Application Regulations from the Committee and Service for Charitable Action for the Development of Peoples

PREAMBLE

Every human being has full dignity, beyond all historical, cultural or religious barriers, and therefore has an "inviolable dignity... and no one can consider himself or herself authorized by particular situations to deny this conviction or to act against it" [Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter "Fratelli tutti," No. 213]. This principle of the primacy of the human person, and the protection of their rights, guides the entire activity of the Committee and Service for Charitable Action for the Development of Peoples. It is a principle that the Church has always reaffirmed because every human being is loved by God and made in His image. "Love of God and love of neighbour are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment"; and " The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable" (cf. Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, n.18 and n.25 and Intima Ecclesiae Natura, Proem). Hence the priority commitment of the Committee and Service to those who are weakest and poorest, the "little ones" in biblical language, who are the living flesh of Christ.

The poor, if they are the presence of Jesus, cannot simply be the recipient of a donation; they must be the protagonist of a change. This is why it is important to prioritize actions focused on formation and promotion. Authentic formation, that generates and enhances skills, has to be offered to every individual and every community, starting precisely with the most excluded. This is fundamental at all levels, within an inclusive perspective.

Thus, those who are on the margins become the centre, able to promote an involvement that starts from the heart of all those who live around them and who are offered the possibility of becoming a true community. The poor can become the leaven for a dough that already exists, which is the society often lacking justice, solidarity, compassion and the ability to share. This is precisely what the poor could facilitate and restore.

The concepts of "person" and "community" help to promote a fully human development, because they emphasize "relationship" rather than individualism, of "inclusion" rather than exclusion, of unique and inviolable "dignity" rather than exploitation, of "freedom" rather than constraint. Significant in this perspective is the reference contained in the Italian legislation on cooperation for development (see Law 125/2014, art.2 " cooperation for development, in recognizing the centrality of the human person, in its individual and community dimension, promotes... the fundamental objectives aimed at: a) eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities...; b) protecting and affirming human rights...; c) preventing conflicts, supporting peace processes...").

In the face of the complexity of needs, it is clear that the specific actions can only be signs, an expression of an outward-looking Church, attentive to those who suffer most. While helping the poorest to grow in their dignity, one should *first and foremost* be leaven, building relationships, promoting a culture of encounter and charity, involving and sensitizing Christian communities, helping them to understand situations in order to take charge of them and foster local co-participation in the implementation of projects.

It is therefore essential that the actions carried out succeed in being a leaven that animates, giving rise to processes of sustainable development and accompaniment in which the capacities of all are valued. From

the perspective of subsidiarity, forms of local development are encouraged in the context of an integral human development that, in the light of the Social Doctrine of the Church, places each person at the centre as an active subject of the community, and the community as a place of authentic resources and necessary participation.

Art. 1 - General Principles

The Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) assumes as its own the commitment to promote integral human development, in a context of evangelical witness and solidarity among peoples, enhancing the initiatives of local Churches.

For the implementation of the actions aimed at this purpose, and to be financed with the funds deriving from the 8x1000 (eight per thousand) referred to in the 1984 Revision Agreement of the Lateran Concordat, stipulated between the Holy See and the Republic of Italy, Law No. 222/1985 and Circular No. 20/1990 of the Committee for the affairs of Ecclesiastical Institutions and Property, the CEI has established a special Service (Office of the General Secretariat) and a Committee for Charitable Actions for the Development of Peoples (Service and Committee).

Art. 2 - Committee

The composition and responsibilities of the Committee are established by the Regulations approved by the Permanent Episcopal Council of the CEI.

The Committee gives its assessment, as to whether the project is approved in whole or in part or rejected, in accordance with the Regulations.

The final decision for each project rests with the Presidency of the CEI.

The Committee is validly constituted with the presence of the majority of its members and deliberates by an absolute majority of those present. The Committee meets at least six times a year, according to the schedule and agenda set by its Chairman.

For the day-to-day management of its activities, the Committee may adopt guidelines and criteria in accordance with the Regulations, using the best knowledge in the matter.

Committee members are not remunerated for their service.

Art. 3 - Service

The Service maintains constant contact with local Churches and other partners involved in the projects and, in particular:

- Verifies the completeness of the documentation, prepares its own assessment and, upon completion of the preliminary stage, forwards the projects to the Committee;
- Communicates the decisions of the CEI Presidency to the applicant entities (in accordance with Articles 9 and 10 of these Regulations;
- Verifies the completeness and compliance of the interim and final reports of each project until the formal conclusion of the project;

- Monitors the progress of projects and carries out inspections, planned and coordinated by the Head of Service;
- Evaluates and authorizes, within the limits of Article 12(6), any requests for changes in the project, provided that the objectives already approved by the CEI Presidency, remain unchanged.

Art. 4 – Countries targeted for action

The recipient countries of the Committee's actions are those provided for in Article 48 of Law 222/1985, currently identifiable with the Countries included in the list provided by the Organization for the Cooperation and Economic Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) as recipients of public help for development. This list is periodically updated.

Art. 5 - Applicant Entities

The Episcopal Conferences of the countries targeted for action are the reference points for all initiatives, indicating the framework of local priorities, and ensuring a fair distribution of human and financial resources.

Entities eligible to apply for funding to support projects under Article 6 are:

- National Episcopal Conferences and Dioceses of the Countries referred to in Article 4, including bodies with social, health or charitable purposes related to them in a functional and organic relationship, recognized by the Episcopal Conference and/or the local Bishop, and legally constituted;
- National and diocesan Caritas in the countries mentioned in Article 4;
- Italian Dioceses engaged with Fidei Donum lay people and/or priests in inter-Church cooperation projects in the countries mentioned in Article 4;
- Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of Pontifical Right operating in the countries mentioned in Article 4.

Subject to specific and previous accreditation by the Presidency of the CEI, other entities of proven reliability and relevance in international cooperation and volunteerism present in the countries referred to in Article 4, are also eligible to apply for funding, such as:

- Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life of diocesan right;
- Church Associations and Movements;
- Italian Civil Society Organizations (CSO), legally constituted according to current regulations and recognized by the Italian State which have, in their statutes, an explicit reference to international cooperation and volunteering and which are presented by the Italian Dioceses where they have their registered offices;
- Universities and Research Institutes formally recognized by the National Episcopal Conferences or linked to them in a functional and organic relationship.

Accreditation is conferred at the discretion of the Presidency of the CEI, following the recommendation of the Service, and is a prerequisite for being able to submit a project.

All entities that have completed and properly reported on at least two CEI funded projects during the last five years prior to the approval of these Regulations are to be considered already accredited: for these entities,

formal accreditation begins with the date of approval of these Regulations. Please refer to the Guidelines for accreditation procedures.

Art. 6 - Fundable projects

According to the guidelines of the Social Magisterium of the Church, and in compliance with the purposes of Article 48 of Law 222/1985, charitable projects that promote integral human development are eligible for funding.

6.a Priorities

Priority is given to projects that foster community processes for sustainable development:

- In the fight against misery, which directly targets communities and people living in situations of extreme poverty, disability, marginalization, refugee and/or displaced persons, children (e.g., innovative projects for street children, sick children, children with disabilities, etc.), and people who are victims of violence and/or discrimination, including ethnic-religious minorities;
- Formation, from an inclusive perspective, that aims to ensure access to educational opportunities by the poorest, those most discriminated against and disadvantaged people.

6.b General scope and objectives.

By way of example, projects aimed at may be submitted:

- Fighting hunger by increasing food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture;
- Ensuring quality, equitable and inclusive education, from basic literacy to vocational training, adult education, training of trainers/educators, as well as university education;
- Protecting the health of the poorest people by ensuring decent health services for all people of all ages and promoting preventive activities;
- Ensuring access to potable water and sanitation;
- Promoting the dignity of women, the protection of minors and vulnerable adults;
- Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy systems;
- Acting to protect the environment, including prevention, to combat the consequences of climate change;
- Fostering the development of peaceful and more inclusive societies with initiatives aimed at reconciliation to contribute to nonviolent conflict management and the promotion of civic engagement;
- Supporting social communication activities;
- Promoting sustainable social enterprise initiatives that foster lasting and inclusive progress, with special attention to the most excluded;
- Promoting and supporting financial inclusion and social and entrepreneurial microcredit projects.

6.c General criteria

- Projects must be in favour of the poorest and least protected;
- Community animation and involvement should be ensured: projects should be open to the participation of as many people as possible, with a view to taking charge of, and valuing, everyone's contribution and abilities;
- It is necessary to emphasize how the individual activities for which funding is requested are part of an overall project in which the co-participation of both the local community and the requesting entity acquires particular value;
- Projects must have a promotional, pedagogical, and animating slant and not a purely welfare-oriented one;
- Moderation, necessity, simplicity, and appropriateness to actual needs must be ensured;
- The aspect of sustainability in all its dimensions should be considered;
- From the perspective of subsidiarity, it is preferable to pursue networking through the development of relationships and collaboration, starting from the local church community, and promoting ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, and synergies with agencies and institutions;
- Advocacy/actions in favour of rights are desirable, aimed at producing changes in economic, social and cultural structures and patterns to help build more inclusive communities.

Post-emergency actions aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction, especially for the poorest communities, are not excluded since they can ensure the "continuum" between the different phases, from emergency to development.

Projects in the liturgical, catechetical, institutional areas (e.g., building and/or renovation of churches, seminaries, rectories, curias, administrative centres of Dioceses or Religious Congregations, convents, etc.) are not eligible.

The Service shall ensure that a reasonable number of simultaneously fundable projects within the same territory, or submitted by the same applicant entity, are not exceeded. Projects may not be submitted by entities that are not directly engaged in their implementation on the ground.

Article 7 – Recognised and unacceptable expenses within the scope of eligible projects

Expenses for the implementation of projects are those that correspond to what is described in Article 6 as part of the actions that can be financed.

These include, in particular, the following types of expenses:

- Formation expenses. Budgeted and well-specified expenses for local trainers are allowed;
- Construction and/or renovation. Simple and essential structures are allowed (for which specifications, floor plans, three-dimensional representations, and detailed cost estimates, as outlined in the project budget, must be provided);
- Equipment/tools/and furnishings.

Essential expenses are allowed:

- For purchase of materials, including any means of transportation strictly necessary to carry out the project; the quotations should be from local suppliers with details of costs and characteristics (possibly produced locally);
- For pharmaceuticals and medical supplies strictly necessary for the conduct of the project;

- Expenses for environmental sustainability. Expenses are eligible for the purchase and installation of equipment and machinery that ensure a lower environmental impact and use renewable energy sources related to social, health, and educational projects;
- Purchases outside the Country of intervention if necessary for the project. Purchases (of equipment, machinery, etc.) or expenses for professional expertise are permitted only if they are not available locally, or are available locally at a much higher cost;
- Management and personnel costs. General/administrative and personnel costs directly involved, limited to the duration of the project, in the activities envisaged by the project are allowed; the services must be budgeted with a clear indication of the motivation and duration of the presence of the personnel; in total, the aforementioned costs must not exceed 7% of the total cost for projects that do not fall under the two priority areas in Art. 6 a. For the latter, the percentage may be even higher.

The following types of expenses are not permitted within the scope of eligible projects:

- Costs relating to personnel not coming from countries specified in Article 4;
- Planned activities in non-target countries (conferences, congresses, meetings, seminars and programmes of study, research, surveys, services, consultancies, collaborations, etc.);
- Preparation and preliminary studies for the project;
- Current expenses for the routine operation of existing facilities;
- Any additional expenses that refer to current activities, except those strictly essential to the start-up of the project.

Expenses incurred prior to the approval of the project by the CEI Presidency, although pertaining to the project and funded activities, will not be considered valid.

Article 8 - Documentation to be submitted with the project.

Projects must be submitted to the Service as detailed in the Guide for Submitting a Project.

Each project must contain the official name, supported by the legal representative of the requesting entity, along with the name of a trusted individual who will assume the function of the operational of the project and who becomes the liaison with the Service for the administrative management of the project.

Article 9 - Procedures for approval and funding of projects.

Procedures for the reception of projects, analysis, review, and the eventual approval and funding of projects, are outlined in the Guidelines prepared by the Service.

The Service forwards the results of project evaluations to the CEI Presidency for final decisions. These are then communicated by the Service to the applicant entities.

Art. 10 - Approval of the project and communication to the requesting body.

If the project is approved, the applicant institution will receive a letter from the Service specifying the terms and conditions, and indicating the timing of the instalments for the financing of the project. It will also indicate how the total, or partial, funding contribution is to be accounted for, in order to authorize the subsequent funding and/or the conclusion of the project.

The project begins from the date of issue of the letter from the Service.

The deadline for submission of the final report will also be indicated. If the project is only partially approved, the Service will request express acceptance by the applicant entity of the approved funding.

Art. 11 - Disbursement of funding

Once the provisions of Article 10 have been completed, the Service will disburse the granted financing by means of a transfer to the bank account indicated in the application, and in the name of the applicant institution. No disbursements will be made to bank accounts in the name of individuals.

If the disbursement is made in several instalments, subsequent funding will be made only after acquiring and verifying the adequacy of the reporting of the previous one (referred to in Article 12).

In case of difficulties resulting in delayed reporting, the applicant institution is required to contact the Service to request an extension. If, after three months from the expiry of each annual instalment, the Service has received neither a report of the previous instalment nor a request for an extension, subsequent instalments, may not be disbursed.

Under no circumstances may supplementary grants be made related to a project that has already been approved and funded.

Art. 12 - Reporting

Applicant entities must provide complete and documented accounting of expenses incurred in the implementation of the approved project.

The operational manager (cf. Art. 8) shall forward to the Service and, for information, to the legal representative of the applicant entity, the aforementioned reports, together with evidence of the accuracy, completeness and consistency of the reports, with the assumption of civil and criminal liability.

In the case of financing through a single instalment, reporting must be provided by the deadline at the end of the project.

The beginning of the year coincides with the date of the letter communicating the approval of the project. Expenses, although relevant to the project and funded activities, made prior to approval will not be considered valid.

In the case of disbursements in several instalments, the reporting must be provided within the deadline for each instalment. No disbursement of subsequent instalments shall be made in the absence of reporting and verification with respect to the previous instalment.

Each variation that does not affect the amount of the project approved by the CEI must be formally communicated in advance to the Service which, after careful review of the reasons and documentation submitted by the entity, accepts or rejects the requested variation.

Reports must be submitted on forms provided by the Service and documentation of expenses incurred must be attached to them. Operational procedures for reporting are outlined in the Guide for Reporting prepared by the Service. Original documentation must remain in the custody of the applicant entity for at least 10 years from the date of submission of the report and must be made available to the Service on request.

Article 13 - Service Control Procedures

Upon receipt of the report, the Service will provide verification, consistent with the Guide for Reporting, and, if necessary, will invite the applicant entity to produce additional documentation or provide clarification on the documentation received. Once the verification has been completed, if positive, the Service will prepare

the necessary documentation for the disbursement of the next instalment (if any); if negative, the Service will notify the applicant entity of the inconsistencies and the actions it considers applicable to the case (instalment suspension, request for full or partial repayment of the instalment, etc.).

Article 14 - Accompaniment, monitoring and evaluation of projects

Strict reporting must be complemented by fraternal support and accompaniment, including through regular monitoring and appropriate evaluation. To this end, inspections prepared by the Service, referred to in Article 3, are also important.

The accompanying, monitoring and evaluation activities of funded projects are crucial in order to:

- Provide mutual help to support the initial project design;
- Offer useful tools for selecting effective and responsive activities for the purposes of the Regulations;
- Ensure maximum transparency in the use of allocated resources (this deserves special attention as they come from Italian taxpayers through the eight per thousand system).

The Guidelines are explicit as to how projects are to be accompanied, monitored and evaluated through a specially prepared, comprehensive system which also indicates any approved expenses.

Article 15 - Competence of the Presidency and the General Secretariat of the CEI.

The Presidency of the Italian Episcopal Conference is responsible for approving the Application Regulations, the relative Guidelines, and any subsequent amendments.

The General Secretariat of the Italian Episcopal Conference is responsible for the ongoing monitoring of these documents.

(Original : italiano – Marzo 2025)