

Diakonia Sweden

Renewal Audit – Summary Report - 2025/07/02

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input checked="" 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
Legal registration	INGO, registered with the Swedish Tax Authorities	
Head Office location	Stockholm, Sweden	
Total number of organisation staff	210	

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Jorge Menéndez Martínez
Second auditor	Simon Maina
Third auditor	-
Observer	-
Expert	-
Witness / other participants	-

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS:2024 Verification Scheme	Certification
Audit Cycle	Third cycle
Type of audit	Renewal Audit
Scope of audit	The audit covers the whole organisation. The audit includes Diakonia Head office, and all the humanitarian, development and advocacy programmes, including the International Humanitarian Law Centre.
Focus of the audit	The audit has focused on assessing the three different operations models implemented by Diakonia this year as part of its reorganisation process.

1.4 Sampling*

Sampling unit	Country Programme
Total number of sampling units	22
Sample size	4
Total number of onsite visits	1
Total number of sampling units for remote assessment	3
Sampling Unit Selection	
Random Sampling — onsite/remote	Purposive Sampling — onsite/remote
Bolivia — not selected	Regional Programme (Kenya and Uganda) - onsite
Sri Lanka — not selected	Nicaragua — remote

	Female	Male	remote
Head Office / Entities / Affiliate offices			
Board members		1	Remote
Management	5	5	Remote
Staff	4	4	Remote
Country Programme			
Management	3	1	Onsite and remote
Staff	7		Onsite and remote
Partner staff (Male, Female and Non-Binary)	12		Onsite and remote
Stakeholders		3	Onsite and remote
Total number of interviewees			45

2.4 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Group discussion #1. Participants in the Democracy and Human Rights Program (Male, Female and Non-Binary)	9		Onsite
Group discussion #2. Resilient Commercial and Agricultural Villages– Women	5		Onsite
Group discussion #3. Resilient Commercial and Agricultural Villages – Widows	5		Onsite
Group discussion #4. Resilient Commercial and Agricultural Villages – Members of the cooperative	2	3	Onsite
Group discussion #5. Resilient Commercial and Agricultural Villages – Men		6	Onsite
Interview #1. Paralegal – People with disabilities		1	Onsite
Group discussion #6. Paralegal – Young	1	2	Onsite
Group discussion #7. Paralegal – Community Leaders	2	1	Onsite
Group discussion #8. Paralegal – Women	4		Onsite
Group discussion #9. Paralegal – Men	4		Onsite
Group discussion #10. Paralegal – Community Leaders	2	1	Onsite
Total number of participants			48

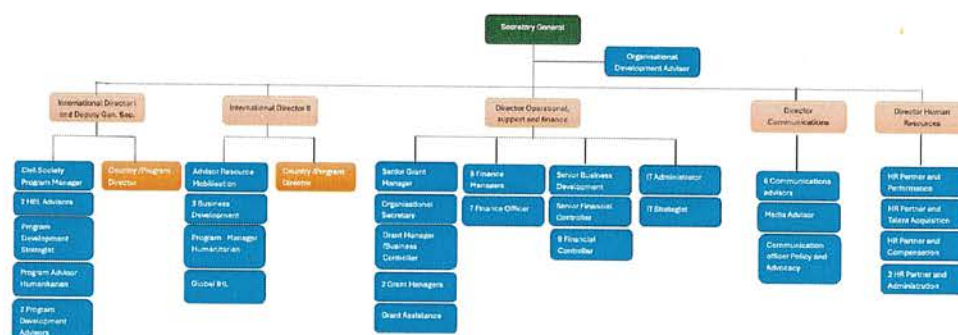
2.5 Closing Meeting

Date	2025/06/09	Number of participants	17
Location	Remote	Any substantive issues arising	None

positions now distributed across various parts of the world, not just based in Sweden. This decentralisation is aiming for closer proximity to the contexts in which Diakonia operates, supporting better-informed decision-making and stronger engagement with partners.

Under the new model, Diakonia operates through three distinct modalities: the Country Model, the Remote Country Model, and the Multi-context Model. These are selected based on funding levels, security and political conditions, and program complexity. The Country Model ensures direct in-country presence and strategic engagement. The Remote Country Model allows for program continuity in high-risk or low-capacity environments through remote management and resource sharing. The Multi-context Model supports regional and global initiatives through flexible and cost-efficient structures. All models are designed to be scalable and are supported by globally based teams, allowing Diakonia to remain adaptive and resilient in a rapidly changing development landscape.

Organigram of Diakonia Sweden



3.3 Work with partner organisations

Diakonia supports and implements its programmes through more than 350 implementing partner organisations worldwide. Only two programmes are implemented directly by Diakonia: its advocacy initiatives and resource mobilisation activities in Sweden. Diakonia strives to support people who do not have their basic human rights respected through the funding of NGOs and CSOs working with rights holders for sustainable change. The organisation is committed to long-term partnerships.

The new Partnership Policy, adopted in December 2023, defines the principles and standards guiding its relationships with civil society partners. The policy emphasises mutual accountability, transparency, and shared commitment to human rights, gender justice, and sustainability. It outlines what partners can expect from Diakonia—including financial and strategic support, respectful dialogue, and flexibility—and what Diakonia expects in return, such as alignment with its core values and a clear focus on rights-holder impact. The policy also affirms Diakonia's dedication to decolonisation, localisation, and long-term transformative partnerships, including with informal actors.

The policy rejects donor-recipient dynamics and promotes equitable, trust-based collaboration. Diakonia commits to flexibility in funding, inclusive engagement, and minimising bureaucratic burdens to maximise resources for partners. It also highlights feminist principles, aiming to allocate at least one-third of its funding to feminist and LGBTQI+ movements. The policy includes mechanisms for partner feedback, annual partnership reviews, and a whistleblowing mechanism to ensure compliance and ongoing improvement.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

- Equitable partnership: Diakonia places strong emphasis on equitable partnerships, fostering relationships based on mutual respect, shared values, and joint accountability. All partner organisations consulted highlighted the quality of Diakonia's collaboration and expressed appreciation for the consistent support, open communication, and commitment to strengthening their capacities.
- Community capacity building: Diakonia strengthens local capacities and resilience, empowering local leaders.

Weakness identified in the audit:

- Data Protection management: Diakonia does not ensure all the partners have an appropriate mechanism to ensure the data protection of information collected from the communities.
- PSEAH (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment) information sharing: Diakonia does not ensure that staff and partners consistently share relevant information with communities regarding PSEAH and expected standards of behaviour.
- Disaster risk reduction: Diakonia does not support local capacities to anticipate and reduce the risks of potential crises or disasters.
- Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) complaints mechanisms: Diakonia lacks safe, accessible, and appropriate mechanisms in communities for reporting complaints related to SEAH.
- Monitoring of SEAH reporting awareness: Diakonia does not regularly monitor whether communities understand how to report SEAH-related concerns and how these will be addressed.
- Share Learning: Diakonia does not ensure that learning from feedback and monitoring are shared with the communities.

4.3 PSEAH

Diakonia demonstrates a strong organisational commitment to the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH) through comprehensive policies such as its Code of Conduct, Safeguarding Policy, and the Complaints and Incident Response Mechanism. Staff and partners receive regular training on these standards, and community members generally trust Diakonia to handle complaints confidentially and in a survivor-centred manner.

As part of its partner assessment process, Diakonia verifies whether partners have appropriate PSEAH policies and mechanisms in place. When gaps are identified, Diakonia supports its partners in developing and implementing the necessary systems to ensure compliance with PSEAH standards.

In 2024, the revised Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) introduced more detailed requirements related to PSEAH. In the context of this updated standard, the audit identified several areas requiring improvement:

- Not all communities have access to safe, accessible, and appropriate mechanisms for reporting SEAH-related concerns.
- Information about staff behaviour and Diakonia's PSEAH commitments is not always shared with communities, and the use of visual or accessible formats remains limited.
- There is no consistent process in place to monitor whether communities are aware of the expected conduct of Diakonia and partner staff.
- Although Diakonia manages SEAH-related complaints appropriately, it does not require partners to report SEAH complaints received at their level, limiting oversight.

4.4 Organisational performance against each CHS Commitment

Strong points and areas for improvement	Average score*
Commitment 1: People and communities can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.	2.5
<p>Diakonia's commitment to accountability and information sharing is clearly stated in Diakonia's policies, website and strategy. Diakonia demonstrates a strong focus on the meaningful inclusion of people and communities in decisions that affect them. The organisation integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion principles across its policies, strategies, and practices. Diakonia has established a coherent organisational approach that ensures transparency, inclusive participation, and effective information sharing at all levels.</p> <p>Diakonia and its partners share timely information about its work and its values with communities and stakeholders in languages, formats and media that are easily understood, respectful and culturally appropriate. However, there is a lack of consistent practice, and no mechanisms are in place to ensure that Diakonia and its partners regularly share information about PSEAH and Code of Conduct (CoC) with the communities. In addition, Diakonia does not use visual or pictorial information in all the programmes to inform the community about PSEAH and CoC.</p> <p>Diakonia communications and fundraising are made with informed consent and in a respectful, ethical, and dignified manner. Partner agreements require to obtain a permission from the person for the described use of their images. Partners staff confirm that they always ask for consent.</p>	
<p>Feedback from communities:</p> <p>Community members state that the communications are easy to understand, respectful and appropriate to their context.</p> <p>Community members are satisfied with the level of participation in the decision-making and the level of engagement in the programmes.</p> <p>Community members confirm that Diakonia and its partners always ask for consent before taking photos or videos.</p> <p>Community members state that they are regularly informed about Diakonia and programme activities. However, not all communities recall being informed about how they can expect staff to behave when working with them.</p>	
Commitment 2: People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.	2.5
<p>Diakonia demonstrates a strong organisational approach to designing and implementing programmes that are relevant, inclusive, and responsive to local contexts. The organisation respects and builds upon local knowledge, capacities, and existing initiatives, and communities confirm that programmes reflect their realities. Diakonia and its partners undertake systematic context analysis, including the SEAH risk, which is described and considered in country strategies, programmes and projects.</p> <p>Diakonia applies fair and impartial criteria to define programmes, and the groups supported. Diakonia designs and implements programmes based on an impartial assessment of needs and risks and an understanding of the vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups, with particular attention to those most marginalised. In 2025, Diakonia rolled out the new Humanitarian Need Assessment tools, which aim to ensure that Humanitarian Programmes are based on the main needs of the communities, however, due to the recent introduction of this tool it is not yet fully implemented in all Country Programmes.</p> <p>Diakonia and its partners regularly monitor and adapt their programmes to ensure they are timely, accessible, and meet the priority needs of people and communities, and partners appreciate the flexibility allowed to adjust interventions as contexts evolve.</p>	

data protection measures in place, and current partnership agreements do not include explicit requirements for partners to ensure data protection.	
Feedback from communities: Community members state that programmes have no negative effects. Community members consider that their data is protected and safe. Community members state that Diakonia and its partners share their commitment to ensure their project does not have negative environmental effects and to their safety, dignity and rights.	
Commitment 5: People and communities can safely report concerns and complaints and get them addressed.	2.0
<p>Diakonia has established a Complaints and Incident Response Mechanism (CIRM) to enable communities, partners, and other stakeholders to safely, confidentially, and appropriately share feedback, concerns, or complaints, including those related to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH). Also, this mechanism has a clear victim and survivor centered approach. However, the mechanism is not fully adapted to all local contexts, and most of the communities are not aware of the confidential manners to raise sensitive complaints.</p> <p>Projects and programmes include several ways to provide feedback, concerns, or non-sensitive complaints. However, not all the programmes and partners provide a way for the communities to raise sensitive complaints in a confidential and safe manner. In addition, Diakonia does not monitor whether these systems are implemented. Partners and Diakonia staff report that they share all the complaints with Diakonia—and staff provided several examples—but there is no formal obligation to report complaints in a timely manner, which creates a risk that Diakonia may not be aware of all complaints received.</p> <p>Additionally, Diakonia does not currently monitor, as part of its field visits, whether community members understand how to report complaints or how these will be addressed—particularly in relation to SEAH.</p>	
Feedback from communities: Community members state that they have mechanisms in place to provide feedback, concerns, and complaints—such as face-to-face communication with Diakonia staff, partner staff, or community leaders. However, they are not aware of any way to submit complaints in a confidential manner, either through the Partner or Diakonia, and they are unfamiliar with Diakonia's Complaints and Incident Response Mechanism (CIRM). While community members recall being provided with general information about CoC, standards of behaviour for staff and on how to raise complaints, other community members do not recall receiving this information from Diakonia or its partners. There was a wider general understanding among community members about Diakonia's commitment to the prevention of fraud and corruption and SEAH.	
Commitment 6: People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.	3.0
<p>Diakonia demonstrates a strong organisational approach to coordination, partnership, and support for local actors. The organisation ensures that its work is aligned with and complements locally led actions, community-based efforts, and the activities of relevant stakeholders. The new Partnership Policy promotes equitable partnerships based on shared decision-making and respect for each partner's roles and responsibilities, including commitments related to PSEAH. All partners are assessed using the Partner Assessment tool. Each partner has a partnership agreement with Diakonia, and clear funding and reporting agreements are in place for all the projects and programmes.</p> <p>Diakonia and its partners coordinate with other stakeholders on the programmes and PSEAH issues through membership to various local and international networks and by sharing information on various sector-related</p>	

Diakonia has an accessible and secure Complaints and Incidents Response Mechanism (CIRM) and response timelines are well articulated.

Diakonia is currently undergoing an organisational restructuring, which has resulted in changes in staff roles and overall structure. As a result, some staff feel overworked, and there is still uncertainty about how some of the roles previously handled by the regional office will be dealt with going forward.

Feedback from communities:

Communities consider that Diakonia staff treat them with respect, dignity and compassion.

Communities perceive Diakonia staff as highly competent and technically proficient.

Commitment 9: People and communities can expect that resources are managed ethically and responsibly.

2.8

Diakonia demonstrates that it has the necessary capacity and resources to meet its commitments effectively and sustainably. Diakonia manages the resources with integrity, accountability, and transparency, minimising the negative impact on the environment. The Administration Handbook, Anti-corruption policy, procurement guidelines, and the Environment policy are examples of documents that illustrate this commitment.

The Global Fundraising Policy lays down guidelines on ethical resource mobilisation and how Diakonia can accept funds without jeopardising its commitment and values.

Diakonia applies uniform global Administration and procurement policies which have not been adopted to the local context in some of the countries to align with country-specific regulations, and operational realities

Regular monitoring and reporting by programme staff, grant compliance advisors, and external audits ensure that resources are managed responsibly and in line with good practice. Diakonia and its partners have embraced risk management as evidenced by regular risk management reports.

Diakonia has developed a toolbox for integrating an environmental and climate perspective into strategies, programmes, and projects. The organisation has implemented environmental conservation measures at the administration and operations level to counter climate change.

Feedback from communities:

Community members state that Diakonia secures enough resources for its work and that the resources are managed well.

Community members confirm having been trained and being involved in various environment conservation activities during their project implementation.

Community members state that they have not experienced any incidents of corrupt activities or extortion from staff.

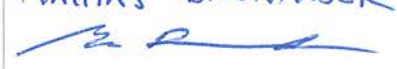
* Note: Commitments are scored by taking the mean average score of the requirements, i.e. the sum of all the requirement scores in a commitment divided by the number of requirements in that commitment. Except when a major non-conformity/weakness is issued, in this case the overall score for the Commitment is 0 (CHSA Verification Framework – Scoring Grid, 2024).

5. Summary of non-conformities

Corrective Action Request (CAR)	Type	Status	Resolution timeframe
2025-1.2: Diakonia does not ensure that the staff and its partners share the relevant information regarding PSEAH and expected behaviour in relation to PSEAH of staff with the communities.	Minor	New	By the 2028 Renewal Audit

Start date of the certification cycle: 2025/07/02 Next audit before 2026/07/02	
Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director: Désirée Walter 	Date and place: Geneva, 02 July 2025

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: MATTHIAS BRUNANDER 	Date and place: 4 AUG 2025 STOCKHOLM

Appeal

In case of disagreement with the quality assurance decision, 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.

3	<p>Your organisation meets the requirement, with organisational systems ensuring it is being met consistently throughout the organisation.</p> <p>For third-party auditing schemes:</p> <p>Independent verification: Requirement is met.</p> <p>Certification: Conformity.</p>	<p>To give a score 3, all measurable components of a requirement are verified to be in place.</p>
4	<p>Your organisation meets the requirement in an exemplary way, demonstrating innovation and/or special recognition of performance, and organisational systems ensure this high quality throughout the organisation.</p> <p>For third-party auditing schemes:</p> <p>Independent verification: Requirement is met in an exemplary way.</p> <p>Certification: Conformity in an exemplary way.</p>	<p>To give a score 4, all measurable components of a requirement are verified to be in place.</p> <p>In addition, the following must be verified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An organisational system (or systems) that demonstrate an innovative approach to meeting the requirement at a high standard throughout the organisation are in place. <p>and/or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organisation has been awarded special recognition of performance in relation to meeting the requirement at a high standard, and this is built into organisational systems so that the high quality is ensured throughout the organisation.
	<p>Guidance notes for scoring commitments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitments are scored by taking the mean average score of the requirements, i.e. the sum of all the requirement scores in a commitment divided by the number of requirements in that commitment. • Except when a major non-conformity/weakness is issued, in this case the overall score for the Commitment is 0. 	

* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Framework 2024