/CSOs"<sup>12</sup>. As defined by the localisation marker which states, "local and national non-state actors are organisations engaged in relief that are headquartered and operating in their own aid recipient country and which are not affiliated to an international NGO", national Caritas organisations are local and national actors that are headquartered and operating in their own aid recipient country<sup>13</sup> and maintain independent fundraising and governance systems. Thus, while they are members of the broader Caritas confederation, they remain local organisations.

"The opportunities to continue with humanitarian action derive from the recognition and acceptance of humanitarian access to the organisation by the various actors in local areas." **Caritas operating locally in South America**



Venezuela - Sara Fajardo/Caritas

As first responders, the national and local Caritas members can quickly and efficiently respond to crises, in a culturally appropriate manner, addressing the concerns of those affected in dignified way. The same organisations will also accompany and support affected communities in the post-crisis phase, identifying needs and supporting communities in their efforts to recover and rebuild.

12 - Local and national non-state actors are "Organisations engaged in relief that are headquartered and operating in their own aid recipient country and which are not affiliated to an international NGO". Note: "A local actor is not considered to be affiliated merely because it is part of a network, confederation or alliance wherein it maintains independent fundraising and governance systems" (text endorsed by GB signatories). [https://interagency-standingcommittee.org/system/files/hftt\\_localisation\\_marker\\_definitions\\_paper\\_24\\_january\\_2018.pdf](https://interagency-standingcommittee.org/system/files/hftt_localisation_marker_definitions_paper_24_january_2018.pdf)

13 - Seven Caritas members are not engaged in relief in their own country and by mandate only work internationally: Caritas Australia, CAFOD (Catholic Agency For Overseas Development England and Wales), Catholic Relief Services (CRS US), Cordaid (Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid, Netherlands), Development and Peace (Canada), Trócaire (Ireland) and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF).



Caritas members make an important contribution to analysing needs and formulating responses, and facilitating dialogue between various responders and affected communities. The permanency of the Caritas structures allow for long-term programming and short-term responses to sit side-by-side. In a number of countries, Caritas members play an important role in peace building, conflict resolution and mediation.

“With a strong local Church presence, strong solidarity among the local people, and with financial resources it is easy to deploy staff from one diocese to support the other, and easy to communicate with local staff.” **Caritas operating locally in Africa**

## ACCESS TO FUNDING

Members across the Caritas confederation recognise that core funding investment is indispensable to strengthen the quality and standard of responses, the effectiveness and efficiency of any organisation, and to improve overall transparency and accountability of humanitarian programming. The existing funding modalities within the confederation, particularly the emergency appeal system, comprise a fast and efficient tool for Caritas members to access funding. However, operational members often face challenges in covering their administrative or unearmarked costs.

“Explicitly mentioning capacity strengthening in a partnership agreement should be mandatory for all Caritas organisations funding [us]” **Caritas operating domestically**

## INVESTING IN CAPACITY

In 2014, Caritas drew up a set of [Management Standards](#) that are effective for every member, large or small. These standards help Caritas organisations to identify their individual capacity strengthening needs, pool and share technical resource personnel, and coordinate improvement initiatives. In addition, a Caritas Internationalis Code of Ethics<sup>14</sup> and a Code of Conduct for Staff are in place. All Caritas members must adhere to humanitarian standards in delivering a response<sup>15</sup>.

The confederation invests in a rapid response support mechanism which facilitates deployment of experienced technical staff in an emergency. This strengthens the efficiency and quality of response and contributes to strengthening the capacity of the responding Caritas member.



Myanmar - Tommy Trenchard/Caritas

14 - <https://www.caritas.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CodesEthicsConduct.pdf>

15 - All Members of the confederation are signatories to international standards, such as the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organisations, and The Sphere Project's Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. The confederation provides access to training and organisational development, provided by sectoral working groups (Shelter, Wash, Accountability) and regional Caritas groups, and secondment and technical surge capacity to ensure members are equipped and supported to provide timely and effective humanitarian response in accordance with international standards.

## CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS COMMITMENTS TO STRENGTHEN LOCALISATION AND PARTNERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

As outlined above, Caritas is built on the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and autonomy, the foundation of partnership, mutual respect and collaboration. Strengthening partnerships with communities ensures a humanitarian response based on need, delivered in a timely and principled way. Recognising the challenges in strengthening partnership in humanitarian action, the confederation has reviewed the current support available to members. The following commitments will strengthen the work of the confederation, strengthening and promoting the role and contribution of each Caritas member in humanitarian action.

- 1. Strategic priority of partnership - Caritas recognises and reinforces the critical role of each national Caritas organisation as a first responder.** The leadership role of each national Caritas in coordinating the collective humanitarian response is central to the Caritas Internationalis Emergency Response Framework.
- 2. Capacity strengthening** – the collective commitment of the confederation is to strengthen and promote the capacity and sustainability of the national Caritas organisation to respond to humanitarian crises. Capacity assessments consider the long-term response of the organisation, planning beyond the immediate capacity requirements to deliver a humanitarian response. **A commitment to capacity strengthening will feature in every partnership agreement between an international and local Caritas. Additionally, at least 2% of each emergency appeal will be earmarked for capacity investment of the national member responding to a humanitarian crisis.**
- 3. Access to funding:** Where a national Caritas member is best-placed to access and secure funding to sustain a high quality humanitarian response, other **confederation members will refrain from competing for or securing nationally available funding such as pooled funds or funds available from institutional donors present in-country.** In addition, confederation members will increasingly collaborate with and support national Caritas members to secure direct funding from institutional donors.
- 4. Reporting formats:** Building on the successful model of Caritas Internationalis Emergency Appeals, reflecting the sector-wide commitments of the Grand Bargain workstreams and noting the New Way of Working, **the confederation will promote a common reporting modality for all members and work towards achieving this by 2020.**
- 5. Core costs:** Noting the essential requirement of funds to cover indirect costs, promote organisational development and support long-term programme commitments, **the confederation commits to providing at least 5% of the humanitarian funding budget towards coverage of the core/administrative costs of implementing partners of humanitarian actors in a response.** Caritas organisations will advocate internally and externally on the practical necessities of core funding for organisations. Core funding investment will be necessary to strengthen standards of programming, transparency and overall accountability of humanitarian programming.
- 6. Coordination and representation:** Given that increasing collaboration and consultation are priorities for the confederation, national Caritas will be requested to step up engagement in national, sub-national and local coordination mechanisms as much as possible. Recognising obstacles that may exist, such as funding, capacity, technical knowledge and language barriers, **the confederation will collaborate to support and promote the expertise and influence of national members in humanitarian coordination.**
- 7. Investing in surge capacity: Investment in surge capacity across the confederation is key to strengthening capacity, reputation and recognition of national actors as humanitarian responders.** Noting the need for cross-organisational surge support, particularly south-south, to provide relevant technical expertise in a humanitarian response, Caritas national organisations commit to supporting national capacity with secondments, facilitating surge capacity, and promoting efforts to strengthen staff retention.

“We are more empowered than ever. Capacity strengthening activities have made a huge impact. We already were proficient at humanitarian and development programming. We are now in a good position to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and World Humanitarian Summit agenda to provide a more dignified life for the marginalised”. **Caritas operating locally in Asia**

Further information on the work of Caritas may be found to [www.caritas.org](http://www.caritas.org)

