

World Relief

Initial Audit – Summary Report – 2024/08/14

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 type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy
Legal registration	US Government Non-profit Unique Entity Identifier C2TKJFL5CKP7	
Head Office location	Baltimore, Maryland (remote)	
Total number of organisation staff	2325	

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Nik Rilkoﬀ
Second auditor	Camille Nussbaum
Third auditor	Gertrude Dendere-Chibwe
Observer	
Expert	Andrew Nzimbi
Witness / other participants	

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS:2014 Verification Scheme	
Audit Cycle	Initial Audit, First cycle
Type of audit	Certification
Scope of audit	World Relief's international programmes and corresponding home office support departments
Focus of the audit	The audit includes humanitarian and development programmes across World Relief's portfolio.

1.4 Sampling*

Sampling unit	Country Programme
Total number of country programme sites included in the sampling	11
Total number of sites for onsite visit	1
Total number of sites for remote assessment	3
Sampling Unit Selection	
Random Sampling – remote/onsite	Purposive Sampling – remote/onsite
Kenya – onsite	Chad – remote
Burundi - remote	South Sudan - remote

Any other sampling considerations:
Sampling risks identified: Efforts were made to include representation of World Relief's directly and indirectly implemented work (through partners), however, there were too few instances of active programmes with partners to achieve this. This was mitigated through analysing partnership agreement templates and examples. Given the management of the sampling risks identified, the auditor is confident in the findings and conclusions of this audit based on the sample. Purposive sampling of partner-implemented programmes is recommended for the next audit.

**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

Date	2024/02/22	Number of participants	24
Location	Online	Any substantive issues arising	None

2.2 Locations Assessed

Locations	Dates	Onsite or Remote
Headquarters (known in World Relief as Home Office)	2024/02/22-2024/05/02	Remote
Kenya	2024/04/02-2024/04/12	Onsite/Remote
Burundi	2024/04/15-2024/05/03	Remote
Chad	2024/04/15-2024/05/03	Remote
South Sudan	2024/04/15-2024/05/02	Remote

2.3 Interviews

Level / Position of interviewees	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Home Office			
Management	3	1	Remote
Staff	10	10	Remote
Country Programme office(s)			
Management	1	5	
Staff	1	9	

Partner staff			
Others		4	
Total number of interviewees	15	29	44

2.4 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Community group discussion #1, Non-Leadership group, Oldonyoike, Kajiado Church Empowerment Zone (CEZ)	8	2	Onsite
Community group discussion #2, Channels of Hope Female Facilitators, Pakase, Magadi CEZ	4		Onsite
Community group discussion #3, Channels of Hope Male Facilitators, Pakase, Magadi CEZ		6	Onsite
Community group discussion #4, Child Protection Committee, Shompole, Magadi CEZ	6	5	Onsite
Community group discussion #5, SFL Group, Pakase, Magadi CEZ	10		Onsite
Total number of participants	28	13	41

2.5 Closing Meeting

Date	2024/05/10	Number of participants	13
Location	Online	Any substantive issues arising	None

3. Background information on the organisation

3.1 General information

World Relief is an international non-governmental organisation founded after World War II to respond to humanitarian needs in Europe. Initially the War Relief Commission of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), in the 1950s it changed its name. Its mission is 'to boldly engage the world's greatest crises in partnership with the church'. The vision of the organisation is: *thriving, welcoming communities where families flourish, and people experience restorative relationships with God, their neighbors, themselves, and all of creation.*

World Relief's domestic refugee resettlement programme has not been included in the scope of this audit, which has focussed on the International Program (IP). The IP partners with local churches and communities in humanitarian response as well as programmes that support resilience and community strengthening. It is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organisation in the United States of America, with a home office in Baltimore, Maryland.

Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive in 2021 and a period of organisational growth, World Relief is working toward systematisation of policies, processes and procedures. World Relief's previous strategy, Forward Together (2021-2023) is being updated to focus on programme value, alignment to its recently updated vision and mission and integration of the CHS, tracked through OKRs (objectives and key results). At the time of this initial audit, the new strategy is currently being cascaded from the leadership team to country programmes.

World Relief currently has operations in 11 countries (Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Kenya Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine) and an office in Nicaragua that is part of its IT and Finance Support Department. For national compliance, some country offices have a local governing board (Kenya) or advisory board (Malawi and Rwanda).

World Relief works through 45 partners and 162 Church Network Committees in health, nutrition, agriculture, economic development, child development and protection, gender equality and social inclusion, church empowerment, disaster response and community resilience and peacebuilding. In FY23 the annual budget for the international programme was US\$52.4M, with 70% allocated for humanitarian programming and 30% for development.

3.2 Governance and management structure

World Relief is a subsidiary of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and its board of directors includes two permanent NAE seats, with NAE approving World Relief's President/CEO and Board Chairperson. The elected Board (11 - 21 members and Executive, Finance, Audit, Workforce and Governance Committees) meet thrice annually to oversee fulfilment of World Relief's purpose; treatment of staff and affiliates; strategic planning; and financial planning, budgets, and oversight. The Executive Committee comprises the Executive Department and the leads of the other Home Office Departments, supporting the President/CEO in strategy, planning, and decision-making.

The Home Office has ten departments: nine report to the President/CEO while the Chief Financial Officer reports to the Chief Administrative Officer. There are two programme departments: US (not covered by this audit) and International, which is divided into the Development Countries Unit (DCU) and the Humanitarian and Disaster Response Unit (HDRU). World Relief also funds disaster responses through the Integral Alliance when they are not present. Support departments include technical, monitoring, evaluation, and learning, business development, and operations (security, administration, complaints and feedback, knowledge management). There are also project management units for large, centrally-managed projects implemented across multiple countries.

The seven other Home Office departments fall under either 1) General and Administrative support (Executive, Admin/IT, Finance, HR and external General Counsel) or 2) Fundraising, Marketing, Communications, and Advocacy. Interdepartmental teams include the Operations Committee, the Risk Committee, the Green Team (environmental stewardship), and the Multi-Cultural Committee (focused on areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion).

3.3 Work with partner organisations

Partnerships are entered into by World Relief based on the organisation's specific needs. They are categorised as implementation, technical assistance, donor relationships or collaboration (on information, networking or advocacy).

World Relief implements between 1-14% of activities through partner organisations, with most country offices spending less than 3% of annual budgets on this. The process of selecting implementing partners includes a checklist of capacities and policies that informs the terms of partnership agreements that outline deliverables, reporting and payment timelines. Detailed due diligence processes are not yet established. Partner performance is monitored against the agreement and through feedback meetings, although support to ensure appropriate risk management is not in place.

World Relief's Partnership Policy defines types of partners, partnership principles and minimum requirements including CHS adherence. The Partnership Policy mandates clear complaint handling processes and requires partners to inform communities about expected behaviour. It also stipulates the organisation's commitment to preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH), as well as ensuring child protection.

Many World Relief activities engage churches, faith communities, and community-based organisations through capacity strengthening, without funding. Memoranda of

Understanding (MOUs) in non-funding partnerships, for example with churches and Church Network Committees in Church Empowerment Zones (CEZs), do not include the requirements established in the Partnership Policy.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Internal quality assurance and risk management mechanisms

World Relief's internal control system includes:

1. Prevention through policies, defined processes (segregation of duties, approval levels) and conflict of interest declarations,
2. Detection through internal audit, whistle-blowing protection and confidential complaint mechanisms,
3. Information and communication to appropriate people,
4. Internal and external risk assessments, and
5. Establishing a control environment and a culture of ethical values and accountability.

World Relief's internal audit process includes internal compliance and evaluating control processes. The Internal and Compliance Auditing Department produces annual audit plans based on risk assessments, and reports to senior finance executives on results and the completion status of audit recommendations.

World Relief's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Policy establishes expectations for monitoring inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. It includes stakeholder and community engagement, ethics as well as ideal MEAL staff levels by programme size. Aspects of this policy are not yet fully realised at the programme level.

DMEAL Guidance (design + MEAL) emphasises improving quality and impact, and builds on World Relief's Integral Mission Principles and CEZ programmatic methods. It includes programme design and implementation with tools and minimum standards that country office technical and operational staff are required to be trained in as part of orientation for all new project staff.

World Relief's Risk Management Policy applies worldwide, using Enterprise Risk Management as a process-driven tool enabling management to manage risks, defined as strategic, compliance, reputational, financial, operational, IT & information system or political/security.

Management and staff at different levels are responsible for identifying, assessing, mitigating, monitoring and reporting on risk. A country-level risk assessment and reporting matrix includes programmatic risks and SEA, although the programmatic risk assessment template does not. Risks relating to safeguarding are managed through complaint and whistleblowing mechanisms as well as required annual training refreshers on the code of conduct, child protection and PSEAH. A Risk Management Committee of the Board oversees risk management policy implementation, however monitoring and updating risk management processes is not assured at all levels.

4.2 Level of application of the CHS

Responsibility, overview and supervision of the CHS certification process sits with the Director of Operations for International Programs who reports to the Senior Vice President of International Programs. Prior to this Initial Audit, World Relief underwent a self-assessment process that included identification of weaknesses and establishment of a CHS action plan. Certification is a strategic initiative in the IP, and the CHS provides the framework for institutional improvement in the IP and across all support functions.

There is widespread buy-in for change processes across the IP and Home Office in terms of policy, processes and design, monitoring and implementation practice. The amount of

change is significant, however there is a strong orientation towards supporting roll out and an awareness of the need to prevent overload. CHS milestones are included in job descriptions and performance appraisals, and there are resources and funds available to address the most significant gaps. Progress is embedded in objectives and key results.

World Relief's main strengths in applying the CHS are currently the policy framework including information sharing, communications, coordination and collaboration, knowledge management, human resources and financial management. Internal quality assurance and risk management frameworks are robust.

Localisation is also a relatively strong component of World Relief's work, building the capacity of churches and communities to strengthen their own resilience.

Areas of improvement include requirements of the CHS relating to gender, avoiding harm, and the PSEAH, broadly in terms of risk and vulnerability assessments at programme levels and building mitigation measures into programme planning and implementation.

4.3 Organisational performance against each CHS Commitment

Strong points and areas for improvement	Average score*
Commitment 1: Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant	2.3
<p>World Relief policies, and the Integral Mission Principles, commit the organisation to providing impartial assistance and to taking into account the diversity of communities, including by collecting disaggregated data. Detailed context analyses are conducted for three-year strategic plans, and for projects, however there is no process or practice to ensure ongoing reviews of these. Programme assessments include needs as well as vulnerabilities, particularly of children, however the risks of SEA are not systematically included for the context and for all demographic groups within a community and risks are not systematically taken into account when programmes are designed and implemented.</p>	
<p>Feedback from communities: Communities confirm that World Relief provides impartial assistance. However, they state that they have not been involved in assessment activities, nor do they recall being consulted on whether the activities are relevant and meeting their needs. Additionally, they express that they do not have the ability to influence the type of activities delivered.</p>	
Commitment 2: Humanitarian response is effective and timely	2.3
<p>World Relief has a thorough country office capacity assessment that helps the organisation ensure its programme commitments are in line with the capacity to deliver. Roll out of a systematised DMEAL framework and guidance alongside mandated expectations for MEAL staff numbers, are increasing performance in terms of MEAL practice. Outcomes are not yet systematically captured. Country programmes do not consistently undertake disaster preparedness and good practice timeliness standards for humanitarian responses have not been established.</p>	
<p>Feedback from communities: Communities are included in monitoring but are not confident that their input is listened to and taken into consideration. World Relief activities address sensitive topics, including female genital mutilation and early marriage, and some community members expressed concerns about their safety by taking part in those activities. They state a preference for increased participation by, and sensitisation of local leaders, followed by support from these leaders. Activities take place in a timely manner, although administrative follow-up can be delayed. Communities express a desire for more information on how to address their unmet needs.</p>	
Commitment 3: Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects	2.3
<p>World Relief has comprehensive policies designed to strengthen local capacities and prevent negative effects, including child protection and PSEAH. Data Protection and Information Sharing policies safeguard information collected from communities and the MEAL Policy includes provisions for data protection audits. Programmes, particularly within the CEZ model, build on local capacities and work towards improving the resilience of communities. However, well developed tools for resilience and disaster preparedness considerations in programming have been removed from country strategy templates and community-based and participatory hazard and risk assessments are not conducted. Existing information on risks and hazards and community preparedness plans is not used to inform programme plans.</p>	
<p>Feedback from communities: Communities indicate they are able to participate in programme activities relevant to them and confirm that marginalised people with disabilities are encouraged to take up leadership positions in World Relief projects, identifying examples of this. Communities have not participated in activities to identify local hazards and risk and have limited awareness of whether these are integrated into World Relief's programmes. Communities are uncertain of the duration of World Relief's interventions and had concerns about whether some changes relating to cultural practices would be sustained after the projects ended. People are confident that the Savings for Life project benefits the local economy and their households.</p>	
Commitment 4: Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback	2.6
<p>World Relief has policies in place for information sharing, participation and management of feedback of communities. Information about the organisation and programmes is shared systematically at field level. The organisation communicates with communities through a variety of appropriate media. The information about contexts and communities is accurate, respectful and ethical. However, the information shared with communities does not systematically include the expected behaviour of staff. Their participation is limited in some cases to preassigned tasks. The management of feedback is not consistent.</p>	
<p>Feedback from communities: Communities have information about the organisation and its projects but not consistently about the expected behaviour of staff. They appreciate the efforts to offer a variety of media in different formats and languages. Although they are invited to provide some feedback, they do not systematically receive replies</p>	

to the questions raised. Some groups express discontent at perceived limitations to propose ideas and participate more.	
Commitment 5: Complaints are welcomed and addressed	2.1
World Relief made significant effort in recent years to develop and implement a consistent complaint and feedback mechanism (CFM) globally and in its different country programmes. The organisation has a documented complaints policy, managed complaints in a safe way and has an overall organisational culture that takes complaints seriously. It refers complaints that are out of its scope to relevant parties. However, the level of rollout of the policy and mechanism varies in the different contexts. This results in small numbers, and inconsistent follow-up of complaints in some contexts. The efforts made to disseminate information to communities about the mechanism, especially for the issues related to prevent SEAH, have not yet produced reliable awareness.	
Feedback from communities: Communities confirm they can complain however they have a limited understanding of the mechanism regarding the scope and, in fewer cases, the channels to access it. They have limited awareness of expected behaviour of staff and more specifically, World Relief commitments made on the prevention of SEAH.	
Commitment 6: Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary	2.8
World Relief has clear commitments to coordination and collaboration in its key strategic documents and in the different stages of implementation of projects. Detailed stakeholder analyses and mapping are systematically conducted. Staff is coordinated with other agencies, local authorities, and coordination bodies to maximise the impact of actions. However operational blockages are not systematically addressed through consultation with other organisations.	
Feedback from communities: Communities confirm that World Relief works well with other implementing agencies and local authorities.	
Commitment 7: Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve	2.7
Country strategies commit teams to learning lessons from monitoring, feedback and complaints, and this process is central in the DMEAL Guidance. Practice is not yet consistent and is being supported at all levels. An intranet has been developed that is searchable to promote documentation and learning and make knowledge and experience accessible throughout the organisation. World Relief staff do not systematically adhere to guidance on communication of learning, assessment data and adaptation with communities.	
Feedback from communities: Stakeholders identify that World Relief shares lessons in collaboration meetings, but communities are not aware of changes made in programmes or learning and improvement taking place in programmes.	
Commitment 8: Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably	2.8
World Relief staff work according to the mandate and values of the organisation, they have regular performance appraisals through which job descriptions are updated. The World Relief Employee Handbook and the Code of Conduct outline expectations of staff and policies and procedures are checked for compliance with local laws. Staff take part in regular trainings and have opportunities to develop including through mentorship programmes. Staff wellness is taken seriously, however there is a question over whether World Relief allocates sufficient security management resources to ensure effective security monitoring, management and response in high-risk contexts.	
Feedback from communities: Communities and stakeholders recognise the professionalism and conduct of World Relief staff, indicating that they are competent and have adequate technical skills to perform their duties.	
Commitment 9: Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose	2.7
World Relief has a policy framework governing the use and management of resources, with the exception of a documented statement on how it ensures that acceptance of resources does not compromise its independence. Staff are knowledgeable about strategies to balance quality, cost and timeliness. Budget monitoring is carried out. World Relief has detailed corporate, country and programme risk assessment processes however processes for risk management and practices of risk mitigation are not systematically monitored and updated at all levels. World Relief's 2022 Environmental Policy guides efforts to reduce operational and programmatic environmental impact, with current actions focussed on staff behaviour and education.	
Feedback from communities: Stakeholders appreciate the management of financial resources by World Relief. Communities are not aware of any efforts relating to natural resource management through the projects.	


* 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 Requests (CAR)*	Type	Status	Resolution timeframe
2024-1.2: World Relief does not design and implement appropriate programmes based on risks, and an understanding of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-3.2: World Relief does not use existing community hazard and risk assessments or preparedness plans to guide activities.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-3.6: World Relief does not identify and act upon potential unintended negative effects in a timely and systematic manner in the areas of: b. sexual exploitation and abuse by staff; c. culture, gender, and social and political relationships; and f. the environment.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
2024-5.6: World Relief does not systematically ensure that communities and people affected by crisis are fully aware of the expected behaviour of humanitarian staff, including organisational commitments made on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.	Minor	New	By 2027 RA
Total Number of open CARs	4		


* *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. Lead auditor recommendation

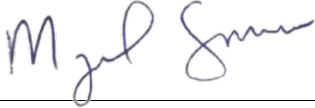
<p>In our opinion, World Relief conforms with the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.</p> <p>We recommend certification.</p>	
<p>Name and signature of lead auditor:</p>  <p>Nik Rilko</p>	<p>Date and place:</p> <p>June 30, 2024</p>

7. HQAI decision

<p>HQAI decision:</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certification preconditioned to the provision of a management response</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Certification preconditioned to the closure of Major CAR</p>
<p>Management response expected by: 2024/07/29</p>	
<p>Final decision on certification:</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Issued</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Refused</p>
<p>Start date of the certification cycle: 2024/08/14</p> <p>Next audit before 2025/08/14</p>	

Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director: Désirée Walter 	Date and place: Geneva, 14 August 2024
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8. 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's representative: 	Date and place: 9/17/2024, Norfolk, VA

Appeal

In case of disagreement with the decision on certification, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 14 workdays after being informed of the decision.

HQAI will transmit the case to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaint Board who will confirm that the basis for the appeal meets the appeals process requirements. The Chair will then constitute an Appeal Panel made of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. The panel will strive to come to a decision within 45 workdays.

The details of the Appeals Procedure can be found in document PRO049 – Appeals 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>Score 0: 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"> • Independent verification: major weakness. • Certification: major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issued or immediate suspension of certificate.
	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent verification: minor weakness • Certification: minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).
	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	<p>Score 2: 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"> • 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.	<p>Score 3: indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.	<p>Score 4: indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.</p>

* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020