Hand in Hand for Aid and Development
Initial Audit – Summary Report – 2023/10/16

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified
☐ International ☒ National ☐ Membership/Network ☐ Direct Assistance ☐ Federated ☐ With partners	☒ Humanitarian ☒ Development ☒ Advocacy	☒ Humanitarian ☒ Development ☒ Advocacy

Legal registration	Directorate of Civil Society in Türkiye (Gaziantep, Türkiye). Subsidiary registration: Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Birmingham, United Kingdom).
Head Office location	Gaziantep, Türkiye
Total number of organisation staff	936

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Andrea Bollini
Second auditor	Elisabeth Meur
Third auditor	
Observer	
Expert	
Witness / other participants	Local Consultants (LCs): Ezdehar Kanjo and Husam Al Shehnhe

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS Verification Scheme	Certification
Phase of the audit	Initial Audit, First cycle
Coverage of the audit	The audit covers all mandates of Hand in Hand for Aid and Development (HIHFAD): humanitarian, development and advocacy mandates. The audit covers the following entities of HIHFAD: • an entity legally registered in the United Kingdom (HIHFAD UK) • an entity legally registered in Türkiye, hosting the Head Office and the Country Office of HIHFAD for Syria.

1.4 Sampling*

Total number of Project sites in scope	15
Total number of sites for onsite visit	2
Total number of sites for remote assessment	1

Name of project site	Included in final sample (Y/N)	Rationale for sampling and selection / de-selection decision	onsite or remote
Random sampling			
Aleppo-Afrin, Syria	Y	Food-security and livelihoods project which provides sectoral diversity as most of HIHFAD's portfolio is focused on health programming. Potentially accessible to Local Consultants (LCs).	Remote
Idlib (Kalbeet, Atmeh), Syria	Y	Health and WASH project, representative of HIHFAD's main sector of work. Significant budget volume when compared to other projects within the portfolio. Potentially accessible to LCs. Project delivered in partnership with various stakeholders, with a significant number of participants. Project site has reliable internet connectivity, implemented over a number of sites, allowing for flexibility if one or more of the sites became inaccessible due to insecurity.	Onsite, through LCs
Aleppo and Idlib, Syria	N	Not selected. The project has a significant budget volume, and this characteristic is already represented in both the Aleppo-Afrin, and Idlib interventions (see above). Lead Auditor opted to include in the sampling an intervention with a smaller budget (see Purposive sampling below).	
Purposive sampling			
Jarablus, Syria		Project selected due to its small budget, and its sectoral focus (education). Selection provides a balanced representation of different of project budget size and sector.	Onsite, through LCs

Any other sampling performed for this audit:

HIHFAD implements most of its projects in Syria, with a small number of projects implemented on the Turkish-Syrian border. Security assessment prevented the auditors from accessing the project sites. This limitation was addressed through identifying and training Local Consultants (LCs) based in Syria. The auditors selected a team of two consultants, one male and one female, and trained them to conduct community consultations and staff interviews. The audit was managed through a two-stage process: Stage 1 was conducted onsite and remotely by the auditors. Stage 2 was conducted with a blended approach, whereby the auditors conducted most of staff and stakeholder interviews and the LCs conducted onsite visits to projects, carrying out community consultations and interviews with some staff and stakeholders.

A major earthquake occurred in February 2023, affecting HIHFAD's Head Office and the programme in Syria during the course of the audit. The event happened at the conclusion of Stage 1 of the IA2023. At the onset of the earthquake, HQAI and HIHFAD agreed to halt the audit activities, which were resumed in May 2023.

Sampling risks identified:

During the audit, HIHFAD started and ended a pilot project intervention in Yemen. Information available at the time of the audit sampling did not take account of this project. The auditors mitigated this risk by including evidence from the pilot intervention.

Given that working with LCs is a pilot approach for HQAI, the auditors increased the number of interviews and community consultations, and tasked consultants to visit three sites across the sampled projects.

The auditors are confident that the evidence obtained during Stage 1 and Stage 2, including evidence recorded by LCs, is sufficient to determine audit findings.

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 Locations Assessed

Locations	Dates	onsite or remote
Head Office (Gaziantep, Türkiye)	December 6-8, 2022	onsite
HIHFAD UK (Birmingham, United Kingdom)	December 6-8, 2022	remote
Aleppo-Afrin (Syria)	June 5-7, 2023	remote
Jarablus (Syria)	June 18- 19, 2023	onsite (LCs)
Atmeh (Syria)	June 21, 2023	onsite (LCs)
Kalbeet (Syria)	June 22, 2023	onsite (LCs)

2.2 Interviews

Level / Position of interviewees	Number of interviewees		onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Head Office			
Management		6	onsite
Staff	3	9	onsite
HIHFAD UK			
Board	1		remote
Management		2	remote
Staff	1		remote
Country Programme			
Board		3	remote
Management		3	remote
Staff	13	7	remote (auditors), and onsite (LCs)
Stakeholders	2	5	
Total number of interviewees	**20**	**35**	**55**

2.3 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of participants		onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Group Discussion (GD) #1, Students, Jarablus (Syria)	8		onsite (LCs)
GD #2, Students, Jarablus (Syria)	8		onsite (LCs)
GD #3, Parents of students, Jarablus (Syria)	8		onsite (LCs)

GD #3, Parents of students, Jarablus (Syria)		4	onsite (LCs)
GD #4, Volunteers involved in agriculture activities, Aleppo - Afrin (Syria)	11		onsite (LCs)
GD #5, Mothers in breast feeding age, Atmeh (Syria)	8		onsite (LCs)
GD #6, Caretakers accessing paediatric services, Atmeh (Syria)	8		onsite (LCs)
GD #7, Disadvantaged individuals accessing health services,	4		onsite (LCs)
GD #8, Disadvantaged individuals accessing health services,		4	onsite (LCs)
GD #9, Community members attending the Camp Management and Camp Coordination Mechanism		17	onsite (LCs)
Total number of participants	**55**	**25**	

2.4 Opening meeting

Date	2022/12/06
Location	Gaziantep, Türkiye
Number of participants	20
Any substantive issues arising	no

2.5 Closing meeting

Date	2023/07/05
Location	remote
Number of participants	18
Any substantive issues arising	no

3. Background information on the organisation

3.1 General information	HIHFAD was established in the United Kingdom (UK) in response to the Syrian crisis in 2011. The vision of the organisation is to pursue a world where barriers are removed and communities are dignified, empowered and self-reliant. HIHFAD state its mission as follows: "to help vulnerable communities through providing merit humanitarian solutions, restoring vital services, and strengthening social resilience".
	HIHFAD's programme portfolio includes Health and Nutrition; Food Security, Livelihood and Early Recovery; Protection; WASH; Non-food items; and Education sectors. In 2021, 75% of HIHFAD's programme portfolio comprised of Health and Nutrition interventions, with non-medical sectors completing the remaining 25%.
	With an overall budget of approximately 29 million USD in 2021, HIHFAD allocates most of its financial resources to the Syrian Crisis. This is put into practice with a significant programmatic presence of 15 projects in Northwest Syria; approximately 0.4% of the budget has been allocated to fund a pilot intervention in Taiz, Yemen. This new programme is the result of a cooperation agreement signed between HIHFAD and the Government of Yemen in 2022, in line with the strategy of the organisation for 2021.
	HIHFAD is comprised of two legal entities: HIHFAD UK and HIHFAD Türkiye. HIHFAD UK is registered as a foundation under the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Its role

is to lead its subsidiary and to contribute to achieving the mission of HIHFAD through fundraising and advocacy in the UK, where 5 staff are employed. HIHFAD Türkiye is registered with the Directorate of Civil Society and employs 55 staff in Türkiye and 873 staff located in Northwest Syria, either at programme implementation sites or in one of two offices tasked to support logistics and operations.

HIHFAD is in the process of considering registration as an international NGO in Türkiye with the overall intent to grow its programming beyond Syria and diversify the nature of funding in its portfolio.

3.2 Governance and management structure	HIHFAD was first registered in the UK by a diaspora group of British-Syrian nationals motivated to provide aid at the onset of the Syrian Crisis in 2011. At that time the regulatory environment in Türkiye for NGOs delivering aid to Northwest Syria was unclear. In 2013, the organisation later registered a subsidiary office as a national NGO in Türkiye. Since then, HIHFAD UK continues to exist in order to reach a European audience for advocacy and fundraising purposes; it also enables HIHFAD to use UK legislation for charities as the framework of reference for both HIHFAD UK and its subsidiary.

HIHFAD UK does not have a physical office and staff are either seconded to the office of HIHFAD in Gaziantep (Türkiye), work at the HIHFAD Charity Shop in Birmingham (UK), or work remotely from their homes in the UK.

HIHFAD UK has a Board of Trustees with 5 members, including two of the founders. The Trustees are appointed for an unlimited term, and they include the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Country Director (CD) of HIHFAD Türkiye. The board of HIHFAD UK meets on a quarterly basis and ensure that the organisation and its subsidiary in Türkiye are carrying out their purpose, in line with internal policies and in accordance with the legal framework in the UK. The board approves annual financial and programmatic reports including the organisation's work in Türkiye, approves the organisational strategy, and monitors its implementation.

HIHFAD Türkiye has a Board with 5 members who are nominated by the General Assembly. The General Assembly has 5 board members, 5 reserve board members, 3 auditing members and 3 reserve auditing members. The board of HIHFAD Türkiye meets on quarterly basis to oversee compliance with national regulations.

The CEO of the organisation and the CD of HIHFAD Türkiye are employed by HIHFAD UK and seconded to HIHFAD Türkiye. The CEO and CD nominate the Senior Management Team (SMT) of HIHFAD Türkiye. The SMT comprises of the CEO, the CD and the heads of departments. SMT meetings are held at least monthly. During these meetings senior managers oversee the performance of the organisation and collate key information which is shared with the Board of HIHFAD Türkiye. The SMT coordinates a policy making function by collecting and processing suggestions and requests from staff. Drafted policies are later submitted to the Board for final approval. The SMT also identifies priorities and trends to inform the strategy of the organisation, which are then considered by the Board of HIHFAD Türkiye and validated by the Board of Trustees of HIHFAD UK. HIHFAD is currently implementing its 2022/2023 strategy focusing on the centrality of communities and of accountability mechanisms.

Since its inception, HIHFAD has undergone rapid growth in terms of its portfolio and its policy environment, with support from various international partner organisations, and under the leadership of its founders. The five founders of HIHFAD are all Trustees in the UK Board, with the CEO and the CD holding both the role of trustees and executive roles in the organisation.

Dedicated coordination task forces are in place in HIHFAD Türkiye to interlink departments and promote internal coordination, and both senior and middle management promote an open-door culture, so that concerns can be discussed with staff as they arise.

Senior and middle management representatives from HIHFAD UK and Türkiye regularly visit the projects in Northwest Syria.
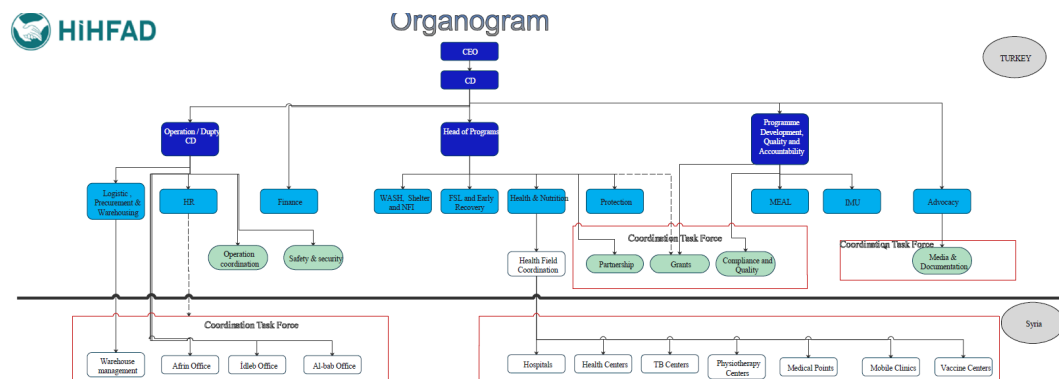
3.3 Key internal quality assurance, internal control and risk management mechanisms	HIHFAD has established a comprehensive set of policies that govern internal quality assurance, internal control and risk management across key departments. Each department is responsible for its policies of reference. Additionally, HIHFAD interlinks departments through coordination task forces comprising of leads from different departments. Through this approach, the organisation promotes policy awareness and compliance beyond a given department.

Cross-cutting policies such as the Compliance Management Policy regulate routine internal control functions across finance, human resources and procurement departments. Compliance reports are shared with the CD, and, when relevant, with the boards in both Türkiye and the UK. The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Terrorism and Conflict of Interest Policy, Whistleblowing and Protection Against Retaliation Policy, and Code of Conduct (CoC) are known by most staff and implementation is monitored by the Human Resources department, the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) department, and the boards through dedicated reporting lines.

Furthermore, HIHFAD Türkiye undergoes frequent programmatic and financial audits carried out by its funding agencies.

The SMT of HIHFAD Türkiye oversees all departments and is informed on their performance, challenges and opportunities by the respective heads of each department, through direct conversation within senior managers at the level of the coordination task forces, and through the Feedback-Complaint Response Mechanism (F-CRM). The mandates of the Board of HIHFAD Türkiye and the SMT are regulated in written policies, outlining their responsibilities in the anticipation and management of programmatic and financial risks. The MEAL Policy, the Proposal Development Process Policy and internal controls regulate the work of HIHFAD from the needs assessment stage to impact evaluation, covering the entire programme cycle. HIHFAD has an internal Quality Framework comprising of a set of internationally recognised quality indicators that HIHFAD must adhere to in the implementation of its programmes. Complaints and feedback are critical to the tracking of programme performance, informing decisions on changes, adaptations and new activities.

3.4 Work with partner organisations	At the current time, HIHFAD implements projects funded by INGOs and United Nations (UN) agencies and does not sub-grant to implementing partners. This is due to donor regulations and to legal and contractual obstacles to sub-granting to local NGOs in Syria. HIHFAD has a Partnership Policy that sets out the principles and procedures that govern its relationship and collaboration with prime organisations (organisations that have funds and wish to collaborate with implementing partners who have the capacity and access to implement projects in specific thematic areas and geographical regions), implementing partners, and technical and operational partners. This framework ensures that partnerships are aligned with the organisation's values and strategic goals, and are fairly coordinated, managed, and evaluated to meet the organisation's needs. According to the Partnership Policy, the funds made available by prime organisations should not contradict the CHS or HIHFAD's internal policies. To enter into partnership, prime organisations should be officially registered, and have clear compliance and accountability provisions. HIHFAD considers the opportunity to partner with prime organisations in accordance with defined criteria, and the decision is supported by a Go-No-Go mechanism. This scorecard considers strategic alignment as well as risks, resources and the capacity of HIHFAD to respond to a funding opportunity. Despite not working with implementing partners at the time of this audit, HIHFAD has a Partnership Policy that details the core criteria for collaborating with them, including compliance with HIHFAD's internal policies, back donor rules, and local laws. The policy presents the whole process of identifying and selecting a partner based on an Expression of Interest (EoI), an organisational capacity assessment (OCA), a review of the applicant's policies and procedures of relevance to HIHFAD, donor minimum standards, and anti-terrorism and sanctions checking (ATSC). HIHFAD is committed to collaboration and partnerships with local organisations that have similar values and mandates. For other technical and operational collaborations, HIHFAD enters specific agreements signed on behalf of HIHFAD by the Country Director. Technical partners must comply with HIHFAD policies, donor rules, and local laws.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Effectiveness of the governance, internal quality assurance and risk management of the organisation	The Board of Trustees of HIHFAD UK is the ultimate governing body of HIHFAD. The Board hosts the founders of the organisation, among which two of the trustees also hold executive positions (CEO and CD). This governance design reflects the conditions that used to characterise the context at the onset of the conflict in Syria. For example, the registration of HIHFAD in the UK was done for fundraising purposes, and HIHFAD Türkiye was first registered to facilitate logistics during the emergency phase of the conflict, to facilitate access for in-kind donations in Syria. Since then, HIHFAD has grown rapidly and has become recognised as a leading actor in the humanitarian response in Syria. The Board continuously invested in the internal policy making processes, in line with the growing needs of the portfolio. With this approach, the Board enabled an articulated set of policies to monitor internal quality and risks. However, this policy environment coexists with the participation of executive roles in the main governance platforms, such as the Board and the SMT. Due to this characteristic, most of the internal controls and risk management systems are performed by executive roles, rather than independent bodies. This includes findings from internal compliance reports which are raised to the CD; there is no clear mechanism to ensure that potentially sensitive or serious complaints that relate to the conduct of senior management,

including complaints related to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH), can be confidentially reported and investigated.

The role of the Board of HIHFAD Türkiye on organisational governance is formal, with no substantial engagement of these Board members in internal quality assurance and risk management processes. A Memorandum of Understanding regulates that HIHFAD UK oversees the decision-making process on main aspects of governance, including setting the goal, vision and mission, strategy and workplans of HIHFAD in Türkiye.

The organisation is currently undergoing a plan to change its registration in Türkiye from a national organisation to an international organisation, and to update its governance structures accordingly. In preparation to this, the Board of Trustees of HIHFAD UK are currently mentoring the SMT members of HIHFAD Türkiye on their potential future roles as Board members.

The Board of HIHFAD UK, and the SMT of HIHFAD Türkiye actively supported the CHS audit process through their participation.

4.2 Level of implementation of the CHS	HIHFAD is committed to quality and accountability and applies humanitarian standards in its work, adhering, for instance, to the Sphere Standards. According to senior management and board members, the key motivation for CHS certification is around learning and improving quality and accountability.

HIHFAD puts communities and people affected by crisis at the centre of its work, across its development, humanitarian and advocacy programmes. Accountability principles are well understood by the majority of staff at management and project site levels. Overall, there is an established culture around different dimensions of accountability which are supported by policies and processes, including in the areas of MEAL, preventing SEAH (PSEAH), F-CRM, Safeguarding, HR and Finance. HIHFAD performs well in terms of information sharing and coordination with stakeholders, and communication with communities. There are some weaknesses identified around community participation, especially in the planning and design phase of projects and on the identification of risks. HIHFAD's Partnership Policy and project proposals refer to the CHS, however. HIHFAD's commitment to the CHS is not made public and does not fully inform all levels of the organisation and its activities.

PSEAH: HIHFAD is committed to the "Do No Harm" Principle. The organisation has policies and processes in place to prevent SEAH at staff and community levels. Compliance with HIHFAD's Code of Conduct (CoC) and The Humanitarian CoC for the Syria Cross Border Response is mandatory for all staff. Reporting obligations and the consequences of not adhering to the CoCs are made explicit to staff. HIHFAD has an organisational culture in which complaints are taken seriously and are professionally addressed, although this culture is not yet fully established at project site level. HIHFAD has processes for handling sensitive complaints confidentially and fairly, including mechanisms and tools to record and track complaints, conduct investigations, and has trained PSEAH focal points in place. As an active member of the cross-border Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) PSEAH Network, HIHFAD coordinates and collaborates on PSEAH and complaint handling with relevant stakeholders. While HIHFAD uses many different communication materials to inform communities on PSEAH and the F-CRM, the organisation has no system in place to monitor and assess community awareness of the expected behaviour of staff. Further, the HIHFAD risk assessment tool does not identify the risk of SEAH by staff. HIHFAD has a Duty of Care and a Whistleblowing and Protection Against Retaliation policy. The implementation of the Duty of Care policy depends is conditioned to the availability of donor funding and on donor rules and regulations, which apply as primary source of compliance.

Localisation: HIHFAD's performance on localisation is good. As an organisation founded by members of the Syrian diaspora and working mainly in Syria, HIHFAD shows a strong |

commitment to localisation, implementing its projects in Syria almost entirely through national staff, involving communities' representatives, and non-recognised local authorities. Due to its long-term presence in Syria and its local employees, HIHFAD has a solid understanding of the context, roles, capacities and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and the needs of communities. Coordinated by the Communication, MEAL, and Programmes departments, HIHFAD has a system in place to ensure that it communicates appropriately with different members of the community, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups. HIHFAD is committed to the participation of communities, to supporting local leadership, and to promoting early recovery and resilience across projects. HIHFAD empowers national staff and enables the development of local leadership and organisations in their capacity as first-responders. However, communities are not consulted on exit strategies, which are not systematically planned. HIHFAD has processes in place to ensure complementarity of the humanitarian response in coordination with local authorities. Coordination is also done through local structures – health and education directorates, camps managers and the cluster system. A minor CAR is raised due to the absence of processes to identify potential or actual unintended negative effects in the area of livelihoods, the local economy and the environment.

Gender and Diversity: At a programmatic level, HIHFAD is committed to considering the diversity of communities in its MEAL policy and based on its accountability mechanisms, including age, gender and marginalised segments of the society in its data analysis. HIHFAD is an active member of the Protection Cluster and some of its programmes directly target the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. HIHFAD is committed to promoting gender equality and inclusion at all levels, and to encouraging equality in accessing services. In its communications, HIHFAD ensures that published media materials are accessible to all, taking into consideration gender and diversity and adopting inclusive and ethical language.

Through the HR Manual and the CoC, HIHFAD is committed to non-discrimination and equal opportunity to all, regardless of beliefs, sex, marital status, pregnancy, and disabilities. However, there is a gender imbalance both at HO and project sites levels. Women represent only 18% of staff in Türkiye and 32% of staff in Syria. There are no women at management level and only one woman present on the Board of Trustees.

Some weaknesses have been identified around risk analysis and participation. The Risk Assessment template does not include risks as perceived by different groups in the community, including the risk of SEAH. Further, HIHFAD has limited strategies to encourage marginalised segments of the community (e.g., persons living with disabilities (PLWD)) to participate in leadership roles.

4.3 Performance against each CHS Commitment

Commitment	Strong points and areas for improvement	Feedback from communities	Average score*
Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant	HIHFAD has policies, procedures and tools in place enabling impartial assistance informed by ongoing needs, capacities and context assessments and analysis. HIHFAD has established an effective channel of ongoing information gathering from the programmes, context and stakeholders. The policy environment requires that all staff contribute to the MEAL function. Most of the staff are based at programme implementation level, and needs assessment is an ongoing process. With these features, and a culture of close internal coordination, HIHFAD considers ongoing information analysis and informs its programmes accordingly.	Communities indicated that they perceive HIHFAD as an impartial organisation, and that its programmes meet their changing needs.	3.0
Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely	HIHFAD designs and implements interventions that consider contextual constraints. MEAL, Programmes, Security, Procurement, and Logistics functions are interlinked and participate in project design from the initial stages. Preventive measures are in place to control delays. HIHFAD has an established referral pathway addressing unmet needs. The organisation advocates unmet needs at national and international levels, through its staff, including senior management. HIHFAD uses national and international sectoral standards of refence. These are considered at the project design stage, and during implementation and monitoring. While pathways enabling timely decision making are in practice, HIHFAD has no detailed guidance on how key departments interact for timely decision making.	Communities indicated that they consider the staff of HIHFAD as professionals delivering their work according to high standards. They stated that they regularly meet with the MEAL staff during programmes monitoring.	2.9
Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	HIHFAD designs and delivers programmes that strengthen local capacity and improve resilience of communities. The organisation promotes early recovery approaches in its programmes, when the context is sufficiently conducive. Existing community plans inform programming. The ongoing needs assessment processes, specific surveys and evaluations, and meetings with communities are the main channels considered by the organisation to monitor its "do no harm" commitments. Risk identification practices in place consider the communities. However, a	Communities indicated that they feel safe when they participate in HIHFAD programmes. They also indicated that their participation to the programme will contribute determining their future livelihoods.	2.3

	minor CAR was raised as HIHFAD has no procedures in place to identify potential unintended negative effects in the areas of livelihoods, the local economy and the environment. HIHFAD has strict data protection policies and practices, however, practices are unclear on how SEAH information is safeguarded and the risk of SEAH by staff is not systematically identified. Local leadership is involved in the programme in different ways, but HIHFAD lacks guidance to promote the representation of marginalised groups in the development of local leadership capacities. Communities are not generally involved in the design of exist strategies.		
Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	HIHFAD has policies and guidelines in place supporting a culture of openness and for ethical external communication. The organisation has a diversity of communication tools, uses many channels of communication, and adapts its communication materials and messages to different audiences. While feedback from communities is encouraged and supported by different tools across the project cycle, a Minor CAR has been raised as HIHFAD does not systematically ensure that information is provided to communities about the organisation's principles and how it expects staff to behave. It is also observed that HIHFAD does not always ensure inclusive participation and engagement of communities in the design stage of projects. Internally, HIHFAD promotes an open-door policy, which was confirmed by staff interviews, however, the organisation still lacks a system that allows provision and dissemination of information at all levels of the organisation and programmes.	Communities interviewed confirmed that HIHFAD's communication approach is respectful and culturally appropriate for different groups, especially marginalised and vulnerable people, emphasising the use of simple and clear language in communicating with them. Most of the communities interviewed indicated being encouraged to provide feedback without fear of retaliation. While communities interviewed showed a good level of awareness of HIHFAD programmes, activities, they expressed some uncertainty about the organisation's principles and staff expected behaviour. Also, they felt not engaged in the planning stage of projects.	2.4
Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed	At management level, HIHFAD has an organisational culture in which complaints are taken seriously and are professionally addressed. The organisation welcomes and accepts complaints and manages these in a timely, fair and appropriate manner. The organisation maintains a complaints tracker, and investigation and safeguarding case reports. While some elements of the F-CRM system are still lacking, such as an appeal	Most of the communities interviewed indicated that they know how to raise a complaint. However, none of them were told explicitly and directly by the organisation about expected staff behaviour. Also, they stated not being consulted on the design and implementation of the F-CRM.	2.1

	procedure, a pre-established list of services to refer survivors of SEAH, and promotion of the F-CRM on its website, HIHFAD has a documented F-CRM in place with relevant associated mechanisms and tools. Also, as part of the cross-border IASC PSEAH network, HIHFAD coordinates its F-CRM with relevant stakeholders. A Minor CAR has been identified concerning how HIHFAD ensures and monitors that communities are fully aware of and understand rules on the expected behaviour of staff.		
Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	HIHFAD is committed to coordination and collaboration with other stakeholders without compromising humanitarian principles. The organisation actively participates in all relevant coordination mechanisms, both technical and thematic. It is also a member of many platforms and networks, including UN Clusters and the Syrian INGO Regional Forum. Thanks to its local and international anchorage and adequate mechanisms and tools, HIHFAD understands the different actors' roles and responsibilities. HIHFAD is transparent and shares relevant information with its partners and other actors. At programmatic level, HIHFAD complements the work of other actors, avoids duplication, and fills gaps when possible.	Communities interviewed emphasised that there is good coordination between HIHFAD and other organisations working in the area as well as the local authorities to meet the growing needs of the population. They also confirmed the complementarity between the work of HIHFAD and other actors, and the absence of duplication in services.	3
Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	HIHFAD is committed to a culture of learning and improvement. It also actively contributes to learning and innovation in the sector. Thanks to its MEAL system, HIHFAD is able to learn, innovate and implement changes on the basis of monitoring, evaluation and feedback. While lessons learnt are shared internally during learning sessions there is no process ensuring that those lessons learned will systematically and consistently inform the design of new projects. Also, HIHFAD has no mechanism in place to share learning and innovation with communities. The Minor CAR identified is related to the lack of a mechanism to record and share knowledge and experience across the entire organisation.	Communities interviewed provided examples of adaptations in projects and also the development of a new project based on learning and feedback. However, there is limited awareness about lessons learned and innovation.	2.3

Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	HIHFAD has a HR system in place that ensures compliant, fair, transparent and non-discriminatory staff policies and procedures. HIHFAD has its own Code of Conduct and endorses the Humanitarian Code of Conduct for the Syria Cross Border Response. HIHFAD CoC does not explicitly reflect principles of PSEA and the duty to report allegations or suspicions of SEAH. Staff interviewed knew the CoC. While HIHFAD has the management, staff capacity and capability to deliver its programmes, it has no formal process to identify risks and mitigations measures in relation to the loss of skilled staff at management and operational levels. Observations raised for this commitment concern the lack of systematic approach to staff performance development supported by training plans. Indeed, while annual appraisals are conducted by supervisors, HIHFAD has no formal process in place to review achievements regarding work objectives and personal development plans. There is limited budget set aside for staff training and development. Safety and security, PSEAH, and safeguarding trainings are not systematically provided to all staff. HIHFAD policy for staff security, health and well-being is not applicable to all staff, does not cover psychological support and is dependent on the availability of donor funding.	The communities interviewed perceive all staff, regardless of status, as qualified, competent and effective in their work in terms of attitude, behaviour, knowledge and skills.	2
Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	HIHFAD has procedures and practices in place to manage resources efficiently, and within designated purposes. Finance and procurement policies provide detailed guidance on key steps to be followed by staff to balance quality, cost and timeliness of the humanitarian effort. The accounting process and procurement management are computerised and monitored, minimising the risk of waste. The risk of corruption is ultimately monitored by the SMT, with policies delegating controls to relevant departments at the different stages of the monitoring process. HIHFAD has a compliance department tasked to monitor the HR, procurement and finance departments. Some interventions are designed with climate change sensitive approaches, however the organisation has limited policies to define its commitment to using resources in an environmentally responsible way. HIHFAD	Communities interviewed considered HIHFAD to be reputable in how it uses its resources. They also indicated services were almost always in place at the expected time, and that the goods procured by HIHFAD are of a good quality.	2.3

	has no guidance on how it monitors that funding does not compromise its independence. HIHFAD internal audit processes do not provide independent assurance that internal controls are operating effectively. A minor CAR was raised covering the lack of policies governing the above-mentioned organisational responsibilities.		

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 non-conformities

Corrective Action Request (CAR)*	Type	Resolution due date
2023-3.7 HIHFAD has no procedures in place to identify potential unintended negative effects in the areas of livelihoods, the local economy and the environment.	Minor	2026-09-04
2023-4.1 HIHFAD does not systematically ensure that information is provided to communities about the organisation's principles and how it expects staff to behave.	Minor	2026-09-04
2023-5.6 HIHFAD does not ensure that communities are fully aware of the expected behaviour of staff and of HIHFAD's commitment to PSEAH.	Minor	2026-09-04
2023-7.5: HIHFAD does not have effective mechanisms in place to record knowledge and experience and make it accessible throughout the organisation.	Minor	2026-09-04
2023-8.9: The implementation of HIHFAD's policy for staff security, health and well-being is dependent on the availability of donor funding and on donor rules and regulations.	Minor	2026-09-04
2023-9.6 HIHFAD has no policies or processes in place governing that: it (b) uses its resources in an environmentally responsible way; (e) it conducts audits, verifies compliance and reports transparently; it (f) ensures that the acceptance of resources does not compromise its independence.	Minor	2026-09-04
Total Number of CARs	**6**	

Note: The CARs are completed by the audit team based on the findings. The audited partner is required to respond with a Management Response for each CAR to HQAI before a certificate is issued (reference: HQAI Procedure 114).

6. Recommendation for next audit

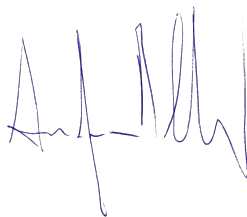| **Sampling**	As per normal sampling rules.
Any other specificities to be considered in the next audit	Accessing the programme in Syria will likely require the audit team to work through Local Consultants in order to conduct community consultations.

7. Lead auditor recommendation

In our opinion, HIIHFAD conforms with the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. We recommend certification.	
Name and signature of lead auditor: Andrea Bollini	**Date and place:** 2023-09-04, Italy

8. HQAI decision

HQAI decision:	☒ Certification preconditioned to the provision of a management response ☐ Certification preconditioned to the closure of Major CAR
Management response expected by: 2023/11/13	
Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director: **Désirée Walter**	**Date and place:** Geneva, 16 October 2023
Final decision on certification:	☐ Issued ☐ Refused
Start date of the certification cycle: Next audit before:	
Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director:	**Date and place:**

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: *If yes, please give details:*	☐ Yes ☑ No
Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings: I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit I accept the findings of the audit	 ☑ Yes ☐ No ☑ Yes ☐ No
Name and signature of the organisation's representative: Faddy sahloul *Faddy sahloul* Faddy sahloul (Nov 2, 2023 12:53 GMT)	**Date and place:** Nov 2, 2023 United Kingdom

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.	**Score 0:** indicates a weakness that is so significant that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to: • **Independent verification:** major weakness. • **Certification:** major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issue or immediate suspension of certificate.
1	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	**Score 1:** 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: • **Independent verification**: minor weakness • **Certification:** minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	**Score 2:** indicates an issue that deserves attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement. This leads to: • **Independent verification and certification:** observation.
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.	**Score 3:** indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to: • **Independent verification and certification:** conformity.
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.	**Score 4:** indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.

* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020