This is an automated translation from the original summary report, which was done in French. In case of mistakes or unclear sentences, please refer to the orginal document.

hqai
HUMANITARIAN QUALITY
ASSURANCE INITIATIVE

Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Locales (APIL)
Initial audit - Summary report - 2025/06/12

With the exception of the translations of the format and standard phrases, which are unofficial translations from English to French, the text of this document is an original draft in French.

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Audited
☐ International ☒ National ☐ Membership/netw ork Direct ☐ assistance ☐ Federation With partners	☒ Humanitarian ☒ Development ☐ Advocacy	☒ Humanitarian ☒ Development ☐ Advocacy

Legal registration	NGO of public utility
Head office location	Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Total number of staff in the organisation	230

1.2 The audit team

Lead auditor	Meur Elisabeth
Second auditor	-
Third auditor	-
Observer	-
Expert	-
Witness / other participants	Local facilitators: - Kazienga Salamata - Savadogo Wendpanga Alain

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS:2014 Audit scheme	Benchmarking
Audit cycle	Initial audit, first cycle
Type of audit	Benchmarking
Audit scope	This audit covers the entire organisation, including its head office and local offices. APIL's humanitarian and development mandates and its various areas of work are covered by this audit.
Purpose of the audit	The sampling of APIL's programmes reflects the diversity of its mandates, its areas of activity and the localities in which it operates. The security and humanitarian dimensions of its operating context are also taken into account in the selection of participants at operational level.

1.4 Sampling*

Sampling unit	National programmes
Total number of sites in the national programme/project/unit included in the sample	15
Total number of sites for site visit	1
Total number of sites for remote evaluation	3
Selection of sampling unit	

Random sampling - on-site/remote	Purposive sampling - on-site/remote
Supporting community livelihoods through the promotion of animal welfare in the Central Plateau communities by promoting animal welfare in the Central Plateau PARMEC-PC/not selected	Solidarité Agissante pour un Vivre Ensemble entre Personnes Déplacées-SONRE/remotely
Programme Victoire sur la Malnutrition plus- VIMplus/remote	Peace and development for displaced persons and vulnerable hosts - PADEP/remote
Strengthening resilience and reducing malnutrition in Burkina Faso - RRM/on site	
Food assistance and the supply of specialised nutritious food to internally displaced people, children, pregnant and children, pregnant and lactating women and host/non-selected households	
Any other considerations relating to sampling: The sample took into account safety constraints in the choice of site visited.	
Sampling risks identified: Only one programme was visited for this audit. However, the interviews and documentary analysis cover all the other programmes, so the risks of bias are mitigated.	

It is important to note that the audit results are based on a sample of an organisation's activities, programmes and documentation, as well as direct observation. The results are analysed to determine the organisation's systematic approach and the application of all aspects of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) in different contexts and working methods.

2. Audit team activities

2.1 Opening meeting

Date	2024/12/03	**Number of** participants	16
Location	Remote	**Any substantive issues** raised	-

2.2 Locations assessed

Location of sites	Dates	On-site or remote
Burkina Faso, Zorgho, Zeguedega	**20-21.01.2025**	On site
Burkina Faso, Pissila	**13.01.2025**	Remote
Burkina Faso, Boussouma, Barsalogho, Pissila and Tougouri	**10.01.2025**	Remote
Burkina Faso, Kaya, Boussouma, Korsioro, Tougouri	**10.01.2025**	Remote

2.3 The interviews

Level / Position of interviewees	Number of people interviewed		On-site or remote
	Women	**Men**	
Head office and offices			
Management	2		Remote
Staff	3	6	Remote
Member of the General Meeting		1	Remote

Sampling unit (project sites / local office(s))			
Management	1		On site
Staff	1	1	On-site
Partner staff	1	1	Remote
Other: decentralised technical services, Ministry of Agriculture	1		On site
Total number of people interviewed	9	9	18

2.4 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of people interviewed		On-site or remote
	Women	**Men**	
Management Committee for the School Gardens, Zeguedega	7	5	On site
Teachers, Zeguedega	1	2	On site
Village Development Committee and working committees, Zeguedega	6	8	On site
Total number of participants	14	15	29

2.5 Closing meeting

Date	2025/03/17	**Number of** participants	14
Location	Remote	**Any substantive issues** raised	-

3. General information about the organisation

3.1 General information

Action pour la Promotion des Initiatives Locales (APIL) is a national, non-political and non-profit organisation. APIL was founded in 1998 by volunteers with the aim of federating the farming sector, based on the recognition of the intrinsic weaknesses of the rural world of Burkina Faso. Farmer training and the mobilisation of skills were part of a wider objective to increase rural participation in sustainable development. In 2004, APIL acquired the status of development NGO and was recognised as being of public utility in 2013. In 2021, APIL acquired special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Its vision is of a Burkina Faso where there is solidarity and no hunger, where the farming populations are autonomous, collectively strong, and earn a decent income from their work thanks to more equitable, inclusive and sustainable food systems. Its mission is inspired by the values of social commitment, equity and respect. It aims to provide small family farms with technical and organisational innovations that guarantee a sustainable improvement in their living conditions. Its mission is to build farmers' capacities, encourage local initiatives, and develop political commitment and empowerment among them.

From 2016 onwards, as a result of the security and climate upheavals in the region, APIL adopted the nexus approach, integrating the humanitarian and peace components into its programmes. Its missions now include many internally displaced people (IDPs) whose urgent needs must be met. In this context, emergency humanitarian funding is forcing APIL to rethink its action while maintaining its approach of supporting support.

Its mission is based on a ten-year Strategic Orientation Plan (SOP). The aim of the 2020-2030 SOP is to focus the organisation's activities on five areas: strengthening the sustainable food system, territorial development, sustainable transformation of local economies and inclusive growth, humanitarian management and disaster risk prevention, and finally, organisational and institutional strengthening of the NGO. APIL aims to consolidate its visibility and identity at national and international level by contributing to the dynamics of sustainable development. Its areas of intervention include sustainable food security, local economic development, sustainable management of natural resources, gender promotion, agro-ecology, humanitarian and disaster risk management, and local governance.

From 2022 onwards, APIL expanded its partnership portfolio (with the arrival of new humanitarian partners), its human and financial resources, and its geographical areas of intervention. APIL's budget in 2023 totalled 8,067,040 euros, made up mainly of funding received from its financial partners as well as
own funds (more or less 5% of its budget).

3.2 Governance and management structure

APIL is governed by three bodies. Firstly, the General Assembly (GA) is made up of all member organisations. It meets annually to approve the NGO's programme of activities by a 2/3 majority vote and to monitor their implementation. It is the supreme decision-making and guiding body for the organisation's activities. Secondly, the Board of Directors (BD) meets quarterly and is made up of five members, elected for three years by universal suffrage. It is responsible for implementing the decisions and policies defined by the General Meeting. It is responsible for the day-to-day management of the organisation, approving action plans and cash flow plans as well as draft budgets, analysing budget implementation and reporting to the General Meeting. Finally, the Executive Board is responsible for implementing and managing the activities approved by the General Meeting, with the support and supervision of the Board. The Steering Committee, headed by the General Co-ordinator, ensures the co-ordination and implementation of programmes through project managers, support staff and field workers.

APIL's head office is in Ouagadougou, but its administration is based in Ziniaré and Kaya. The organisation also has regional operational offices in Kaya, Boulsa, Korsimoro, Zorgho, Ziniaré, Ouaga, Fada, Koudougou and Pissila. This decentralisation is a response to the need to be close to the sites where it operates to ensure that its projects and programmes are properly monitored. The operational offices are headed by a Head of Office and house operational staff (programme managers, monitoring and evaluation officers, facilitators, etc.) as well as technical, administrative and financial support staff (accountants, secretaries, Human Resources focal points).
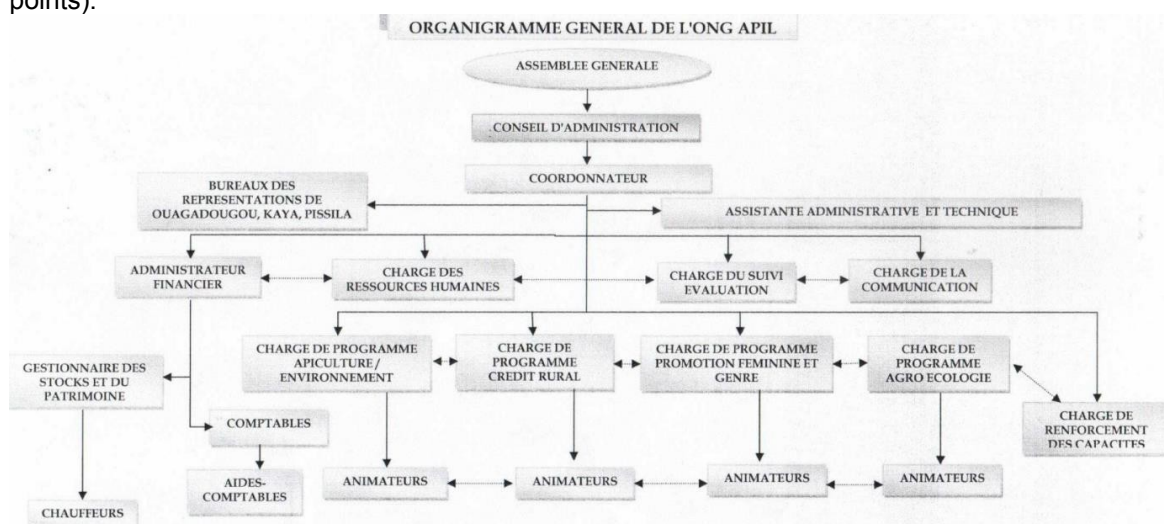
3.3 Working with partner organisations

APIL works with a number of NGOs and international agencies as an implementing partner, but also with government departments with which agreements and protocols are signed.

Its partnership portfolio has grown considerably since 2010 and now includes more than ten partners. In addition, the security situation has led to an increase in its humanitarian work, with particular support for internally displaced people, now backed by NGOs and international humanitarian agencies. This has resulted, on the one hand, in an increase in the number of due diligence processes (five for 2023). On the other hand, the organisation has had to adapt to the requirements of some of its partners in terms of intervention modalities.

APIL is a member of several networks and platforms, such as clusters, and its General Coordinator is Chairman of the Board of Directors of SPONG, a national platform bringing together 290 NGOs and development associations.
Finally, through its mission, APIL accompanies and supports hundreds of producer groups, cooperatives and agricultural unions.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Internal quality assurance and risk management mechanisms

APIL has internal quality assurance mechanisms described in strategic documents and procedures. APIL's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is in place with different levels of responsibility and control. APIL's decentralised structure ensures that activities are monitored and financial and budgetary controls are carried out as close to operations as possible, from the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) officers and accountants to the Coordinator. Programme monitoring is also based on the reporting templates of its financial partners.

Internally, APIL has a documented protection system, including a *Code of Ethics, a Policy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* (EAS), a *Policy on Safeguarding Children's Rights*, and a *Policy on Reporting Cases*, which includes protection measures and staff training.

In terms of accounting and financial control systems, APIL does not have an internal audit function, but external audits of its accounting and financial statements are carried out annually and submitted to the governing bodies. APIL has a system for preventing and dealing with the risks of fraud and corruption. The programme budget provides a link between the technical programme and the budget for the year and enables its efficiency to be monitored.

APIL does not have a formalised system for analysing and managing organisational and programmatic risks. Various policies, strategies and programme documents include certain risks for the organisation and its mission. This is particularly true of the intervention strategy and the annual programme budgets. Risk matrices are formalised for certain programmes and in accordance with the requirements and frameworks of the financial partners. The presence of regional offices, close coordination with local authorities and the fact that APIL is rooted in the community nevertheless enable it to identify programmatic risks. The strategic orientation plans cover contextual and internal risks. Finally, at its quarterly meetings, the Board of Directors examines the implementation of current and future projects, while keeping a close eye on organisational and programmatic risks.

Overall, APIL has few procedures, frameworks or tools of its own to enable it to implement its policies systematically and consistently across its programmes. This represents a risk in terms of quality assurance. In addition, the increase in the humanitarian mandate in its programming (currently being strengthened through targeted recruitment and training) marks a turning point for this organisation, whose identity and relationship with communities is based on long-term support and capacity building. According to management

the nexus approach has enabled this transition, but the quality and risk management mechanisms still need to be adapted to different intervention and monitoring logics.

| **4.2 Level of application of the CHS standard** | The CHS standard was gradually introduced by APIL's financial partners following the increase in the humanitarian component of its work and the adoption of the triple nexus approach - humanitarian, development and peace. Because it has only recently been introduced, the standard has not yet been adopted by individuals or institutions. However, management believes that auditing the CHS standard will enable it to improve quality and gain a better understanding of humanitarian requirements. Training in the CHS standard at SPONG level and, in particular, training for HQAI audit focal points as part of the LOCAL project are helping to ensure that the standard is taken on board.

Accountability towards communities is an integral part of APIL's identity, particularly through a participatory approach at all stages of the intervention. APIL's programmes focus on local leadership, with an emphasis on gender and social cohesion. APIL's programmes are designed to ensure the sustainability, resilience and empowerment of vulnerable groups. Community respondents and stakeholders report a high level of satisfaction and very good relations with APIL.

APIL has a robust system for the protection and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PEAS), with specific policies and staff trained in protection, gender and inclusion, as well as designated managers and focal points in regional offices. Its system is well communicated internally, with staff familiar with the relevant policies and code of ethics. Awareness-raising campaigns on PEAS are organised in the communities, demonstrating a good knowledge of the behaviour expected of staff.

However, APIL does not have a robust system for managing community complaints. Despite the fact that the mechanism is rooted in the community, the complaints system lacks clarity in terms of responsibilities, scope and handling of complaints. The policies are not sufficiently articulated with procedures and implementation tools, and they are not always consistent with the practices observed at programme level. APIL's documents and practices do not ensure that the complaints mechanism is effectively and systematically implemented throughout the organisation and its programmes. However, this is one of the organisation's strategic organisation's strategic priorities for 2020-30. |
|---|---|

4.3 The organisation's performance in relation to each of the CHS commitments

Strengths and areas for improvement	Average score
Commitment 1: The humanitarian response is adapted and appropriate.	2,7
APIL's participatory approach, through the planning, programming and monitoring cycle, makes it possible to understand the needs of all community groups and to target the most vulnerable households impartially. Various tools are in place to adapt programmes to changing needs, capacities and context. However, some mechanisms, such as data disaggregation, context analysis and stakeholder analysis, are not formalised through policies and/or procedures. This represents a risk in the future of not applying these requirements systematically across all programmes.	
Feedback from the communities: They confirm non-discrimination and state that everyone is represented, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), people with disabilities, the elderly, etc. The communities interviewed have a good understanding of the targeting and selection criteria. The communities interviewed have a good understanding of targeting and its selection criteria. Needs are diagnosed in a participatory way by village and the communities affirm that their needs are taken into account as well as their capacities. Finally, community members give examples of how they have adapted to changes in their needs and in the political context.	
Commitment 2: The humanitarian response is effective and timely.	3
APIL has a system that enables it to match its missions with its organisational capacities. Its community base and monitoring system ensure that decisions are taken quickly and effectively. Its partnerships with humanitarian agencies have enabled APIL to provide an emergency response, particularly to displaced populations. APIL has managed to adapt to security constraints and to take measures to reduce the risks to communities at risk, for example during food distributions.	
Feedback from communities: Communities feel safe during activities and confirm that programming is respected and carried out on time. They confirm that programming is monitored on an ongoing basis by project staff and in collaboration with community members.	
Commitment 3: the humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects.	3,1
APIL has a robust system for building the capacity of communities, leadership and local institutions through a holistic and sustainable approach to building resilience. This has enabled it to achieve an exemplarity score of 4 for the requirement to build capacity and resilience. In addition, the organisation has a protection policy arsenal articulated with training for staff, stakeholders and communities. Various mechanisms and tools, as well as APIL's participatory approach, make it possible to identify and prevent the negative effects generated by projects.	
Community feedback: Community members explain that the activities have strengthened their resilience, and in particular their ability to cope with the effects of climate change using appropriate and accessible techniques. They also feel that the activities have strengthened social cohesion in the village and local leadership, particularly with the creation of women's cooperative societies. Finally, they emphasise the positive effects on the local economy, thanks in particular to the income-generating activities (IGAs).	
Commitment 4: the humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback.	3
APIL's participatory approach is described in its policies and strategies, and is deployed through specific mechanisms. APIL's commitment to PEAS is well communicated both internally and externally, in particular through the organisation of awareness-raising sessions for communities. Analysis of external communication reveals that communication is ethical and respectful of the dignity of communities, and this is covered in various policies.	

various policies. APIL uses communication channels adapted to the communities (radio, theatre, communication in local languages).

Community feedback: Communities have a good knowledge of APIL and receive information about activities, the duration of the programme, APIL principles (such as non-discrimination), the need to inform APIL if there is a problem, and they are consulted about their needs. Community members feel encouraged and comfortable giving feedback. They confirm that communication is appropriate, with the use of local languages and the strong presence of staff on the ground. As one community member put it: "We're like a family because we understand each other so well".

Commitment 5: Complaints are well received and dealt with.	2,7

Despite a good organisational culture of safeguarding and several policies, APIL does not yet have a robust complaints management system that clearly articulates its policies with procedures and tools for implementation. Some policies and procedures were adopted very recently (at the end of 2024) and their deployment could not therefore be assessed during this audit. There is, however, a willingness on the part of management to implement a robust complaints management system, as evidenced by the recent adoption of a series of policies.

Feedback from the communities: They are well aware of the behaviour expected of staff: "No sexual exploitation or bribery in order to receive assistance". Community members cite two complaints mechanisms: the complaints committee and the toll-free number. They can also address their complaints to the field workers.

Commitment 6: the humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary.	3

APIL's work is coordinated and complementary. It is based on a series of public partnerships (State, region), on agreements with international humanitarian and development NGOs, and with technical partners. It is also coordinated locally through its work with the Village Development Committees (CVD), agricultural cooperatives and the various management committees.

Feedback from the communities: The communities feel that APIL works in a complementary and coordinated way with public services, giving examples of complementarity between state services and APIL.

Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors learn and improve continuously.	2,3

APIL has a monitoring system in place with different levels of responsibility and the implementation of recommendations following reports. The organisation contributes to innovation and learning in the sector through cluster meetings, state consultation frameworks and networks such as SPONG. Internal knowledge and experience sharing is functional and uses several communication channels. However, APIL does not have a robust learning system, articulated with mechanisms to ensure that lessons, based on experience and complaints, are systematically integrated across programmes and the organisation.

Feedback from communities: These confirm good communication but no sharing of learning and innovation. They provide examples where field monitoring and feedback have enabled changes to be implemented, such as the introduction of a manual pumping system on a water tower to preserve an individual supply.

Commitment 8: Staff are supported to carry out their work effectively and are treated fairly and equitably.	2,9

APIL has a human resources management system that aims to ensure fair, transparent and legally compliant processes. Targeted technical recruitment (environment, humanitarian) is carried out and training provided in order to guarantee the skills needed to accomplish its mission. However, APIL's training plan has not been budgeted for, which could jeopardise its implementation.

Feedback from the communities: The communities interviewed emphasised the respect, attentiveness, involvement and availability of APIL staff. They consider the staff to be competent and efficient.	
Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly and for their intended purpose.	2,7
APIL has an arsenal of policies and procedures aimed at ensuring the efficient management of resources and preventing the risks of fraud, corruption and waste. However, a weakness has been identified in that certain elements relating to the management of resources and risks are not documented. For example, APIL does not have a process for assessing all the risks covered in this commitment at organisational and programmatic level and guaranteeing their regular and systematic assessment.	
Feedback from the communities: They feel that APIL keeps its commitments and carries out what is planned. APIL talks to them about environmental protection and they plant trees (mango, guava, etc.).	

* Note: The average scores are the sum of the scores per commitment divided by the number of indicators in each commitment, except if one of the indicators in a commitment obtains a score of 0 or if several scores of 1 on the indicators in a commitment lead to the issue of a major non-conformity/weakness in the commitment (in these two cases, the overall score for the commitment is 0).

5. Summary of weaknesses

Weaknesses	Type	Status	Resolution timeframe*
2025-5.4: The complaints management process for communities is not operational.	Minor	New	2028
2025- 7.1: APIL does not systematically use learning from previous experience when designing programmes.	Minor	New	2028
2025 - 9.6: 2025 - 9.6: APIL's policies do not mention the requirement for regular external financial and accounting audits. APIL does not have an organisational or programmatic risk assessment policy or process to ensure that risks are regularly and systematically assessed. APIL's policies do not explain how the organisation assesses whether accepting resources compromises its independence.	Minor	New	2028
Total number of weaknesses	3		

Note: Resolution times are given for information only as they are not relevant in the context of a benchmarking audit.
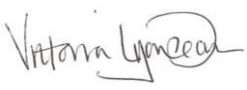
6. Lead auditor's recommendation

In our opinion, APIL has demonstrated that it complies with the requirements of the Fundamental Humanitarian Standard on quality and accountability.	
Name and signature of lead auditor : Meur Elisabeth	**Date and place**: 06.06.2025, Malbuisson

7. HQAI decision

Validity of the benchmarking report :	2025/06/12 until 2026/06/12	
Name and signature of HQAI Quality Assurance Manager :		**Date and place :**
Victoria Lyon Dean		12.06.2025, Geneva

8. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

Space reserved for organisation	
Any reservations regarding the results of the audit and/or comments regarding the conduct of the HQAI audit team: *If yes, please specify :*	☐ Yes ☒ No
Acknowledgement and acceptance of findings : I acknowledge and understand the audit findings I accept the audit findings	☒ Yes ☐ No ☒ Yes ☐ No
Name and signature of organisation representative :	**Date and place:** 04.07.2025, Ziniaré

Appeal

In the event of disagreement with the quality assurance decision, the organisation may appeal to HQAI within 14 working days of being informed of the decision.

HQAI will refer the matter to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaints Committee who will confirm that the basis for the appeal meets the requirements of the appeals procedure. The Chair will then appoint an Appeals Panel consisting of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. The panel will endeavour to reach a decision within 45 working days.

Details of the appeals procedure can be found in document PRO049 - Appeals procedure.

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale* (in French)

Scores	Meaning: for all verification scheme options	Technical meaning for all independent verification and certification audits
0	Your organisation is not working to implement the CHS commitment.	**Score 0:** indicates such a significant weakness that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to : • **Independent verification:** major weakness. • **Certification:** major non-conformity leading to a request for major corrective action (CAR) - No certificate can be issued or immediate suspension of the certificate.
1	Your organisation is making efforts to apply this requirement, but these efforts are not systematic.	**Score 1:** indicates a weakness which does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment, but which must be corrected if the organisation is to continue to respect it. This leads to : • **Independent verification**: minor weakness • **Certification:** minor non-conformity, giving rise to a request for minor corrective action (CAR).
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts to apply this requirement, but some key points are still not being addressed.	**Score 2:** indicates an issue that warrants attention but does not currently compromise compliance with the requirement. This leads to: • **Independent verification and certification :** observation.
3	Your organisation complies with this requirement and organisational systems ensure that it is met across the organisation and over time - the requirement is met.	**Score 3:** indicates full compliance with the requirement. This leads to : • **Independent verification and certification :** compliance.
4	The work of your organisation goes beyond the objective of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary manner throughout the organisation and the organisational systems ensure that a high level of quality is maintained throughout the organisation and over time.	**Score 4:** indicates exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.

* CHSA 2020 verification system rating scale