

# Act Church of Sweden

## Initial Audit – Summary Report - 2024/07/16

### 1. General information

#### 1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Assistance <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy
<b>Legal registration</b>	Act Church of Sweden is the International Department of the Church of Sweden which is registered in Sweden as a religious community.	
<b>Head Office location</b>	Uppsala, Sweden	
<b>Total number of organisation staff</b>	120	

#### 1.2 Audit team

<b>Lead auditor</b>	Sarah Kambarami
<b>Second auditor</b>	Nancy Vallejo
<b>Third auditor</b>	-
<b>Observer</b>	-
<b>Expert</b>	-
<b>Witness / other participants</b>	-

#### 1.3 Scope of the audit

<b>CHS:2014 Verification Scheme</b>	Independent Verification (bridge from Certification Scheme)
<b>Audit Cycle</b>	Third Cycle
<b>Type of audit</b>	Initial Audit
<b>Scope of audit</b>	The audit scope covers all the international work of Act Church of Sweden in the five Regional Programmes and the Humanitarian Rapid Response Programme. The two domestic programmes ('Mobilisation and Fundraising', and 'Policy Dialogue') are not covered in the scope of this audit. This audit covers Act Church of Sweden's international humanitarian, development and advocacy work (the previous audit covered humanitarian programming only).
<b>Focus of the audit</b>	Considering that Act Church of Sweden implements all its international work through partners, this audit focuses on Act Church of Sweden's partnership processes and how they support the implementation of the CHS requirements. When sampling partners, there was a specific focus on local and national partners across all three mandates, as many of the international partners are externally verified against the CHS and so present less risk.

## 1.4 Sampling\*

<b>Sampling unit</b>	Programme	
<b>Total number of units included in the sampling</b>	6	
<b>Total number of units for onsite visit</b>	1	
<b>Total number of units for remote assessment</b>	2	
<b>Sampling Unit Selection</b>		
<b>Random Sampling – remote/onsite</b>	<b>Purposive Sampling – remote/onsite</b>	
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Programme – not selected	Humanitarian Rapid Response (HRR) Programme - remote	
Latin America & The Caribbean (LAC) Regional Programme – remote		
East Africa Regional Programme (EARP) - onsite		
<b>Any other sampling considerations:</b>		
<p>Due to a strategic shift in Act Church of Sweden, all work is now managed under eight programmes. The international work with partners is covered by six of these, including five regional programmes and the humanitarian rapid response programme. Therefore, the sampling unit is 'Programmes' and no longer 'Country Programmes' as had been used in previous audit cycles.</p> <p>The programmes were sampled randomly with the humanitarian programme sampled purposively to ensure all mandates covered by the scope of the audit were represented in the sample. Partners and projects were also sampled purposively to ensure a mix of mandates and a range of different partners. There was a particular focus on sampling local partners as many of Act Church of Sweden's international partners are already CHS certified, so present a lower risk. Projects in Ethiopia (East Africa Regional Programme) were selected based on additional criteria of accessibility and security, while maintaining a mix of mandates and range of implementing partners.</p>		
<b>Sampling risks identified:</b>		
No specific sampling risks identified. The audit team is confident in the findings and conclusions of this audit based on the sample.		

*\*It is important to note that the audit findings are based on a sample of an organisation's activities, programmes, and documentation as well as direct 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 Opening Meeting

<b>Date</b>	2024/03/12	<b>Number of participants</b>	27 (20F, 7M)
<b>Location</b>	Remote	<b>Any substantive issues arising</b>	None

### 2.2 Locations Assessed

<b>Locations</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Onsite or Remote</b>
Uppsala, Sweden – Head Office	2024/03/11 - 2024/03/18	Remote
Ethiopia – East Africa Regional Programme	2024/04/14 - 2024/04/19	Onsite
Colombia - LAC Regional Programme	2024/04/26 - 2024/04/26	Remote

Honduras – LAC Regional Programme	2024/04/24	Remote
Ukraine – Humanitarian Rapid Response Programme	2024/04/11 – 2024/04/25	Remote
Myanmar – Humanitarian Rapid Response Programme	2024/04/26	Remote

## 2.3 Interviews

Level / Position of interviewees	Number of interviewees		Onsite or Remote
	Female	Male	
<b>Head Office</b>			
Management	7	0	Remote
Staff	10	1	Remote
<b>East Africa Regional Programme</b>			
Management	0	1	Onsite
Staff (based at HO)	1	1	Remote
Partner staff	3	12	Onsite
<b>LAC Regional Programme</b>			
Staff	1	2	Remote
Partner staff	2	0	Remote
<b>Humanitarian Rapid Response Programme</b>			
Staff (based at HO)	1	1	Remote
Partner staff	1	2	Remote
<b>Total number of interviewees</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>46</b>

## 2.4 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Group discussion #1 – women participants, leadership and advocacy project, Ethiopia	4	0	Onsite
Group discussion #2 – advocacy participants, leadership and advocacy project, Ethiopia	2	2	Onsite
Group discussion #3 – trainers, leadership and advocacy project, Ethiopia	3	1	Onsite
Group discussion #4 – volunteers, maternal and child health project, Ethiopia	9	0	Onsite
Group discussion #5 – mothers, maternal and child health project, Ethiopia	11	0	Onsite

Group discussion #6 – fathers, maternal and child health project, Ethiopia	0	8	Onsite
Group discussion #7 – men, livelihoods project, Ethiopia	0	5	Onsite
Group discussion #8 – women, livelihoods project, Ethiopia	5	0	Onsite
Group discussion #9 – youth, livelihoods project, Ethiopia	2	2	Onsite
<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>54</b>

## 2.5 Closing Meeting

<b>Date</b>	2024/05/07	<b>Number of participants</b>	32 (29F, 3M)
<b>Location</b>	Remote	<b>Any substantive issues arising</b>	None

## 3. Background information on the organisation

### 3.1 General information

Act Church of Sweden (Act CoS) is the International Department of the Church of Sweden and is based in Uppsala, Sweden. Originally established as the “Church of Sweden Mission” in 1874, and later known as the “Church of Sweden International work”, the International Department changed its name to “Act Church of Sweden” in 2019. The Church of Sweden is a registered religious community in Sweden and is governed by the law of the Church of Sweden and the law on religious communities.

The Church of Sweden is part of a worldwide ecumenical community and is a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Act Church of Sweden is also a member of Act Alliance (Action by Churches Together).

Act Church of Sweden describes itself as a ‘faith-based aid and development actor’ and its vision is “life in the realm of God – a healed Creation and humanity as one, together with justice, freedom and peace.” The Strategic Plan (2022) includes the strategic goal “people living in just, sustainable, and democratic communities, backed by global solidarity and based on human rights”. Act Church of Sweden seeks to contribute to change through four strategic ways of working: mobilisation, capacity development, collaboration and advocacy. There are currently five thematic focus areas for Act Church of Sweden’s work:

- Livelihoods and Climate Justice
- Gender Equality and health
- Peace and Democracy
- Faith and Learning
- Humanitarian Actions

Act Church of Sweden works collaboratively with other churches, as well as both local and international organisations, around the world in the five regions of Asia, East Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Southern Africa. During 2022, Act Church of Sweden made a strategic choice to transition from organising its work through Country Programmes to Regional Programmes.

The most recent Annual Report (2022) reports that annual expenditure in 2022 was SEK450,516,000 (approx. USD42 million). Out of the funds committed to international

programmes, approximately 70% was spent on cooperation with churches and development partners, and 30% on humanitarian activities.

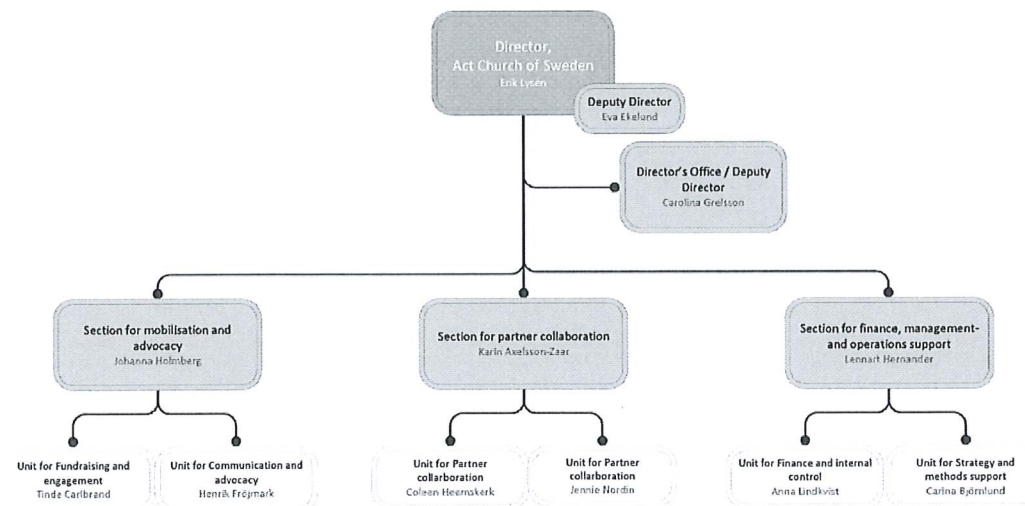
**3.2 Governance and management structure**

Act Church of Sweden is one of several departments in the Central Office of the Church of Sweden. The highest decision-making body of the Church of Sweden is the Church Synod which meets once a year. The Church Synod appoints members to the Church Board, which is the executive body that leads the church when the synod is not convened. The Church Board appoints an International Council who is responsible for the international work of the Church of Sweden. There is also an International Reference Group, comprised of representatives of partner organisations, that advises Act Church of Sweden on strategic direction.

During 2023, Act Church of Sweden underwent a significant organisational restructure, introducing a teams-based structure and working methods. The department is now organised into three main sections: the section for mobilisation and advocacy, the section for partner collaboration and the section for finance, management and operations support. The section for partner collaboration is responsible for collaboration and capacity development with partners, and the overall leadership of the regional and humanitarian programmes.

Self-organising teams are established linked to the achievement of a specific set of goals. These teams are cross-organisational and can have both core and extended members who meet to agree what needs to be achieved and delivered and to assign responsibilities. Staff can be part of multiple teams, depending on their function. Cross-organisational teams have been established for coordination and implementation of the five regional programmes and the rapid response humanitarian programme.

The new structure is shown below:



Act Church of Sweden currently employs approximately 120 people, of whom approximately ten are based outside of Sweden. There is a strategic initiative underway which intends to strengthen Act Church of Sweden’s regional presence by 2025. The goal is for Act Church of Sweden to have an established presence in 4-5 regional hubs with a small cluster of staff in place to strengthen partnerships, act as a facilitator and contribute to increased local capacity and ownership, as well as increase access to institutional funding.

### 3.3 Work with partner organisations

Act Church of Sweden's international work is implemented entirely through partners. The Guidelines for Partner Collaborations provide the framework for establishing partnerships and outlines Act Church of Sweden's partnership approach as being characterised by organisational autonomy and equity, mutual respect, joint quality and accountability, and a commitment to mutual learning. Act Church of Sweden is a member of ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) and many of its partnerships are with other ACT members. All of Act Church of Sweden's humanitarian rapid response programming is implemented by ACT members. The Act Alliance secretariat is certified against the CHS.

A capacity self-assessment is the first step for organisations to initiate partnership capacity dialogue with Act Church of Sweden, and this is accompanied by a process of due diligence where a review of core documents is undertaken. This partnership renewal process takes place every five years prior to the start of a new programme period. Established partners can submit applications for funding to Church of Sweden and these are assessed by a team of staff against a wide range of criteria, including partner capacity, strategic alignment, and the quality of the proposal. Many CHS requirements are assessed through this process.

Act Church of Sweden monitors the work of partners through a process of continual dialogue, monitoring visits and regular reporting processes. Issues identified at the project assessment phase are prioritised for follow up during monitoring processes.

Act Church of Sweden articulates a strong commitment to the strengthening of local capacity, both of its partners and civil society more broadly. It is an advocate for localisation and the principles of the Grand Bargain. Act Church of Sweden's relationships and collaboration with churches and other organisations forms the core of their identity and daily work.

## 4. Overall performance of the organisation

### 4.1 Internal quality assurance and risk management mechanisms

Act Church of Sweden has a well-established internal quality control system and dedicated staff performing internal audit and control functions. The Quality and Accountability Framework (QAF) lists the standards, principles, policies, and guidelines that help ensure quality and accountability is reflected throughout the organisation and its work. The QAF is currently being updated. Findings from external audits, at the organisation and project level, feed into internal control processes. Systematic processes are in place for assuring the quality of Act Church of Sweden's partners, and the projects that they fund, including partner due diligence, proposal assessments and regular project reporting.

Act Church of Sweden has systems in place to assess risks at different levels. At the organisational level, risks are analysed by senior management, using a risk matrix, under four main categories: strategic risks, operational risks, compliance risks and financial risks. At the programme level, the risk matrix focuses on contextual risks (from external factors), programmatic risks (risks to achieving programme objectives) and institutional risks (mainly related to internal factors).

At the project level, partners are required to identify risks linked to achieving project outcomes which, together with proposed mitigation strategies, are assessed at the proposal stage. Act Church of Sweden also reviews whether any possible negative side effects of the project have been identified and addressed, with a particular focus on risks in relation to safeguarding, gender, environment and conflict. However, there is no guidance to ensure that possible negative side effects in the areas of livelihoods and the local economy are systematically identified or managed.

Act Church of Sweden has processes in place to monitor progress towards strategic outcomes, with each programme identifying bridging outcomes and a programme level monitoring and evaluation plan. Act Church of Sweden monitors both partners and projects through a process of continual dialogue, monitoring visits and regular project reporting. However, the focus of monitoring processes is primarily on the progress towards achieving project outputs and outcomes, as well as financial management. There is not a systematic approach to monitoring the quality of project components related to accountability to affected people (specifically on information sharing and complaints handling).

Act Church of Sweden's senior management oversees the CHS external verification process and keeps the relevant governing body, the International Council, informed of the process and significant audit findings. The International Council reports to the Church Board annually on issues related to Act Church of Sweden's overall strategic direction.

#### **4.2 Level of application of the CHS**

Act Church of Sweden is a strong advocate for quality and accountability and was certified against the CHS from 2016 to 2023, when it decided to bridge to the independent verification scheme for its humanitarian, development, and advocacy mandates. Organisational approaches, such as being needs and rights-based, as well as the strong commitment to working collaboratively, contribute to the strong performance observed in Commitment 1 (the work being appropriate and relevant) and Commitment 6 (the work being coordinated and complementary).

Many of Act Church of Sweden's partners are ACT Alliance members who have a good understanding of the CHS and how to apply it effectively in their programmes. However, partners that are not ACT Alliance members do not always have this same level of understanding.

ACT Church of Sweden performs well across the standard in relation to localisation. The organisation has embedded its approach to supporting and strengthening local partners and civil society more generally across all its work. Specific policies, particularly in the Humanitarian Programme, prioritise direct funding to local partners.

Act Church of Sweden also performs well across the standard in relation to gender and diversity. Gender justice has been a core thematic focus for the organisation for many years and this has resulted in an approach which ensures gender and diversity considerations are systematically mainstreamed throughout the work.

The main area of weakness for Act Church of Sweden is ensuring that communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints, particularly sensitive ones. Although the organisation has recently included the requirement for all partners to have a complaints-handling process in place, there is not yet a systematic approach to monitor this requirement or to ensure relevant staff have the capacity to provide support to partners to help establish or strengthen existing complaints-handling systems. This has impacted Act Church of Sweden's performance in Commitment 5 (with 4 minor weaknesses), as well as in related requirements across other commitments and in its performance in relation to PSEAH. A Code of Conduct is in place that prohibits sexual exploitation and abuse, however, there are no systems to ensure that communities are systematically informed about expected staff and partner behaviour, or organisational commitments made on PSEAH.

Overall, this audit identifies nine minor weaknesses and 12 observations.

### 4.3 Organisational performance against each CHS Commitment

Strong points and areas for improvement	Average score*
<b>Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant</b>	<b>3</b>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has policies in place that commit to providing impartial assistance, based on both the needs and capacities of communities and people affected by crisis, and that commit to taking into account the diversity of communities.</p> <p>Context and stakeholder analyses, as well as a detailed assessment of needs, capacities and risks, are all required elements of project proposals and are systematically assessed by Act Church of Sweden prior to approving funding. Act Church of Sweden also has processes in place to respond in a timely way to partner requests to adapt programmes based on changing needs, capacities, and context. Partners confirm that Act Church of Sweden promotes adaptive management of programmes, and that the staff are responsive and flexible in approving relevant requests for adaptations to programmes.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes shows that Act Church of Sweden's partners are knowledgeable about the local context and stakeholders and have processes in place to identify ongoing changes in the context. Sampled projects are designed and implemented based on an impartial assessment of needs and risks, and a thorough understanding of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p> <p>Communities consistently indicate that the project activities are relevant to their needs, and state that their engagement in the early stages of needs assessment and project design help to ensure this.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that Church of Sweden's partners demonstrate a good understanding of their different vulnerabilities and capacities and that this information informs the design and implementation of the project. People at the community level also understand the selection criteria and confirm that no one is excluded. Many community members emphasised the impartiality of Church of Sweden's partners.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that project activities are adapted to changes in context or needs. In some cases, these changes are communicated by the community to partner staff, with suggestions for relevant adaptation, which are subsequently implemented.</p>	
<b>Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has well established policies and processes in place to ensure that programme commitments are in line with organisational capacities and that decisions can be made, and resources allocated, in a timely way. Partners confirm this.</p> <p>A thorough process for assessing the quality of project proposals helps ensure that programmes are designed by partners to be realistic and safe for communities, and that relevant technical standards and good practice are being used.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes shows that activities, outputs and outcomes are systematically monitored by both partners and Act Church of Sweden staff, and that this leads to adaptation and improvement of the programmes. Unmet needs are also referred or advocated for, as relevant.</p> <p>However, Act Church of Sweden does not ensure that programme components related to accountability to affected populations are monitored systematically - either by partners or by their own staff. This can result in poor performance (eg. in relation to complaints handling processes) not being identified and addressed in a timely way.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p>	



<p>Communities consistently indicate that the projects are designed to be realistic and safe for them, and that their engagement at the needs assessment stage helps to ensure this.</p> <p>Communities all confirm that activities take place in a timely manner and that project staff make decisions and act in a timely way.</p> <p>Communities also give examples of unmet needs being referred to other organisations with the relevant technical expertise - both governmental agencies and other NGOs.</p>	
<p><b>Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects</b></p>	<p><b>2.6</b></p>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has policies, strategies and guidance in place to prevent programmes from having negative effects and to strengthen local capacities, and staff understand these policies and apply the strategies and guidance in practice.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes shows that Act Church of Sweden works with their partners to design project interventions that have positive long-term effects with transition and exit strategies built in from the beginning. The sampled projects also demonstrate that Act Church of Sweden works with partners to ensure that programmes build on and strengthen local capacities and leadership, ensuring that marginalised and disadvantaged groups, in particular women and girls, are appropriately represented.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden's approach to prioritising working with local partners, strengthening civil society, and funding institutional support to local partners all contribute towards the development of local organisations.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden also emphasises a 'do no harm' approach, in some cases requiring contextual analysis that considers the impact of programming on areas such as gender, conflict and the environment. However, there is not a systematic approach to ensure that potential or actual unintended negative effects in areas such as livelihoods and the local economy are identified and acted upon.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden has processes in place to safeguard personal information it collects from communities, primarily for communication purposes. Act Church of Sweden also requires this of partners. However, monitoring checklists for non-humanitarian projects do not encourage Act Church of Sweden staff to check that partners have effective systems in place at the project level to safeguard personal information collected from communities.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p> <p>Communities consistently confirm that the project activities have improved their resilience, strengthened their capacity and are sustainable. People know when the project is ending and are confident that the positive impacts will continue beyond the lifetime of the project interventions.</p> <p>Many communities also provide examples of how their engagement in the work develops their leadership and that due consideration is given to preventing any negative effects, including in relation to their safety as well as consideration of impact on local markets and the local environment.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that if there are any unintended negative effects of project interventions, but these are identified through community feedback channels and the partner listens and takes action to address it.</p>	
<p><b>Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback</b></p>	<p><b>2.6</b></p>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has policies and processes in place for information sharing and for ensuring the participation and engagement of people and communities in the work. A culture of open communication is observed throughout the organisation and staff and partners confirm this.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes shows that information is regularly shared with communities, particularly about the organisation working with them and the programmes it is implementing. However, Act Church of Sweden does not systematically monitor whether partners share all the information with communities that is required by their</p>	

<p>cooperation agreements. Evidence from sampled programme shows that information on the full scope of complaints handling mechanisms, the expected behaviour of staff and PSEAH commitments are not systematically shared with communities.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes consistently shows inclusive participation based on a needs and rights-based approach and that both Act Church of Sweden and their partners have methods to regularly seek feedback from communities and implement changes to address their priority needs based on the feedback.</p> <p>External communications are accurate, ethical, respectful and present people with dignity. Systems are in place to ensure people represented in the communications have given their informed consent.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p> <p>Communities consistently confirm that they are actively invited to engage and participate in all stages of the project cycle, and that their feedback is regularly sought, listened to and addressed.</p> <p>Communities feel well informed about principles, objectives, rationale of, and selection criteria for projects, however, most do not confirm receiving information about the expected behaviour of staff.</p> <p>Communities confirm that they give their informed consent when communications material is gathered that represents them.</p>	
<p><b>Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed</b></p>	<p><b>1.6</b></p>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has a Complaints Response Mechanisms (CRM) with guidelines and procedures in place for handling complaints that are reported to them. These insist on the confidentiality of complaints and the security of complainants. There is evidence of timely management of complaints and that those which do not fall within the scope of Act Church of Sweden or their partners' complaints handling mechanism are referred to relevant actors.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden has recently included the requirement for partners to have a complaint handling process in place in all cooperation agreements. However, Act Church of Sweden does not yet have a systematic approach to monitor this requirement and the extent to which its partners' complaints handling mechanisms are in place and functioning effectively. Act Church of Sweden systematically trains its staff on the Act Church of Sweden CRM, however there are limited resources and capacity available to support partners in developing their own effective complaints handling processes, where needed.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes shows that not all partners are fully aware of how to access Act Church of Sweden's CRM and that there has been limited monitoring or support available for partners to ensure that communities have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints. In addition, Act Church of Sweden does not have systems in place to ensure that partners are systematically involving the communities in the design and operation of complaints handling mechanisms.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p> <p>Communities confirm that they know that complaints handling mechanisms exist, but most understand them as covering issues related to programme implementation and have limited awareness that the scope also covers sensitive complaints such as those related to sexual exploitation, abuse, and other abuses of power.</p> <p>Most communities are not consulted on the design, implementation and monitoring of complaints handling processes, however people interviewed confirm that they are satisfied with the options they are provided with.</p> <p>Communities confirm that they trust Act Church of Sweden and its partners to handle complaints fairly and safely and can give examples of complaints being referred to other relevant organisations.</p>	
<p><b>Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
<p>Act Church of Sweden's strategies and ways of working include a strong commitment to coordination and collaboration with other relevant actors.</p>	

<p>Evidence from sampled programmes shows a thorough analysis of relevant stakeholders at project level and Act Church of Sweden’s partners are encouraged to be well coordinated with local government and/or other relevant actors to identify target areas for project implementation, minimising the risk of duplication.</p> <p>Staff confirm participating in relevant coordination bodies, in particular through membership with ACT Alliance. ACT Alliance partners confirm that Act Church of Sweden is an active participant in coordination bodies such as ACT Forums, Reference Groups and Communities of Practice.</p> <p>Partners confirm that Act Church of Sweden actively encourages participation in relevant government, UN and NGO coordination bodies, both at national and local levels. Relevant information, for example on changing needs and context, as well as on planned activities, is shared with these groups.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden’s work with partners is governed by an approach to collaborative partnerships that is characterised by organisational autonomy, mutual respect and joint learning, and is based on an open and continuous dialogue between the partners. Clear and consistent agreements are in place for all partnerships, and partners confirm that they feel valued by Act Church of Sweden, describing their partnership as a mutual partnership that recognises each other’s mandates, obligations, independence, constraints and commitments.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p> <p>Communities consistently confirm that Act Church of Sweden’s partners coordinate their work to ensure complementarity with other relevant organisations and stakeholders, including relevant local authorities and line ministries.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that there is no duplication with actions of other stakeholders.</p>	
<p><b>Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve</b></p>	<p><b>2.5</b></p>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has policies and processes in place for learning and is committed to being a ‘Learning organisation’. Staff and partners confirm that time, funds and tools are available to support learning, and that mechanisms exist to record knowledge and experience and make it accessible throughout the organisation.</p> <p>Evidence from sampled programmes demonstrates that Act Church of Sweden intentionally draws on lessons learnt and prior experience when designing programmes and is responsive to requests from partners to learn and change based on monitoring, evaluation and feedback during project implementation.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden has processes in place to ensure that they, and their partners, learn, innovate, and implement changes on the basis of monitoring and evaluation. However, Act Church of Sweden does not support partners to systematically share their learnings from feedback and complaints. This makes it difficult for them to analyse any trends and learn from feedback and complaints across their portfolio, at either the regional programme or global level.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden shares learning and innovation internally and with other stakeholders, including partners and the wider sector. Partners often share ad-hoc learning and innovation with communities, however, Act Church of Sweden does not systematically encourage or support partners to share learnings from evaluations with communities and people affected by crisis.</p>	
<p><b>Feedback from communities:</b></p> <p>Communities confirm that the information they share with the organisation improves the programmes. Many communities provide examples of feedback they had given which resulted in adaptations and improvements to the project implementation.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that they are engaged in discussions about follow-on phases of a project, including discussions about what went well or what could be improved from the first phase, enabling them to contribute their learning in evaluation processes.</p>	

Communities also demonstrate a strong willingness to share what they had learnt from the project activities with other members of the community who were not direct project participants.	
<b>Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably</b>	<b>2.6</b>
<p>Act Church of Sweden, as a department within the Church of Sweden, has a number of staff policies and procedures in place that ensures staff are treated fairly and in line with local employment law. Staff adhere to policies and understand the consequences of not adhering to them. Those interviewed for this audit feel fairly and equitably treated and there is evidence that they are supported to develop their personal and professional skills and competencies and can progress within the organisation.</p> <p>Act Church of Sweden has a Code of Conduct that is signed by all staff. This covers abuse of power, including SEAH, and fraud and corruption and is signed by all staff. Act Church of Sweden requires its partners to also have a Code of Conduct in place. All partners sampled for this audit have their own Code of Conduct, sometimes developed with support from Act Church of Sweden. Staff and partners demonstrate good understanding of the Code of Conduct and other policies that are relevant to them and their work.</p> <p>Technical advisors are available to support the partner collaboration units, particularly with their systematic inclusion in the process of assessing new projects. However, there is less support for relevant staff working directly with partners, such as training, resources or direct technical support to partners, on how to follow up or monitor the partners or support them on the implementation of some of the cross-cutting issues, particularly community-based complaints handling mechanisms.</p>	
<b>Feedback from communities:</b>	
<p>Communities consistently confirm feeling well treated, with respect and love, by staff and volunteers who they interact with.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that the project staff and volunteers are competent, knowledgeable, and skilful, having the relevant expertise to fulfil their roles.</p>	
<b>Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<p>Act Church of Sweden has strong financial management, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Anti-corruption and anti-fraud measures are in place and external audits are regularly used at all levels of programming, including at Head Office, with partners and for projects.</p> <p>Documents, interviews with staff, and evidence from sampled programmes show that Act Church of Sweden manages resources responsibly, without waste, and systems are in place to regularly monitor and report expenditure against budget.</p> <p>This audit also notes continuous progress in addressing environmental and climate change related aspects, including by the adoption of the Environment and Climate Charter and the development of an implementation plan. However, these latter elements are still relatively recent, and many targets are still to be implemented. The definition of roles and responsibilities, allocation of resources and development of capacities is not yet sufficient to ensure that the impact on the environment is fully considered throughout the organisation, including at the project level with partners.</p>	
<b>Feedback from communities:</b>	
<p>Communities confirm that resources are used efficiently and for their intended purpose, frequently doing more than expected with limited budgets. However, they are not aware of the zero-tolerance policy of Act Church of Sweden and their partners towards fraud and corruption.</p> <p>Communities also confirm that project activities take into consideration the impact on the environment.</p>	

\* Note: Average scores are a sum of the scores per commitment divided by the number of indicators in each Commitment, except when one of the indicators of a commitment scores 0 or if several scores 1 on the indicators of a Commitment lead to the issuance of a major non-conformity/ weakness at the level of the Commitment. In these two cases the overall score for the Commitment is 0.

## 5. Summary of weaknesses

Weaknesses	Type	Status	Resolution timeframe
2024-2.5: Act CoS does not systematically monitor the activities, outputs and outcomes of project components related to ensuring accountability to affected populations.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-3.6: Act CoS does not ensure that potential or actual unintended negative effects in all areas identified in this indicator are systematically identified and acted upon.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-4.1: Act CoS does not ensure that partners consistently share information with communities and people affected by crisis about the expected behaviour of their staff.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-5.1: Act CoS does not ensure that partners consult with communities and people affected by crisis on the design, implementation and monitoring of complaints-handling.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-5.2: Act CoS does not ensure that its partners systematically communicate how their complaints mechanism can be accessed and the scope of issues it addresses.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-5.4: Act CoS does not systematically ensure that the complaints handling process for communities and people affected by crisis is in place and that it covers programming, sexual exploitation and abuse, and other abuses of power.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-5.6: Act CoS does not ensure that communities and people affected by crisis are fully aware of the expected behaviour of staff, including organisational commitments on PSEAH.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-7.2: Act CoS does not systematically learn, innovate and implement changes on the basis of feedback and complaints received by partners at the community level.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-8.4: Act CoS does not have the staff capacity to ensure effective delivery of all aspects of programmes.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
<b>Total number of weaknesses</b>	<b>9 Minor</b>		

## 6. Lead auditor recommendation

In our opinion, Act Church of Sweden demonstrates a high level of commitment to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and its inclusion in the Independent Verification scheme is justified.

**Name and signature of lead auditor:**



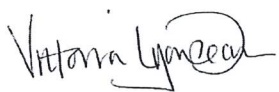
Sarah Kambarami

**Date and place:**


01 July 2024

Bonn, Germany

## 7. HQAI decision

<b>Registration in the Independent Verification Scheme:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Refused
Next audit before: 2027/07/16	
<b>Name and signature of HQAI Head of Quality Assurance:</b>    <b>Victoria Lyon Dean</b>	<b>Date and place:</b>  <b>16/07/2024 Edinburgh</b>

## 8. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

<b>Space reserved for the organisation</b>	
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
<b>Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings:</b>  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
<b>Name and signature of the organisation's representative:</b>    <b>Lisa Sandberg</b>	<b>Date and place:</b>  <b>2024/07/31</b> <b>Uppsala</b>

## 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\*

Scores	Meaning: for all verification scheme options	Technical meaning for all independent verification and certification audits
0	Your organisation does not work towards applying the CHS commitment.	<p><b>Score 0:</b> indicates a weakness that is so significant that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification:</b> major weakness.</li> <li>• <b>Certification:</b> major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issued or immediate suspension of certificate.</li> </ul>
1	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	<p><b>Score 1:</b> indicates a weakness that does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment but requires to be corrected to ensure the organisation can continuously deliver against it. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification:</b> minor weakness</li> <li>• <b>Certification:</b> minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).</li> </ul>
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	<p><b>Score 2:</b> indicates an issue that deserves attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification and certification:</b> observation.</li> </ul>
3	Your organisation conforms to this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time – the requirement is fulfilled.	<p><b>Score 3:</b> indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification and certification:</b> conformity.</li> </ul>
4	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.	<p><b>Score 4:</b> indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.</p>

\* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020