News

Michael Swan

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The funding tap is flowing again for Development and Peace, although it remains closed for 52 partner organizations that continue to be investigated for alleged connections to abortion, artificial contraception and other possible conflicts with Catholic teaching.

In October, 10 of the 12 Canadian bishops who had withheld funds from the Catholic charitable organization earlier this year quietly removed restrictions and forwarded the money. However, Development and Peace, which works with 180 partner agencies worldwide, has agreed that no money will go to any agency under review.

The Archdioceses of Edmonton and Toronto continue to withhold funds and have further questions not addressed so far in the investigation. In Toronto, about $800,000 was contributed to Development and Peace last year as part of the ShareLife campaign.

Romain Duguay, Development and Peace deputy director, told The Catholic Register that the agency was sure any inquiry was "not going to find that we have promoted such a thing as abortion. ... We are sure we haven't done anything wrong."

Canada's Catholic aid agency has been working with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops since April on an ethical audit of its partners, which operate in countries throughout Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa. The audit came after a Canadian bishops' web search of the agency's partners raised questions about more than 40 organizations.

Suggestions that some partner organizations have either supported abortion access or worked for more liberal abortion laws within their own countries have dogged Development and Peace since 2008.

Canadian bishops investigated in 2009 against several partner organizations and, although the bishops said some partner agencies were "imprudent," it found no specific evidence of wrongdoing. But a follow-up investigation in 2010 looked at 248 files and found 13 that raised concerns and two that posed specific problems. As a result, Development and Peace canceled some projects and initiated procedural changes to ensure no donor money was affiliated with groups that support abortion.

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After questions emerged again this year, Development and Peace worked with CCCB staff to produce a 200-plus page report. But the report failed to achieve unanimous approval from bishops at their September plenary, Serge Langlois, executive director of Development and Peace, wrote in a Nov. 16 letter.

His letter said the agency was asked to "provide additional analysis, particularly on the criteria we use to select our partners."

The names of organizations under review have been kept out of the press to protect the reputations of people and organizations who have not been proven to have worked against Catholic teaching and values, Duguay said.

The review goes beyond abortion and includes such questions as public statements and positions organizations might have taken on same-sex marriage, gay rights and gender theory.

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Swan is associate editor of The Catholic Register, Toronto.