



HUMANITARIAN QUALITY
ASSURANCE INITIATIVE

**FINN CHURCH AID
CHS Verification Report**

FCA-VER-2017-005

Date: 2017-05-10

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1. General information

Organisation Name:	Finn Church Aid (FCA)	Verification Ref / No:	
Type of organisation: <input type="checkbox"/> National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> Federated <input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input type="checkbox"/> Direct assistance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through partners In 2016 approximately half of projects funded by FCA were implemented with partners.		Organisation Mandate: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy Verified Mandate(s) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	
Organisation size: (Total number of programme sites/members/partners)	15 programme sites, about half implemented through partners	Legal Registration:	Helsinki, Finland
Head Office Location:	Helsinki	Field locations verified:	FCA Uganda
Date of Head Office Verification:	2-3 March, 2017	Date of Field Verification:	13 - 17 March, 2017
Lead Auditor:	Claire Boulanger	2 nd Auditor's Name:	Pierre Hauselmann
		Observer's Name and Position	

2. Scope

- Independent verification initial audit Mid-term Audit
 Certification initial audit Recertification audit

3. Schedule summary

3.2 Verification Schedule

Name	Location	Mandate	Sites	Type of projects
FCA	Helsinki (HO)	Multiple		
FCA Uganda	Kampala Adjumani Rwamwanja	Mutiple Humanitarian Development	2 2	Education in emergen- cies Education
Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum	Kampala	Advocacy	1	

3.2 Opening and closing meetings

1) At HO

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	2 March, 2017	3 March, 2017
Location	FCA HO, Helsinki	FCA HO, Helsinki
Number of participants	14 (incl. 1 by Skype)	15
Any substantive issue arising	none	none

2) At PS

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	13 March, 2017	17 March 2017
Location	Kampala FCA office	Kampala FCA Office
Number of participants	13	10
Any substantive issue arising	none	none

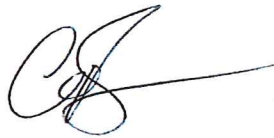
4. Recommendation

The auditors did not find any major weakness. FCA could apply for certification.

Detailed findings are laid out in the rest of this report.

Lead Auditor's Name and Signature

Claire Boulanger



Date and
Place:

Paris, May 3 2017

Quality Control by: Elissa Goucem	Quality Control finalised on: 2017-05-10 First Draft: 2017-05-05 Final: 2017-05-10
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Appeal

In case of disagreement with the conclusions and/or decision on certification if relevant, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 30 days after the final report has been transmitted to the organisation.

HQAI will investigate the content of the appeal and propose a solution within 15 days after receiving the appeal.

If the solution is deemed not to be satisfactory, the organisation can inform in writing HQAI within 15 days after being informed of the proposed solution of their intention to maintain the appeal.

HQAI will act immediately, and identify two Board members to proceed with the appeal. These will have 30 day to address it. Their decision will be final.

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

6. Background information on the organisation

6.1 General

History

Finn Church Aid (FCA)'s origin lies in the establishment on 25 September 1947 of the Lutheran World Federation's Finnish National Committee in response to Finland destruction after World War II. The establishment of FCA as an organisation started in the 1960's when it became an integral part of the central structure of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland. Over the fifties and the sixties, FCA shifted gradually to become an aid provider for "the vulnerable people of the world" and has become nowadays the largest Finnish aid provider.

In 1995, Finn Church Aid became a Foundation with its own Board of Directors (BoD). Since 2010, FCA took the strategic direction to become more decentralised and establish more of a field presence. It is thus a relatively new international actor in this field. FCA has developed its international humanitarian intervention in fragile and complex environments (conflict areas, failed states...) such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Eritrea and South Sudan. The challenge to find appropriate partners in such contexts has led FCA to be increasingly a self-implementing agency.

It is global actor with country offices in 11 countries, two regional offices and advocacy and fundraising offices in London, Brussels, Thailand and USA.

Vision, mission, strategy and thematic areas

Finn Church Aid's vision is of a world comprised of resilient and just societies where everyone's right to peace, quality education and sustainable livelihood has been fulfilled. Its mission is to act for human dignity.

FCA is a faith based organisation that bases its actions on a right based approach itself guided by human right standards and principles. Its values are:

- Unconditional love for its neighbours
- Unyielding hope
- Courage
- Respect

FCA's three thematic focus are: Right to livelihoods (R2L), Right to peace (R2P) and Right to education (R2E).

Evidence: Interviews with staff, Intranet, Website, (102) Constitution for the Finn Church Aid Foundation, (103) Staff Organogram Nov 2016, (1) Strategy 2017 onwards.

6.2 Organisational structure and management system

Governance

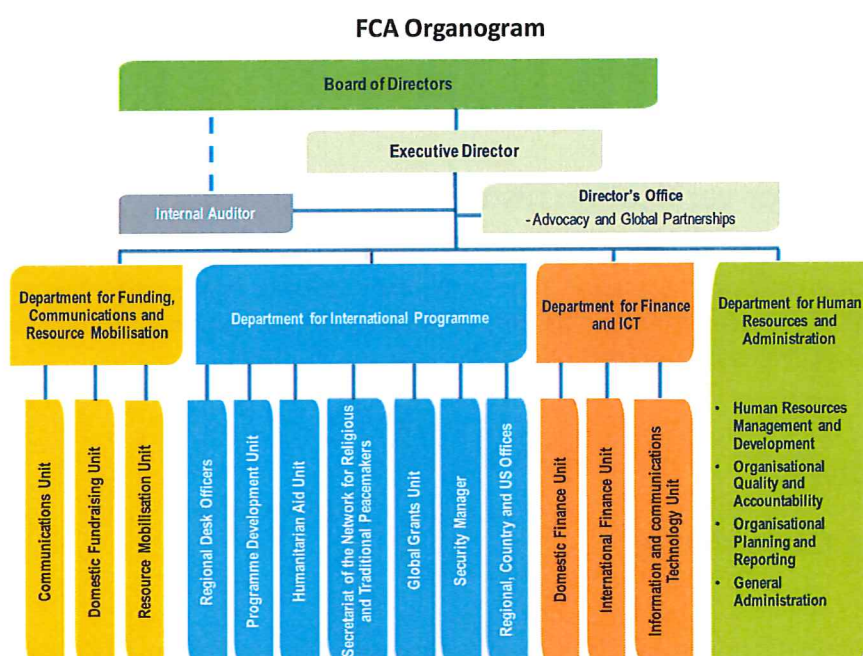
The Board of Directors is made of 11 to 14 Directors (including the Chair). The Directors

of the Board are appointed by the Church Council of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland. In 2017, about two-third of Directors are not connected to the Church. They are elected for a three-year term. The Board of Directors (BoD) approves the strategy and annual work plan and budget.

The BoD can appoint Work Committees to which it can delegate some of its powers.

At the operational level the Secretariat is led by an Executive Director. The Management Team composed of the ED and the other Operational Directors (Funding and Communication, International Cooperation, Finance and Administration) meets at least once a month to deal with far reaching issues regarding operations and finances. In 2016, FCA decided to have two Directors for the International Programme, based on a geographic split.

There is a strong component of internal quality control that includes an internal auditor reporting directly to the Board of Directors.



Evidence: Interviews with staff, Intranet, Website, (102) Constitution for the Finn Church Aid Foundation, (103) Staff Organogram Nov 2016.

6.3 Work with Partners

In 2016, Fin Church Aid operated about half of its projects with partners. While, if the urgency of the intervention dictates, FCA can initiate work with partners outside a formal agreement it does not transfer money before undertaking a formal assessment and signing an agreement. Local FCA staff have the responsibility to monitor partners, using assessment tools developed centrally but adaptable locally. Like all FCA evaluations, project evaluation guidelines for partners address seven key elements: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability (weather the benefit will outlast the project), impact, connectedness and coherence. Monitoring of the specific elements of the CHS is not formally included in monitoring frameworks, but the on-going contact with partners allow FCA to

have a fair understanding of how the partners work. Examples were provided where FCA worked with a partner to improve its accountability. One such example is how to go beyond mere numbers of men and women in the workplace, but addressing the quality of relationships and power balance when speaking of gender balance.

In emergency situations where FCA has no established presence, it favours partners from within the ACT Alliance. Alternatively, a “rapid partner assessment tool” is to be used when time does not allow using the complete assessment format.

Contracts with partners include the right for the internal auditor to undertake audits of the partners. Interview with partners in the sampled programme site indicate they are informed of FCA’s commitments and share FCA’s humanitarian and development values. This latter point is also a requirement for FCA to establish a partnership. While FCA is a faith based organisation (FBO), it does not limit its partnerships to other FBOs. FCA does work with its partners to build their capacity and improve their quality and accountability mechanisms.

Evidence: Interviews with staff and partners, Intranet, (104) Draft Humanitarian Guidelines v3 (47),

6.4 Certification or verification history

Finn Church Aid has no prior HAP certificate nor has previously been engaged in a CHS quality assurance process. However, two important reviews were undertaken in 2016, one from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of a widespread review of their Finnish partners and one internal process, operated by an external consultant.

7. Sampling

7.1 Rationale for sampling:

FCA has offices in 11 countries. It is thus well under the threshold that would require 2 programme sites. With well-established mechanisms, including for M&E and independent internal auditing, the auditors did not perceived risks that would have required a higher sampling rate.

After considering the 11 programmes, plus three programmes operated from the Middle East Regional Office, taking the representativeness of each of them, security considerations and ease of access, the auditors decided to use the Uganda Programme Office as sample.

Two project sites were visited, which included meetings with local communities and beneficiaries of FCA’s assistance.

Disclaimer

It is important to note that the audit findings are based on the results of a sample of the organisation’s documentation and systems as well as interviews and focus groups with a sample of staff, partners, communities and other relevant stakeholders. Findings are analysed to determine the organisation’s systematic approach and

application of all aspects of the CHS across its organisation and to its different contexts and ways of working.

7.2 Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews (individual interviews or with a small group <6

Type of people interviewed	Number of people interviewed
Head Office	
staff members	18 in 14 distinct interviews
Programme sites	
Staff members	11 in 9 interviews
Partners	3 in one interview
Total number of interviews	32

Focus Group Discussions (interviews with a group >6

Type of Group	Number of participants	
	Female	Male
Community Refugee leaders (Adjumani)	4	6
Ex-vocational trainees (Rwamwanja)	3	7
Vocational trainees' parents (Rwamwanja)	18	5
	25	18
Total number of participants	43	

8. Report

8.1 Overall organisational performance

Overall, FCA complies with the commitments of the CHS with particularly good results on community involvement, communication, coordination and human resources. Main areas of improvement include monitoring, evaluation and learning, risk analysis (including unintended negative effects) and complaints mechanisms.

8.2 Summary of non-conformities

The audit found no major weakness.

Weaknesses	Minor	TIME FOR RESOLUTION*
Commitment 1	1.2 Risk analysis does not systematically take risks for communities into account.	1 year
Commitment 2	2.1 FCA does not systematically include and address communities' safety and constraints in designing programmes.	1 year
	2.5c Poor performances are not systematically analysed and acted upon as a result of monitoring activities.	1 year
Commitment 3	3.2 FCA does not systematically analyse community risks and hazards in order to integrate them into programming.	1 year
	3.6a FCA's programmes do not systematically identify potential or actual unintended effects.	1 year
	3.6b Potential and actual un-intended negative effects are not systematically identified and therefore not systematically acted upon.	1 year
	3.7 Policies, strategies and guidance do not systematically guide on screening of potential negative effects prior to programming activities	1 year
	3.8 FCA does not have a clear system in place to safeguard personal information collected from communities and people affected by crisis.	1 year
Commitment 4	--	
Commitment 5	5.1 Communities and people affected by crisis are not systematic consulted in the design, implementation or monitoring of the complaint process.	18 months
	5.2 FCA's complaint mechanism is not communicated to communities and affected people	18 months
	5.3a Complaints handling mechanisms are not systematically in place throughout FCA.	18 months
Commitment 6	--	
Commitment 7	7.2 FCA's systems do not ensure that information coming from M&E is of constant quality, systematically analysed and feed into innovation and changes, nor do they ensure that complaints from communities inform systematically	1 year

	innovation and changes across Programme Offices.	
Commitment 8	7.4	Mechanisms that allow going from information sharing to learning are scattered and/or not defined
Commitment 9	9.4	FCA's system does not ensure that the environmental impact of the use of local and natural resources is significantly considered.
TOTAL Number	14	

* time for resolution is provided as an indication in case FCA desires to switch from the independent verification to the certification scheme. It is not relevant in the framework of an independent verification.

8.3 Strong points and areas for improvement:

1. Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant

Score: 2.1

Strong points

Non-discrimination and rights-based approach are fundamental principles for FCA's work, as outlined in FCA's key policy documents. They underline FCA's thematic areas and programmes, and are strongly endorsed by staff across the organisation.

As a result, FCA conducts needs, capacities and vulnerabilities analysis as a preliminary step of program design and implementation, together with analysis of context and stakeholders. The diversity of communities and people affected by crisis is taken into account, which reflects both in FCA's gender policy and in data collection practices – data is disaggregated in sex, age etc.

FCA has flexible operational procedures and frameworks that allow the adaptation of programmes, based on on-going analysis of the context.

Areas for improvement

Main areas for improvement consist in mainstreaming and systematizing practice throughout the organisation. The quality of analysis varies according to countries and programmes, in particular concerning context and stakeholders as well as local capacities analysis. Disaggregated data is not consistently collected.

This leads to FCA not systematically adjusting programmes to changing needs, capacities and context.

In particular, the audit pointed out one weakness: Risk analysis cover risks that might affect the organisation, but does not systematically take into account risks for communities.

Feedback from communities

Communities and people affected by crisis mentioned that they were given the opportunity to discuss their needs with FCA programme staff. However they expressed mixed feelings on the outcome of this consultation: some groups felt their needs had been taken into account, while other groups felt the response was not properly adjusted. In many cases, communities mentioned that they received no feedback on the results of the consultation.

2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely

Score: 2.2

Strong points

FCA has put in place processes to deliver timely and effective assistance, which include procedures, guidelines and organisational strategies.

Procedures and guideline cover all stages of FCA's intervention. For example, needs and risks assessments feed into logframes and programme design, FCA has formal processes to verify organisational capacities before engaging in programs, and has recently developed a number of monitoring and evaluation guidelines and tools. At pro-

gramme country level, annual reports and visits from HO are an opportunity to analyse potential deviations from programme, and put in place corrective actions. Staff demonstrated commitment to quality, effective and timely humanitarian response.

When relevant, FCA uses existing local and international standards and tools regarding assistance to communities and people affected by crisis. These range from quality standards and good practices (e.g. : Sphere, CHS, RBA) to international tools and platforms (e.g. : MIRA, INEE, to which FCA is an active contributor).

In addition to existing processes facilitating quick implementation of response, FCA's recent reorganisation created more direct links between country programmes and head office in Helsinki, enabling quicker decision-making processes. FCA participates in ACT appeals, and is now identified within ACT Alliance as the lead agency in the field of education in emergencies. FCA's strategy of direct implementation and stronger field presence has given direct access to an increasing number of donors (including emergency focused donors such as ECHO), thus leading to quicker response capacity.

FCA coordinates on a very regular basis with other local and international governmental and non-governmental agencies, and refers unmet needs through existing coordination mechanisms.

Areas for improvement

Although FCA has developed M&E tools at central level, they have not yet been implemented in all country offices in a consistent and systematic manner. Lack of systematic implementation come along with inappropriate M&E staffing at central level and in country offices. Some programmes are monitored and evaluated only by the same staff who designed and implemented them, leading to poor feedback on actual performances. Staff mentioned the lack of a systematic link between monitoring activities and programme adaptation and some communities mentioned that monitoring or feedback had taken place, evidencing issues, without resulting into change or action.

FCA's intervention in fragile countries is not systematically in line with organisational capacities : for example, some areas of FCA's activity are understaffed, leading to quality issues in programme delivery, particularly in fragile contexts ; interviews with communities showed that some aspects of their safety and constraints are not taken into account, and are not addressed when raised; finally the extent to which referrals are done depends largely of the country program, and may vary according to interest, motivation and staffing in countries.

Feedback from communities

Communities expressed mixed feelings about efficiency. Some mentioned that delivery was not adjusted to the context, and that feedback on satisfaction, safety and constraints were not always addressed when raised. Others indicated that FCA is the best operator in education, delivered quality service leading to very relevant outcomes, which genuinely made a difference for communities and people affected by crisis.

3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects

Score: 2.2

Strong points

FCA develops inclusive programmes where resilience, early recovery and sustainability are systematically sought and built into the projects, particularly in the thematic areas of livelihood and education (including education in emergencies).

When possible, projects are developed in line with government policies and structures in order to avoid substitution mechanisms. FCA works in close collaboration with country authorities at national and local level, as well as with community leaders. Communication and discussions about programmes take place through locally elected or appointed groups of community representatives.

Programmes focus on reducing vulnerabilities and promoting empowerment of the marginalised and disadvantaged groups and FCA has developed a set of guidelines for programme planning and monitoring that contribute to the identification of potential or actual unintended negative effects.

FCA has a series of tools framing work with its partners, including partners' assessment, partners' monitoring, and tools for capacity building activities. FCA demonstrates a supportive approach to partnerships, ensuring that existing gaps or weaknesses identified in partners are covered with capacity building activities. Capacity building take place with partners on various aspects of their activity (financial management, due diligence, programmes...).

Programmes are primarily conducted by national staff, and whenever possible, FCA also procures outsourced competencies (such as consultancies) and material resources at local level.

Transition and exit strategies are built into programmes, as part of FCA's commitment to sustainability. Avoiding dependency and strengthening capacities are key drivers for FCA's programmes, are considered at early stages of programme planning, and are strongly supported by staff.

Areas for improvement

Main areas of improvement are related to FCA's capacity to conduct their own analysis and to systematically identify and act upon unintended negative effects.

FCA reportedly relies on contingency and preparedness plans done by others, and does not systematically participate in their elaboration. Risks analysis is not systematized in terms of quality and method, including the use of primary data, which may jeopardize the sustainability of some projects.

Existing guidelines do not consistently structure specific, timely and systematic monitoring of potential negative effects of programmes. In particular, potential negative effects on the environment are left out the scope of analysis, and are generally not taken into account by staff. As a result, some unintended negative effects remain unidentified and /or not acted upon, leading to potential issues for people's security and rights, for social and political relationships, and for the environment. For example, the auditors observed education programmes lacking elementary health and safety teaching for students. Additionally, auditors were not briefed about or asked to sign any commitment related to some child protection policy prior to visiting sites

with children and youth.

Feedback from communities:

Communities express trust and satisfaction about relevance of the programmes, particularly regarding strengthening of local capacities. However some mentioned that issues and risks related to access are not systematically taken into account and not acted upon when raised.

4. Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback

Score: 2.7

FCA's Principles for communications promote an open communication policy in very general terms. FCA is currently redrafting its Open communication policy to provide more comprehensive guidelines and recommendations; it should be issued in May 2017.

FCA uses various channels to provide information to communities and people affected by crisis, including community representatives, public posters at water or food distribution points, local media (radio...), local government structures, existing coordination mechanisms (with local and international governmental or non-governmental organizations...). Interviews with staff and communities evidence sensitivity to language and culture issues.

FCA project across thematic areas are by definition inclusive, from needs assessment to monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring tools include indicators measuring representation, participation and engagement of communities in relation with FCA's work and evaluation reports explore the extent of community participation in programmes.

Project guidance documents make community feedback a condition for participation as part of Rights-Based Approach (RBA) as well as a basis for learning processes.

Programme guidance documents emphasize the need to pay attention to vulnerabilities and collect disaggregated data, although in practice disaggregated data is not systematically collected. FCA demonstrated sensitivity to gender and age balance. Overall, FCA's policies covering projects and programmes, as well as RBA and gender policies, define how and when FCA's work should engage communities.

Areas for improvement

FCA's current communication does not clearly outline the content and type of information that should be given to communities, however it is currently being redrafted.

Examples in the field indicated that feedback from communities are not systematically welcomed and utilized in future programming.

Feedback from communities

Communities generally expressed satisfaction about their participation in programmes, either through direct consultation or through community representatives. They mentioned that information is made accessible through a variety of channels including government structures, church, radio and meetings. However some felt that their feedback was not acted upon, or that they did not receive feedback from FCA after being consulted.

5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed

Score: 1.6

Strong points

FCA has an institutional culture of welcoming complaints, although this culture is more evident at head and programme office, and less so at project site level.

FCA's complaint mechanism is brand new and in the process of being deployed to programme offices. Although training on the new mechanism had happened at the programme office, this deployment had not reached the sampled project sites at the time of the audit where mostly formal complaints from other agencies or the government offices are acted upon.

Areas for improvement

However, complaints made by communities through meetings are often not considered as complaints and therefore not always responded to. FCA does not systematically provide feedback to communities on the status of complaints.

Feedback from communities:

Communities know the focal point in FCA, to whom they may lodge complaints, although if it is about a serious matter they would lodge the complaint to the office of the First Minister. There is no worry about the safety or confidentiality. Communities are generally aware of the importance to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, although not of the specific commitments of FCA in the matter.

The general perception is that complaints are not followed by action nor feedback from FCA.

6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary

Score: 2.6

Strong points

FCA collaborates and coordinates with a number of international and national coordination mechanisms. As a member of ACT Alliance, FCA participates in ACT appeals and in ACT forums. At global level, FCA is an active member of the UN Education cluster, and participates in other global coordination mechanisms.

FCA's recent reorganisation has contributed to better coordination with national and local authorities. FCA's commitment to sustainability includes complementing work of and working in close cooperation with national and local authorities, and programmes are put in place accordingly. Country programmes evaluations indicate that FCA's work with local and national authorities is systematic and relevant.

FCA has put in place a number of processes and tools to identify, coordinate with and complement other stakeholders. FCA guidelines on projects and operations include instructions and tools on stakeholders' mapping and analysis. Country programme documents provide indications on information channels between FCA and partners or other actors in the field. FCA has referral systems in place to share information with local government structures, as well as with local and international non-governmental agencies. Documents framing FCA's work with partners include cooperation agreements, and partners' assessments. Partners' assessments are conducted systematically by country offices when approaching a new partner. Cooperation

agreements are primarily a document framing the funding and reporting mechanism between FCA and its partner.

Areas for improvement

Collaboration and cooperation with others without compromising humanitarian principles are seen as self-evident for FCA, and therefore are not systematically and explicitly mentioned in policy and strategy documents.

In addition, stakeholders' analysis is not systematically conducted and updated, leading to missed opportunities and to coordination issues. It can also constitute a risk in a context where FCA is increasingly developing relationships with the private sector.

Feedback from communities

Communities in the sampled project sites see FCA coordinate with other international agencies and with local government structures, with a clear sense of respective roles and mandates.

7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve

Score: 1.8

Strong points

The organisation is part of several networks through which experience are shared with, and learned from peers. FCA has a well developed system for monitoring and evaluation that provides a wealth of information at all levels of the organisation. There are mechanisms to learn from this information, which leads to programmes improvements.

Areas for improvement

However, the mechanisms are scattered and may not be systematically applied. M&E at field level is made by the same people who implement projects, which leads to uneven quality of information, uneven improvements of projects and thus to uneven quality of project implementation.

Feedback from communities

In the sampled project sites, communities generally consider the assistance improves, to different degrees depending on the specific communities. They are however also concerned that their feedback/complaints are not sufficiently heard and acted upon (see C5).

8. Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably

Score: 2.1

Strong points

FCA has fair and transparent staff policies. There is no indication they may not comply with national legislation where FCA operates. The code of conduct, signed by all staff, including volunteers, includes clear commitment to fight against sexual exploitation and abuse and any other form of discrimination. The code also includes the consequences of not following policies. Policies are in place for the development of staff, they are known and used.

Areas for improvement

Overall, resources are adequate to deliver programmes, however staff attributed to M&E may be too limited to ensure a constant quality control of programmes

Feedback from communities

Visited communities consider FCA's staff competent and effective.

9. Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose

Score: 2.33

Strong points

FCA manages resources responsibly for their intended purpose, including strong internal quality control mechanism. For example an internal auditor reporting directly to the Board of Directors assesses all programmes and projects in a cycle.

There is an environmental awareness in the head office where wastes are minimised.

Areas for improvement

However this environmental sensitivity is still superficial and FCA is some distance away from addressing environmental resources with the same rigour as financial ones.

Feedback from communities

Communities in the sampled project sites did not report any suspicion of resource mismanagement.

Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings

(Organisation representative – please cross where appropriate)

I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit

I accept the findings of the audit

I do not accept some/all of the findings of the audit

Please list the requirements whose findings you do not accept

Organisation's
Representative
Name and Signa-
ture:




Jouni Hemberg
Executive Director

Date and
Place:

13.6.2017
HELSINKI

10. HQAI's approval

<p>HQAI's approval of the report</p>  <p>Jacques Forster Humanitarian quality assurance Initiative</p>	<p>Date: 2017-06-27</p>
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Annex 1. Explanation of the scoring scale

In line with the CHS's emphasis on continuous learning and improvement, rather than assessing a pass/fail compliance with the CHS requirements, the CHS Verification Scheme uses a scoring system. It is graduated from 0 to 5 to determine the degree to which organisations apply the CHS and to measure progress in this application.

Be it in the framework of a self-assessment or in a third-party assessment process, it is key to have detailed criteria to evaluate (score) the degree of application of each requirement and commitment of the CHS. A coherent, systematic approach is important to ensure:

- Transparency and objectivity in the scoring criteria;
- Consistency and reliability between one verification cycle and another, or between the different verification options;
- Comparability of data generated by different organisations.

This document outlines a set of criteria to orient the assessment process and help communicate how the respective scores have been attributed and what they mean.

While verification needs to be rigorous, it needs also to be flexible in its interpretation of the CHS requirements to be applicable fairly to a wide range of organisations working in very different contexts. For example, smaller organisations may not have formal management systems in place, but show that an Organisational Responsibility is constantly reflected in practices. In a similar situation, the person undertaking the assessment needs to understand and document why the application is adequate in the apparent absence of supporting process. It is frequent that the procedures actually exist informally, but are "hidden" in other documents. Similarly, it is not the text of a requirement that is important, but whether its intent is delivered and that there are processes that ensure this will continue to be delivered under normal circumstances. The driving principle behind the scoring is that the scores should reflect the normal ("systematic") working practices of the participating organisation.

What do the scores stand for?

The scores have thus the following values and attributes:

Score: 0

- Operational activities and actions systematically contradict the intent of a CHS Commitment and its requirements (Key Actions and Organisational Responsibilities).
- Policies and procedures directly contradict the intent of the CHS Commitment and requirement (Key Action or Organisational Responsibility) or;
- Complete absence of formal or informal processes or policies necessary for ensuring compliance against a commitment

Indicates that:

- There is a recurrent failure to implement the necessary actions at operational level.
- Practice at field level contradict the intent behind a CHS commitment and makes the delivery of the commitment unlikely.
- A systemic issue threatens the integrity of a CHS Commitment (i.e. makes it unlikely that the organisation is able to deliver the commitment).

In the framework of self-assessment a 0 indicates the first priority level for improvement.

A score of 0 corresponds to a Major Non Conformity in a certification process. It excludes the organisation from certification until the corresponding Major Corrective Action Request (CAR) is corrected. If a score of 0 appears while the organisation is certified, it has a short timeframe to address the issue before the certificate is withdrawn.

Score: 1

Actions, policies and procedures respond broadly to the intent behind the CHS requirement. However:

- There are a significant number of cases where the design of programmes and activities does not reflect the CHS commitment.
- Relevant policies are not accompanied with sufficient guidance to support a systematic and robust implementation by staff (tokenistic policy approach), leading to an inconsistent delivery of the commitment.
- Absence of quality assurance mechanisms to ensure the monitoring and systematic delivery of actions the policies and procedures are supposed to support, which make it unlikely that staff are made accountable for implementing the policies.
- A significant number of relevant staff at HO and/or sites are not familiar with the policies and procedures and/or do not use them to guide their actions at operational level.

Indicates:

- The key documentation is incomplete or missing, or that policies are in place, but not consistently translated into the right actions, or;
- A lack of knowledge by the relevant staff about the requirements or relevant procedure leading to an inconsistent application at operational level
- Actions at the operational level are not systematically implemented in accordance of the relevant policies and procedures.

A score of 1 means an issue that is serious but does not immediately threaten the integrity of the relevant CHS commitment. A number of issues that individually would deserve a score of 1 often indicate jointly a systemic issue and can lead to a score of 0.

In the framework of self-assessment a score of 1 indicates the second priority level for improvements.

A score of 1 is equivalent to a Minor Non Conformity in a certification process. It allows the certification of the organisation, but needs to be corrected within a certain timeframe (normally 2 years, although a shorter deadline can be identified if the CAR threatens to become systemic).

A Minor CAR that is not addressed within the specified timeframe becomes a Major CAR.

Score: 2

Actions, policies and procedures respond to the intent behind the CHS commitment. However:

- Some actions at operational level are in line with the intent behind a requirement or commitment, but are not reflected in standard policies and tend to be person/field related.
- There are instances of actions at operational level where relevant policies are not fully reflected in the design of programmes and activities, without compromising the intent behind the specific commitment.
- Policies and procedures relevant to the CHS requirement exist but are partial or scattered, which makes it difficult to consistently and systematically deliver the commitment at operational levels.
- Some operational staff are not familiar with the policies and procedures, and/or cannot provide relevant examples of implementation

Indicates:

- The organisation has implicit or informal approaches that are consistent with the relevant CHS requirement but not necessarily systematised or formalised, but common practice mostly compensate for the gap.
- Policies and procedures meet the intent of the relevant requirement, but there are some instances where they are not correctly applied at operational level, without compromising the integrity of the requirement, or/and;
- The organisation does not have sufficient quality assurance mechanisms to ensure a systematic implementation of relevant policies and procedures across the organisation.

A score of 2 means an issue that is not serious but deserves correction.

In the framework of self-assessment, a score of 2 indicates the third priority level for improvements.

In a certification process, it is equivalent to Conformity with observation. An issue scored 2 that is not addressed may become a Minor CAR.

Score: 3

- Actions, policies and procedures respond to the intent of the CHS requirement.
- Staff are made accountable of the application of relevant policies and procedures at operational level, including through consistent quality assurance mechanisms.
- The design of projects and programmes and the implementation of activities is based on the relevant policies with which all relevant staff are. They can provide several examples of consistent application in different activities, projects and programmes.
- The organisation monitors the implementation of its relevant policies and supports the staff in doing so at operational levels.

Indicates:

- The CHS requirement is met.
- The organisation's system ensures that the requirement is met throughout the organisation and over time.

In the framework of self-assessment and third-party verification, a score of 3 is sufficient, but this does not mean it cannot be improved. This comes as a fourth priority.

A score of 3 means Conformity in the framework of a certification process.

Score: 4

As 3, but in addition:

- Field and programme staff act frequently in a way that goes beyond CHS requirement to which they are clearly committed.
- Relevant staff can explain in which way their activities are in line with the requirement and can provide several examples of implementation in different sites. They can relate the examples to improved quality of the projects and their deliveries.
- Policies and procedures go beyond the intent of the CHS requirement, are innovative and systematically implemented across the organisation.
- Communities and other external stakeholders are particularly satisfied with the work of the organisation in relation to the requirement and view it as an example of good practice in the sector.

Indicates:

- The requirement is implemented in an exemplary way across the organisation
- The system of the organisation ensures this high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.

In the framework of self-assessment it indicates a quality of practices that the organisation should endeavour to promote with peers.

In the framework of certification, a score of 4 denotes Conformity with the requirement.

Score 5:

As 4, but in addition:

- Actions, policies and procedures at all levels and across the organisation go far beyond the intent of the relevant CHS requirement and could serve as textbook examples of ultimate good practice.

Indicates:

- Almost perfection. A score of 5 should only be attributed on exceptional circumstances.

Acronyms

MIRA – Multi-cluster Rapid Initial Assessment

RBA – Rights Based Approach

FCA – Finn Church Aid

INEE – International Network for Education in Emergencies

HO – Head Office