

Christian Aid

Recertification Audit – Summary Report 2020-08-25

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified mandates
<input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Assistance <input type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> Federated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy
Head office location	London, United Kingdom	
Total number of country programmes	26 – CA's current portfolio of 37 country programmes is being restructured by mid 2020 so it will have a presence in 26 countries globally across 13 country programmes and 3 regional programmes.	Total number of staff 1,022 – approx., to be reduced to around 825 in the current change process.

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Stephen Morrow
Second auditor	Dorte Busch
Third auditor	-
Observer	Lina Munoz Figueredo (Stage1 only)
Expert	-
Other	-

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS Verification Scheme

Audit Stage	Certification	Independent Verification	Benchmarking	Other
Initial audit (IA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First maintenance audit (MA1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mid-term audit (MTA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Second maintenance audit (MA2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recertification audit (RA)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extraordinary audit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Short notice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (<i>specify</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.4 Sampling*

Randomly sampled country programme sites	Included in final sample	Replaced by	Rationale / Comments	Onsite visit / remote assessment
Zimbabwe	Yes		Of the five randomly selected programmes, Zimbabwe, relative to the other PSs, reasonably reflects CA's work in humanitarian and development; is not a Service level Contract; has a substantive scale of operations; is feasible in terms of security and logistics; has not been audited in first cycle; includes sectoral focus (CTP) that is a significant element in CA's work; Selected for site visit but this was cancelled due to COVID_19 travel restrictions. Interview list adapted because of COVID-19 and CA restructuring process, and changed to remote.	On-site -> remote
IOPT	Yes		IOPT was randomly selected. It includes humanitarian and development programmes and hence is included in audit scope. Proposed interview list adapted.	Remote
Sierra Leone	Yes		Sierra Leone was randomly selected. It includes development programmes and humanitarian responses at times, hence is included in audit scope. Proposed interview list adapted.	Remote
Kenya CASE Orphans and Vulnerable Children project (OVC)	Yes		CASE OVC is a Service Level Contract (SLC) funded by USAID. Proposed interview list adapted	Remote
STAR Ghana (SLC)	No	Bangladesh	Purposively selected to limit SLC programmes to one, and to include Asia region in sample. Proposed interview list adapted.	Remote

Add any other sampling performed for this audit :

The programme site visit to Zimbabwe was cancelled due to COVID-19 travel restrictions on 10/03/2020.

CA was able to arrange a limited number of CP staff for remote interviews, due to CA's ongoing internal restructuring of the organisation, the COVID-19 restrictions, and disruptions to CA's plans that this has caused. These factors also meant that it was not possible to arrange remote interviews with CA partner organisations or community members. Proposed interview lists were adapted to accommodate staff who were available and able to participate during the time of this audit.

CA is at the beginning of its second 4-year audit cycle with HQAI. Over the first cycle, 2015-2020, CA has worked steadily through each audit and has demonstrated improving performance over time. CA has internal quality assurance and control systems in place to address requirements of the CHS, and other strategic commitments. These give the auditors sufficient confidence to recommend that CA be re-certified, despite the lack of a site visit, or consultations with communities and partners during this audit. Furthermore, to compensate for the cancelled site visit, the auditors recommend that if feasible, the next maintenance audit include a programme site visit, so that consultations with partner staff, communities, and affected populations can take place directly.

**It is important to note that the audit findings are based on a sample of an organisation's country programmes, its documentation and observation. Findings are analysed to determine an organisation's systematic approach and application of all aspects of the CHS across different contexts and ways of working.*

2. Activities undertaken by the audit team

2.1 Locations assessed

Locations (<i>offices, projects at country programme level</i>)	Dates	Onsite or remote
CA Head Office (HO), London (16 participants)	16/01/2020 12 – 13/03/2020	Remote On-site
IOPT programme (2 participants)	5-17/06/2020	Remote
CASE OVC project (3 participants)	5-17/06/2020	Remote
Sierra Leone country programme (3 participants)	5-17/06/2020	Remote
Bangladesh country programme (3 participants)	5-17/06/2020	Remote
Zimbabwe country programme (5 participants)	5-17/06/2020	Remote

2.2 Interviews

Position / level of interviewees	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Head Office			
Management & staff	11	7	onsite & remote
Country Programme(s)			
Management	2	2	remote
Staff	6	4	remote
Partner staff	0		N/A
Others (specify)	0		N/A
Total number of interviews	32		

2.3 Consultations with communities

Type of group	Number of participants	
	Female	Male
None - <i>Please see sampling note above in 4.1</i>	0	0
Total number of participants	0	0

2.4 Opening meeting

Date	2020/03/12
Location	Head Office, London & on-line
Number of participants	12 (6 female / 6 male)
Any substantive issues arising	No

2.5 Closing meeting

Date	2020/06/23
Location	Remote
Number of participants	6 (2 female / 4 male)
Any substantive issues arising	No

2.6 Programme Site(s)

Briefings

De-briefings

No programme site briefings were carried out as a result of COVID-19 disruptions and cancellation of travel to selected country programme sites.

3. Background information on the organisation

3.1 Governance and management structure

CA is the official relief, development and advocacy agency of 41 Sponsoring Churches in Britain and Ireland. The Sponsoring Churches appoint the members of the Board of Trustees which is engaged with, and has oversight of, CA's CHS certification process. Specifically, the Board's Audit and Risk committee oversees CA's work to align with the CHS commitments, and reports regularly to the Board. A cross-organisation Safeguarding Governance Group is responsible for overseeing the implementation of safeguarding initiatives.

CA's global strategy, Standing Together 2019-26, affirms its commitment to the CHS, and charges it to prioritise a portfolio of activities that can deliver on three pillars: Poverty – reaching those most in need; Power – addressing the root causes of poverty; and Prophetic Voice – speaking truth to power and building local and collective agency.

In the context of this new strategy, CA has strengthened its accountability capacity in the last year. The accountability team now comprises a Humanitarian Accountability Specialist, two global Accountability Officers and dedicated accountability capacity in three high priority humanitarian responses.

CA is currently undergoing a major organisational change process to align with the global strategy. As of March 2020, it was due to be completed in the main by June 2020 and seeks to:

- deepen rather than widen CA's portfolio, reducing the number of country programmes (CP) from 37 so that it has a presence in 26 countries globally across a set of 13 country programmes and 3 regional programmes, focusing its programme footprint geographically and thematically;
- integrate humanitarian actions, longer term development work and advocacy efforts into a more joined-up CA programme at country, regional, and at global levels;
- develop a Global Results Framework, due to be rolled out from April 2020, that focuses work on the poorest women and men and seeks to measure impact through their eyes;
- form partnerships for delivery and funding based on shared values; and
- acknowledges the changed funding environment and works with the mixed (restricted and unrestricted) economy to fund the CA programmes.

3.2 Effectiveness of the internal quality assurance systems

In regards to internal quality assurance systems:

- CA's Humanitarian Quality Standards (HQS) are aligned to the CHS commitments and from July 2019, managers review humanitarian programmes through the lens of the CHS to inform CA's annual humanitarian performance report and programmes.
- CA uses a safeguarding risk assessment tool which examines the level of inherent safeguarding risk of each country programme. The HO based Safeguarding Manager works with country programmes to determine what safeguarding measures are in place and what is required to meet standards.

CA continues to address accountability and quality assurance during the current change process, including the following:

- Socialisation of a programme Quality Management System (QMS) across the organisation; incorporation of ten Quality Standards (QS) and associated Minimum Requirements (MR) that are aligned with the CHS in the Programme Quality Handbook (PQH) in November 2019; Introduction of a KOBO tool to monitor implementation of the Humanitarian Quality Standards and piloting it in the period January – March 2020.

- The appointment of two Humanitarian Programme Officers – Accountability, in the early part of 2019 to provide support across country programmes during emergencies and to support implementation of the CHS across CA. They provide surge support in Level 3 emergencies and in-country and remote support to all country programmes.
- Creation of a new Safeguarding Advisor role from unrestricted funding, broadening the role of a Programme Inclusion Advisor and the Accountability roles noted above, from humanitarian to whole of organisation.

3.4 Work with partner organisations

CA is investing in improving partners' approaches to align with the CHS around safeguarding and establishing codes of conduct. CA has also adapted its Partner Organisational Capacity and Risk Assessment (POCRA) to consider accountability to communities, protection, power and inclusion, thus aligning with the CHS. These changes are reflected in the Partnership Guidelines and in the draft PQH that is to be formally launched in mid-2020.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Management system and internal quality assurance and governance

Christian Aid established a CHS Steering group to oversight application of the CHS across the organisation. It also addresses CARs or weaknesses identified in previous audits. The groups is comprised of staff and management from across the organisation, it meets monthly to plan and review progress, and it reports each quarter to the Audit and Risk (ARC) committee of the Board. The ARC has responsibility for oversight of Christian Aid's work on the CHS and also specifically for safeguarding, and it reports regularly to the Board.

See also 3.2 above.

4.2 Performance in the application of the CHS

Christian Aid worked steadily through the previous audit cycle to more closely address the requirements of the CHS identified in each audit, and other commitments arising out of the World Humanitarian Summit such as the localisation agenda. At the time of the MTA and since then, Christian Aid had strengthened its work on inclusion, a Code of Conduct and safeguarding, and accountability. It is drawing on this and other existing customs, practices, and resources within the organisation to develop a set of ten Quality Standards that closely reflect the nine Core Commitments in the CHS, and sets of Minimum Requirements for each QS. These will be formally rolled out across the global portfolio in 2020, at the end of the current restructuring process, so that country programme teams and HO can assess a country programme's alignment with the requirements of the CHS.

Christian Aid's preferred way of work is through local partners. As reported by staff and noted in previous audit reports, Christian Aid has sought to work in a manner that could be described as 'partner-led' and sought to enhance the agency of partners. In this context, there was not always a consistent Christian Aid way of working across all country programmes. Christian Aid has begun to develop a more consistent way of working with partners e.g. around safeguarding.

This third stage has been delayed by changes within Christian Aid and by COVID-19. Developing this more consistent Christian Aid way of working, around complaints and feedback, or monitoring, evaluation and learning, is a process that continues, particularly with the launch of the PQH and the ten Quality Standards later this year. It remains then for Christian Aid and country programme teams to regularly assess each country programme against those Qs and to roll that up into a broader assessment of Christian Aid, across its global portfolio. See also section 4.6 below.

4.3 PSEA

CA performance on PSEA is satisfactory. As mentioned above, it is working through a three-stage process to ensure that all partners have a Code of Conduct, a safeguarding policy, and as a third stage, that safeguarding is embedded in the culture and practices of the partner organisation. CAID has completed the two initial steps with most partners, but training and other work has been delayed in some country programmes because of Covid-19.

Country teams provide information on CAID's principles and expected staff behaviour, develop posters and other information materials in English and local languages to communicate the expected behaviours, and how to contact CAID if there are safeguarding concerns. However, this is not implemented consistently in all CPs and projects, not all beneficiaries know about the feedback mechanisms.

CAID's procedures for CFM include consultations with communities about safeguarding and about CFM. Agreements with partners require them to establish a CFM and inform CAID when complaints are received. CAID is piloting a digital CFM management system and CAID does not yet have an overview of how all CPs and partners handle complaints and feedback.

See also section 4.6 below.

4.4 Localisation

CA performance on Localisation is satisfactory. It's Global Strategy 2019 – 2026 affirms the centrality of partnership with local organisations and affected communities, working with them to define problems, implement change, and speak out on critical issues. Programming tools and resources such as the partner organisation capacity and risk assessment (POCRA) and the participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA) explicitly identify local capacities and vulnerabilities or risks, and then design activities to build on the former. CA co-founded the Charter for Change, and as part of the ACT Alliance advocated for and signed off on the Grand Bargain at the World Humanitarian Summit.

4.5 Gender and diversity

CA performance on Gender and Diversity is satisfactory. Its approach has strengths including the development of Quality Standard 3 which applies across the organisation when it is rolled out in 2020, and which requires data to be disaggregated by age, sex, and diversity factors. This is reflected in a range of assessment tools that country programmes may use, including a Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment tool, a Community Accountability Assessment process, and the Gender and Social Inclusion section of the Programme Quality Handbook. CA's program management information system, PROMISE, can analyse and provide reports on inclusion. See also section 4.6 below.

4.6 Organisational performance in the application of the CHS

Commitment	Strong points and areas for improvement	Feedback from communities	Average score
Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant	CA strategies and policies clearly outline commitments to impartial assistance based on the needs and capacities of affected people and communities. CA has a range of resources, tools, and procedures outlined in a Humanitarian Handbook, and in a Programme Quality Handbook (PQH) that is currently in draft form. The PQH includes ten Quality Standards, aligned with the CHS, and associated Minimum Requirements. Country Programmes (CPs) develop strategies and then projects based on analyses of the needs and capacities of diverse community groups and they consider the role of other stakeholders. CA's preferred way of working is in partnership with local organisations, premised on partners sharing CA's values including inclusion of	The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.	2.7

	<p>diverse community groups, and the use of data disaggregated by sex, age and diversity factors. There is variation in how the guidelines in the Humanitarian Handbook and the draft PQH are implemented across CPs and partners, and this is an area for improvement.</p>		
<p>Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely</p>	<p>CA's global strategy 2019-2026 and country strategies outline the broad framework within which country programme staff design programmes and projects. They draw on resources in the Humanitarian Handbook and the draft PQH to consider contexts, constraints, and risks, and to develop responses in a timely manner.</p> <p>CA's performance against this Commitment has a number of areas for improvement. Some country strategies are aligned with the new global strategy while others are out of date or in the process of being reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the global strategy and the PQH, including the ten Quality Standards, is yet to be launched and consistently implemented across all CPs.</p> <p>Above all, CA's planned restructuring to align its strategic intent, programme commitments, and organisational capacities has been affected by COVID-19, so the organisation is in a state of flux with changing capacities and commitments.</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	2.7
<p>Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects</p>	<p>CA has enhanced policies, guidance, and practices that contribute to strengthening local capacities and avoiding negative effects at the governance, management, and operations level. It has revised the Safeguarding policy, updated the Code of Conduct (CoC), established a cross-organisation safeguarding working group, and a Board committee has specific responsibilities in this domain. CA has conducted training for staff in all continuing Africa Programs, and is working through a three-step process to strengthen partner policy and practice around safeguarding. CA's preferred way of working is in partnership with local organisations and its partner capacity and risk assessment explicitly considers safeguarding, with a planned three-step process to strengthen this in their work.</p> <p>CA does not always include exit strategies in project designs and this is an area for improvement. CA's work to strengthen partner capacity and performance around safeguarding, specifically stage 3 in a planned process, has been delayed by COVID-19 and the restructuring process within CA, and this remains an area to be addressed.</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	2.5
<p>Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication,</p>	<p>CA's strategies and policies encourage participation and feedback from people affected by crisis. It has strengthened its capacity to support accountability to communities across the organization. CA promotes engagement with diverse community groups across the project cycle, and shares information about its</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from</p>	2.7

<p>participation and feedback</p>	<p>organisational values, feedback and complaints processes, and expected staff behaviour. This is communicated in languages, formats and media that are easily understood, respectful and culturally appropriate.</p> <p>However, CA's partnership approach means that the information provided to communities is still highly reliant on the partner. While Partnership agreements require partners to adhere to CAs principles of transparency and accountability and CA has a template for sharing of information about organisational values and expected staff behaviour, not all CPs ensure that partners consistently share information with communities about organisational values and expected staff behaviour.</p>	<p>communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	
<p>Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed</p>	<p>CA continues to promote complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM) across the organisation. It puts emphasis on the importance of community engagement in the project cycle and this extends to engagement with communities in some projects in the design and monitoring of CFMs. CA's procedures distinguish between sensitive complaints and other feedback. CA has strengthened its capacity to support CPs and partners in regard to accountability and CFMs, and it only transfers funds if a partner has a safeguarding policy and a code of conduct in place. CA is piloting an online CFM management system which will enable it to monitor the type of feedback and complaints received across CPs, but this system is still a pilot and yet to be rolled out across CPs.</p> <p>In this context in which complaints and feedback are generally welcomed and addressed, not all CPs ensure that a CFM is in place across all projects. In some CPs with high staff turnover, staff and volunteers have limited capacity to ensure accountability, and communities are not consistently engaged in the design and monitoring of CFMs, and in some cases they are not aware of the CFM.</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	<p>2.1</p>
<p>Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary</p>	<p>CA policies and strategies commit it to work in partnership and collaboration with local actors, and in coordination with relevant stakeholders. This applies at the governance, management and operational levels and is articulated in Quality Standard 6. Partnership is CA's preferred way of working, and coordination is integrated within a range of programming tools including partner capacity and risk assessments and partnership agreements. CA works closely with other members of the ACT Alliance to deliver coordinated actions, is an active member of the START Network and the DEC for humanitarian response, and participates in inter-agency coordination mechanisms at country level.</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	<p>2.8</p>
<p>Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors</p>	<p>CA has policies and guidelines in the Humanitarian Handbook and the PQH to enable it to continuously learn and improve. These include QS 7 which affirms that CA evidences its work through rigorous and robust</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner</p>	<p>2.7</p>

<p>continuously learn and improve</p>	<p>M&E, and QS 8 that commits CA to continuous learning, to ensure that learning from previous projects and the sector is referenced in project design.</p> <p>However, CP teams had differing levels of knowledge of CA's evaluation policies and guidance, and implement a range of M&E practices. Further, the PQH, including the Quality Standards, is a work in progress and is due to be launched in mid 2020. CA does not yet have the means to assess the extent to which the QSSs, including those around M&E and learning, are applied across CPs.</p>	<p>organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	
<p>Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably</p>	<p>CA's staff policies and procedures are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory and compliant with local employment law but key policies or resources are not consistently translated into local languages in CPs. A planned restructuring to align staff capacities and capabilities with the recently developed global strategy 2019-2026 has been significantly affected by COVID-19 so that there is some instability around human resource capacities in CPs and in HO in this transition period.</p> <p>CA conducts comprehensive induction processes and has established performance planning and review processes. CA's People Development Policy sets out its commitment to supporting all employees in their development, but provides limited guidelines about implementation. In practice, CA requires staff to undertake a range of mandatory learning and capacity development processes, and provides a range of opportunities for staff to improve their skills and competencies.</p> <p>CA has policies in place for the security and well-being of staff. Security arrangements in CPs are documented in Country Security Plans however these vary in quality and utility across CPs.</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	<p>2.7</p>
<p>Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose</p>	<p>CA has a range of policies and processes in place that contribute to it managing and using resources responsibly for their intended purpose. However, it is still developing a framework for an Environmental policy, and QS4 requires that CPs consider that in reference to project designs.</p>	<p>The auditors were unable to conduct the site visit and gather feedback from partner organisations and from communities due to COVID-19 disruptions.</p>	<p>2.8</p>

5. Summary of non-conformities

Corrective Action Requests (CAR)	Type	Resolution due date	Date closed out
2018 - 3.6: At the Partner level, CA is not systematic in identifying the potential or actual unintended negative effects of people's safety and of sexual exploitation and abuse.	Minor	2020/03/21 Extended 2021/07/16	
2018 - 4.1: CA does not ensure information is systematically provided to communities and people affected by crisis about the organisation's principles and expected behaviours of staff.	Minor	2020/03/21 Extended 2021/07/16	
2018 - 5.1 Communities are not always consulted on the implementation and monitoring of complaints.	Minor	2020/03/21 Extended 2021/07/16	
2018 - 5.6: Communities are not always aware of the expected behaviour of CA staff, and that of its partners, nor of its specific commitments to PSEA.	Minor	2020/03/21 Extended 2021/07/16	

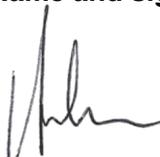
6. Sampling recommendation for next audit

Sampling rate	The standard sampling rate indicates that 3 CPs should be included in the Maintenance Audit. No deviation from this standard sampling is recommended.
Specific recommendation for selection of sites	<p>Given the travel restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, this recertification audit did not include a CP site visit, nor consultations with partner organisations and communities. It is therefore recommended that one CP is selected for a site visit in the upcoming maintenance audit.</p> <p>It is also recommended that this CP has an adequate number of partner organisations that can participate in the audit and where community consultations can be facilitated at the time of the audit.</p>

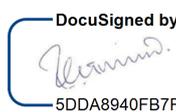
7. Lead auditor recommendation

In our opinion, Christian Aid is implementing relevant actions to close the Minor CARs identified in the prior audits, and continues to conform with the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. We recommend maintenance of certification.	
Name and signature of lead auditor:  Stephen Morrow	Date and place: 25 August 2020, Sydney, Australia

8. HQAI decision

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certificate maintained <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate suspended	<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate reinstated <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate withdrawn
Next audit Maintenance Audit to be completed before 2021/07/18	
Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director:  Pierre Hauselmann	Date and place: 25 th August 2020, Geneva

9. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

Space reserved for the organisation	
Any reservations regarding the audit findings and/or any remarks regarding the behaviour of the HQAI audit team: <i>If yes, please give details:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no
Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings: I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit I accept the findings of the audit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Name and signature of the organisation representative:  5DDA8940FB7F40E... Robin Greenwood International Director Christian Aid	Date and place: 04/09/20 Cambridge, UK

Appeal

In case of disagreement with the decision on certification, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 14 days after being informed of the decision. HQAI will investigate the content of the appeal and propose a solution within 10 days after receiving the appeal.

If the solution is deemed not to be satisfactory, the organisation can inform HQAI in writing within 30 days after being informed of the proposed solution, of their intention to maintain the appeal.

HQAI will transmit the case to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaint Board who will constitute a panel made of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. These will strive to come to a decision within 30 days.

The details of the Appeals Procedure can be found in document PRO049 – Appeal Procedure.

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale

0	Major non-conformity or Major weakness
	Your organisation currently does not work towards applying this requirement, either formally or informally. It's a major weakness that prevents your organisation from meeting the overall commitment.
1	Minor non-conformity or Minor weakness
	Your organisation has made some efforts towards applying this requirement, but these efforts have not been systematic.
2	Observation
	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.
3	Conformity
	Your organisation conforms to this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time – the requirement is fulfilled
4	Exceptional conformity
	Your organisation's work goes beyond the intent of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.