

Save the Children International

Renewal Audit – Summary Report – 2026/01/30

1. General information

1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified
☒ International ☐ National ☒ Membership/Network ☒ Direct Assistance ☐ Federated ☒ With partners	☒ Humanitarian ☐ Development ☐ Advocacy	☒ Humanitarian ☐ Development ☐ Advocacy
Legal registration	Save the Children International is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with Company No. 3732267 and Registered Charity No. 1076822. Its registered office is in London/UK.	
Head Office location	Various -Global Team	
Total number of organisation staff	20,000	

1.2 Audit team

Lead auditor	Birgit Spiewok
Second auditor	Andrew Nzimbi
Trainee auditor	Tejas Merh Desai
Observer	Désirée Walter
Expert	-
Witness / other participants	-

1.3 Scope of the audit

CHS:2024 Verification Scheme	Independent Verification
Audit Cycle	Third cycle
Type of audit	Renewal Audit
Scope of audit	Entire organisation including Global Team and Country Programmes, humanitarian mandate only
Focus of the audit	All 9 commitments of CHS 2024 with focus on the findings from the previous audit report

1.4 Sampling*

Sampling unit	Country Programme
Total number of sampling units	42
Sample size	6
Total number of onsite visits	2
Total number of sampling units for remote assessment	4
Sampling Unit Selection	
Random Sampling – onsite/remote	Purposive Sampling – onsite/remote
Iraq - remote	Rwanda - onsite
South Sudan - remote	Laos - onsite

Turkey - remote	
Côte d'Ivoire - remote	
Syria – not selected	
Zimbabwe / Malawi – not selected	

Any other sampling considerations:

Syria was not sampled due to security considerations. Zimbabwe/Malawi was not selected as the two Country Programmes were in the middle of an organisational merger at the time of the audit. The purposive sampled Country Programme Laos was included to have an Asian country in the sample. Rwanda was included as an example of a mid-scale programme.

Sampling risks identified:

No specific sampling risks identified. The auditor is confident in the findings and conclusions of this audit based on the sample.

**It is important to note that the audit findings are based on a sample of an organisation's activities, programmes, and documentation, as well as direct observation. Findings are analysed to determine an organisation's systematic approach and application of all aspects of the CHS across different contexts and ways of working.*

2. Activities undertaken by the audit team

2.1 Opening Meeting

Date	2025/11/03	Number of participants	47
Location	online	Any substantive issues arising	-

2.2 Locations Assessed

Locations	Dates	Onsite or remote
Global Team	3–7 Nov 2025	Remote
Country Programme Turkey	10–14 Nov 2025	Remote
Country Programme Rwanda	17–21 Nov 2025	Onsite
Country Programme Laos	17-21 Nov 2025	Onsite
Country Programme Iraq	25 Nov – 4 Dec 2025	Remote
Country Programme Côte d'Ivoire	25 Nov – 4 Dec 2025	Remote
Country Programme South Sudan	25 Nov – 4 Dec 2025	Remote

2.3 Interviews

Level / Position of interviewees	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Global Team			
Management	5	6	Remote

Staff	16	3	Remote
Country Programmes			
Management	5	2	Onsite/ Remote
Staff	15	27	Onsite/ Remote
Partner staff	0	6	Onsite/ Remote
Others	5	13	Onsite/ Remote
Total number of interviewees	46	57	103

2.4 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Mahama Refugee camp, Rwanda - Representatives of the Camp Refugee Executive committee.	1	2	Onsite
Mahama Refugee camp - Rwanda - Women/ Mothers	4	0	Onsite
Mahama Refugee camp, Rwanda - Men/ Fathers	0	3	Onsite
Mahama Refugee camp, Rwanda - Adolescents	2	1	Onsite
Nkamira Transit Centre, Rwanda - Representatives of the Camp Refugee Executive committee.	1	1	Onsite
Nkamira Transit Centre, Rwanda - People with Disabilities	2	0	Onsite
Nkamira Transit Centre, Rwanda - Women/ Mothers	0	1	Onsite
Nkamira Transit Centre, Rwanda- Men/ Fathers	0	2	Onsite
Nkamira Transit Centre, Rwanda - Adolescents	1	1	Onsite
Gikondo Urban Centre, Kigali, Rwanda - Adolescents	1	3	Onsite
Gikondo Urban Centre, Kigali, Rwanda - Community Members	1	2	Onsite
Gikondo Urban Centre, Kigali, Rwanda - Representatives of the Refugee Executive committee	1	1	Onsite
Sibounheuang Village, Laos - Men	0	9	Onsite
Sibounheuang Village, Laos - Women	11	0	Onsite
Sibounheuang Village, Laos – Local authorities	0	1	Onsite
Simoongkhun Primary School, Laos - Boys	0	10	Onsite
Simoongkhun Primary School, Laos - Girls	10	0	Onsite
Simoongkhun Village, Laos - Men	0	8	Onsite
Simoongkhun Village, Laos - Women	11	0	Onsite
Simoongkhun Village, Laos – Village authorities	1	1	Onsite
Phonxay Primary School, Laos – Boys/Girls	5	7	Onsite

Naphay Village, Laos – Village authorities	0	1	Onsite
Naphay Village, Laos - Men	0	10	Onsite
Naphay Village, Laos - Women	11	0	Onsite
Total number of participants	63	64	127

2.5 Closing Meeting

Date	2025/12/09	Number of participants	7
Location	Online	Any substantive issues arising	-

3. Background information on the organisation

3.1 General information

Save the Children was founded in 1919 in London/UK and is the world's largest independent children's rights organisation. Save the Children International (SCI) was established as the global coordinating and international implementing entity of the movement in 2010. Its early rights work helped shape the first international child rights declarations, precursors to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The organisation's vision is a world where every child survives, learns, is protected, and can participate fully in society. Its mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and achieve immediate, lasting change in their lives.

Save the Children works across approximately 103 countries globally of which 58 are SCI managed, of these 42 include humanitarian programmes. The organisation has 30 national members and offices to deliver programmes and coordinate advocacy. It focuses on health (including survival and nutrition), quality education, child protection, and resilience for children and families, and provides humanitarian assistance in emergencies. Its strategy aims to ensure children do not die from preventable causes, learn effectively, and are protected from violence and harm by 2030. Funding comes from governments, multilateral institutions, foundations, corporations, and individual donors.

The organisation has recently undergone significant organisational changes to enhance efficiency, reduce costs and adapt to international funding cuts. A global transformation agenda called Fit for the Future was started in 2024 and includes changes in the organisational and the management structures, adapting and increasing use of technology and closure of Country Programmes and projects. At the time of the audit, SCI operates humanitarian programmes and projects in 42 countries.

3.2 Governance and management structure

Save the Children International is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales and a charity registered in England and Wales. Its sole member is the Save the Children Association (SCA), a Swiss registered association which has 30 national members. At the top of the governance structure is the Board of Trustees which consists of 16 members including the Board chair. Directors on the Board of Trustees also serve on several committees.

- The four-member Audit and Risk Committee oversee matters concerning SCI's external auditors, annual financial statements, internal controls, risk strategy and assurance.
- The four-member Finance Committee advises the board on financial management budget, and reporting, treasury, insurance, and reserves.

- The five-member Governance Committee advises the trustees on constitution of its Board and Board governance systems and processes, as well as effectiveness.
- The three-member Nominations committee is responsible for finding, evaluating and recommending candidates for Board positions.
- The six-member People & Organisation Committee determines policy for executive-level compensation, advises on organisational design and processes, and organisational culture. This committee has deliberated and approved the restructuring exercise that has overhauled the organisational structure in 2025.
- The Child Safeguarding Trustee is one member appointed by the Board of Trustees, mandated with strategic oversight on matters regarding child protection.

Restructuring, which began in 2024 and was expedited in early 2025, has led to the following high-level changes in management:

- Chief executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chief Strategy Officer (CSO) are at the top of the hierarchy with various departments and teams managing global policy and influencing, country level programming and evidence and learning respectively.
- Several roles in the regional offices have been moved to the Global Team leading to the closure of regional offices, with only a regional director in place at that level and a direct connection between the country programmes and the global office.
- Recognising the importance of the General Counsel role as an advisor to the CEO and the SCA/SCI Boards, the legal department was added as reporting department to the CEO's office.

3.3 Work with partner organisations

SCI both implements most of its programmes directly with its own staff and support systems managed by country offices and through a modestly growing number of partnership agreements.

The organisation works with international partners on specific themes to mutually enhance technical capacities and advocate globally for adherence to rights-based standards. Topics include e.g. Education in Emergencies, WASH and MHPSS where SCI engages in long-term international partnerships and collaborations.

At country programme level, SCI has policies and guidance in place outlining its approach to partnerships within the localisation agenda, a key strategic priority of the organisation. These include due diligence and clear reporting guidelines as well as stating accountability and safeguarding obligations. Capacity building of Civil Society Organisations has become a focus of the organisation as a component of its localisation strategy and a contributor towards SCI's overall vision. The organisation expresses its commitment to move towards having more equitable partnerships that are less transactional and compliance focussed. A new partnership assessment tool is currently being piloted in 8 countries before an organisation-wide roll-out will be done.

In 2023, SCI supported national and local partners with 205 million USD, 9.7% of its overall portfolio.

4. Overall performance of the organisation

4.1 Internal quality assurance and risk

SCI has well established internal quality assurance and risk management mechanisms including:

**management
mechanisms**

The Quality Framework: is a set of mandatory operational and programmatic policies, procedures and tools which provide a standardised approach SCI's work and support building evidence, demonstrate impact, inform decision making and embed quality into operations.

The Humanitarian Fund Accountability Framework: ensures SCI countries offices receiving humanitarian funding demonstrate sound financial management, fully align with SCI policies and procedures and conduct quality reporting to facilitate knowledge sharing. The framework articulates data-driven decision-making processes which ensure interventions are needs and risk-based, that financial and operational monitoring is conducted, and there is continuous learning and improvement.

The MEAL Procedure: sets the minimum requirements, resources, and procedural steps that must be taken in every SCI country office to ensure robust accountability systems are in place. It requires SCI operations to ensure information sharing, participation of communities, establishing feedback mechanisms and monitoring of all programmes. SCI operations conduct needs assessments, context analysis, evaluations, and establish stakeholder feedback mechanisms.

The Common Approaches Procedure: outlines how SCI operations ensure evidence-based solutions. The procedure articulates key activities and outcomes to consider in the project cycle. Country offices conduct operational monitoring including holding learning forums where operational challenges and solutions are identified.

The Humanitarian Response Management Procedure: guides response leaders through the mandatory procedural steps of managing a humanitarian response, from launch to close.

The Localisation Operational Guidance: offers a step-by-step approach to assess, plan and implement localisation efforts and includes tools and resources to support this. This guidance is yet to be fully rolled out across all operations.

The Country Finance Manual and Procurement Manuals: define how SCI should manage resources, fund allocations, address risks around corruption, fraud and misuse of resources. SCI operations conduct kick-off meetings, financial and procurement monitoring and monthly reporting. Financial spot checks and annual statutory audits are conducted.

SCI has established a comprehensive risk management governance framework, overseen by the Board of Trustees, who set the organisation's risk appetite and culture, and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), who are accountable for the development, implementation, and oversight of risk management strategies. The organisation operates a formal 'three lines of defence' model: the first line, comprising Operational Management, is responsible for the identification, assessment, and management of risks at the operational level; the second line provides independent oversight through compliance monitoring, policy implementation assurance, and technical advisory functions; and the third line delivers independent and objective assurance through internal audit and advisory consulting activities at the global level.

SCI's risk management framework is supported by a suite of established processes and tools, including, but not limited to, the Save the Children Association Risk Framework (SCARF), the Proposal and Award Risk Tool (PART), and the annual Safeguarding and Counter-Fraud Risk Directory applied across all projects. In addition, SCI has implemented a Global Compliance Framework, formally endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team, to ensure consistent application of compliance standards across the organisation.

4.2 Level of application of the CHS

SCI continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to the application of the CHS across its work, at both strategic and operational levels. Core principles of the CHS are well embedded in SCI policies and practices, reflecting a strong commitment to quality and accountability. In addition, the CHS is integrated into several humanitarian guidance documents and tools. SCI Global Team staff and Country Office (CO) staff are familiar with the principles of the CHS and can identify SCI policy and practice that are aligned to the core principles of the CHS. Most, but not all, staff were familiar with the CHS:2024.

The last Renewal Audit in 2021 identified one minor weakness and 23 observations. SCI has developed an action plan to identify possible root causes and put in place actions to address these issues. The minor weakness identified a gap in considering the environmental impact when using local and natural resources. The change in audit criteria/requirements assessed due to introduction of CHS:2024 meant that the previous identified weaknesses was not assessed, though focus was given to related CHS:2024 requirements. Recognising the special circumstances that the organisation was facing at the beginning of 2025, HQAI granted a six-month extension to SCI's CHS Verification cycle on 31 Mar 2025, extending this audit cycle to February 2026.

This renewal audit identifies four (new) weaknesses:

Not all Country Programmes ensure that their means of communication use languages and formats that reach all community members.

Although SCI puts a strong focus on ensuring that safeguarding is understood and adhered to across the organisation and with partners and communities, the organisation does not systematically ensure that it explicitly includes staff behaviour in its communications.

Local and national partner organisations interviewed in this audit confirmed the value of the relationship with SCI but identified some gaps in engaging them in longer-term planning discussion, strategic questions and sharing of resources.

Although SCI has taken action at the organisational and project level to address the weakness on environmental protection that was identified in the previous renewal audit, the stronger emphasis on environmental impact in CHS:2024 has presented challenges for SCI in this audit.

4.3 PSEAH

SCI takes all reasonable steps to make its programmes safe for children and communities. SCI's Safeguarding Policy consolidates the Child Safeguarding Policy, PSEAH policy and Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy. These policies are applicable to and signed off by staff and any other person or entity working on behalf of the organisation in any capacity. The SCI Safeguarding system is made up of three key areas: Prevention, Reporting and Response.

SCI and partner staff recognise failure to comply with this policy may result in harm to communities and that there are repercussions for not abiding by it. SCI commits to identifying and mitigating PSEAH risks and operations and identifies such risks during proposal development using the Proposal and Award Risk Tool. At Country Office level, the organisation uses the 'Country Office Safeguarding and Counter-Fraud Self-Assessment Tool'. Projects monitor PSEAH risks during project implementation using the Save the Children Association Risk Framework. Compliance with this policy is monitored through reviews, spot checks and audits. Communities are informed about mechanisms for reporting SEAH allegations, including Datix and safeguarding focal points. However, communication and information sharing on expected staff behaviour is not systematic across all projects.

Other policies that complement the safeguarding policy include the code of conduct, SCI Anti-Bullying, Intimidation and Harassment Policy and the SCI Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

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.	2.3
Save the Children International is a global leader and a path-maker on child rights and child protection. They have a long-standing history of strong programme implementation keeping child rights at the center of all programmes and processes. They have numerous and comprehensive policies, SOPs and tools for programme implementation with internal structures that ensure that the work encompasses all children. SCI emphasises inclusion through its written policies at the global level (e.g. Guidance for Children's Participation and SCI MEAL Procedure-Accountability to Children and Communities) and when setting country office vision and focus. In practice this is observed through need assessments and MEAL processes at the level of the country programme as well as individual project throughout all SCI country offices. In emergency situations this is done through a Rapid Need Assessment Tool. SOPs on programme implementation and internal structures ensure participation of communities through community representatives for each variant of geography, age, gender and ability. The MEAL process monitors whether the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity focussing on the most marginalised continue to be in place and, for renewal of continuing programmes, it feeds into the proposal and identifies any gaps. The 2025-27 Global Strategy Narrative specifies that “Impact for and with children remains front and centre of the strategy”. SCI has robust guidelines on i) Save the Children Information Sharing & Communication with Children and Communities Guidance, ii) Information Sharing Plan Template - March 2022. This equips the country programmes with tools and methods for information sharing which was observed in practice at the field level and in documents (e.g., i) Minutes of meetings of community representative committees ii) Community consultations and feedback reports). However, in some country programmes information sharing is limited to the verbal mode of communication without other methods which may be more effective and understandable to all, constituting a weakness in meeting CHS requirements 1.2 and 1.3 Expected behaviours of staff and volunteers of SCI is broadly understood by communities consulted, though they were not aware of the specific code of conduct requirements of SCI staff. The policies include guidelines on modes and mechanisms of communication with communities. There is a Language Guide available to account for diversity in communities. SCI has policies and processes in place and is working to ensure that the communities they serve participate in decision and actions. In practice this is ensured through various mechanisms which include i) community representative committees who have a voice in the decision-making ii) suggestion boxes ii) helpline numbers and iv) WhatsApp groups. The communities consulted reported that they were heard and were able to access the channels available for engaging with the organisation. Policies for data protection and safeguarding of children at SCI make explicit that consent is a mandatory requirement, which can be refused any time. Some of the policies regarding this are i) Safeguarding Children in our Comms & Media Work, ii) Consent form iii) Global Media guidelines. At the country programme level and at the field level, the auditors received confirmations that communications representing people and communities, including those used for advocacy and fundraising, have their informed consent, are accurate, respectful, ethical and preserve their dignity. Notwithstanding the minor weaknesses mentioned in requirement 1.2 and 1.3, the auditors have observed that there is a coherent approach across the organisation for community participation in actions and decisions, information sharing and timely communication with communities. Verbal communication with communities is present, effective and monitored at the global level, country level and field offices level in the organisation. The policies and processes for this purpose are also available and understood well by the staff at all levels.	

Feedback from communities: SCI's services are reaching the communities they serve. The communities know and understand SCI's role about the services they provide and confirm that they are happy overall with the services. They know and understand child safeguarding principles which are at the centre of SCI's work. There is a wider general understanding among community members about SCI's commitment to safeguarding and communities interviewed confirmed that they are fully aware of safeguarding rules.

When asked directly, communities gave examples of what would be unethical behaviour of SCI staff and volunteers, even though SCI does not explicitly state what kind of behaviour they can expect from staff.

Communities confirm that SCI staff is available and responsive to their requirements and even if sometimes response takes time, eventually SCI recognises their participation and meets their requirements.

Commitment 2: People and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities.

3.0

SCI designs humanitarian responses in accordance with the needs and priorities identified by communities and as articulated in country strategies which are developed with feedback from communities. SCI operations conduct needs assessments, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments, and utilise secondary data (Humanitarian Response Plans, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC Classification), government data etc) to plan and implement programmes. SCI has a Context Analysis and Foresight Unit (CAFU) which supports tailoring responses to current and anticipated contextual realities.

The organisation has a Humanitarian Categorisation and Prioritisation Framework that determines its involvement and support to people in different contexts. Allocations are determined in line with a global overview of humanitarian funding needs, complemented by country strategies and related data, and input from sectoral technical teams, ensuring interventions are implemented where they are most urgently required.

SCI has a MEAL procedure which focuses on Accountability to children and communities and sets the minimum requirements, resources, and procedural steps that must be taken within every Country Office (with support from Regional Offices, SC Members, and the Global Team) to ensure robust accountability systems are in place across all programming. Country offices have Monitoring and Evaluation (M+E) Units, staff, M+E Plans, tools (e.g. for needs assessment, capacity assessment) and earmarked budgets to support the function. Country offices conduct regular project monitoring against M+E Plans, Post Distribution Monitoring (PDMs) and Child Rights Situation Analysis (CRSA) to determine that projects continue to address community needs. M+E findings are discussed in monthly programme meetings to inform project redesign or design. At the global level, the organisation has research and development advisors who support research activities at the country offices.

SCI utilises relevant sectoral and technical standards (e.g. Sphere, CALP Standards, Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, MHPSS etc) and good practices in its programme design and implementation. Globally, the organisation is linked to the Global Health Cluster, the interagency Standing Committee Working Group, Child Protection Area of Responsibility and other global fora. The organisation is also involved in supporting the development of technical standards (e.g. Health Standards) at the national level in different country offices.

The organisation refers unmet priority needs to relevant stakeholders through its participation in cluster coordination forums globally and nationally, and in country specific inter-agency forums.

The SCI Humanitarian Response Management Procedure outlines the requirements for SCI operations to understand the context, diverse capacities, vulnerabilities, needs and risks faced by people. As part of its Risk Management Procedure, projects identify and address potential SEAH risks that could impact programming. SCI has a Safeguarding Policy signed off by SCI representatives and mechanisms for reporting SEAH, which are shared with staff, partners and communities.

Feedback from communities: Communities confirm that SCI programmes are based on fair, impartial and transparent criteria. They provide examples of how SCI conducts needs-assessments, targets and selects programme participants. Communities confirm that SCI addresses their priority needs and express satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of interventions they receive.

Commitment 3: People and communities are better prepared and more resilient to potential crises.	3.0
SCI's localisation policy outlines the fundamental principles that govern the organisation's commitment to localisation. These include the belief that shifting greater capacity, means and ownership to national and local actors results in more timely, appropriate and effective outcomes for the most deprived, vulnerable and marginalised children and their communities and better fulfils the rights of children. The SCI Localisation Operational Guidance offers a step-by-step approach to assess, plan and implement localisation efforts and includes tools and resources to support this. The guidance promotes innovative, cost-effective, and locally relevant approaches, allowing each country office to redefine its role and pace within its local ecosystem including seeking context specific government approvals for working with local organisations. Staff and partners recognise the importance and value of supporting locally-led efforts to reinforce the resilience of communities. SCI operations engage government and local authorities, community structures and communities through assessments (capacity assessments, vulnerability assessments). Awareness creation meetings are also regularly held to design and implement programmes that contribute to the positive effects on people's lives, livelihoods and local economy. SCI has a Framework for Anticipatory Action which creates a common understanding across the organisation and explains how Anticipatory Action fits within the scope and ambition of Save the Children's work. The framework requires three components for rollout: i) information about community risk, including vulnerability and capacity, ii) planning operations and delivery based on the information identified and iii) financing plans developed. This framework is complemented by the Anticipatory Action Child Centred Guide and SCI Anticipatory Action Quality Benchmarks which provide minimum standards to consider when designing and implementing anticipatory action. Country offices conduct scenario planning to assess risks and triggers of hazards. Those operating in volatile contexts and faced by frequent crises develop Contingency Plans using Advance Preparedness Checklists. They also develop Minimum Preparedness Actions and Preparedness Action Plans. The plans developed are needs-based and risk-informed and jointly developed with communities. SCI works with government authorities to categorise emergencies and identify communities' capacities and locally led efforts. Country offices conduct local mapping of community leadership, and sign agreements with local Civil Society Organisations, community structures and local authorities. SCI builds their capacities on governance, HR, finance, programmes, operations, communication, external relations and resource mobilisation, supporting them to anticipate and reduce risks of potential crises. Country offices, jointly with communities and/or partners, develop Emergency Preparedness Plans, Disaster Risk Reduction Plans (e.g. for communities and schools) and Early Warning Systems (including posters showing what to do in the event of disasters). SCI sometimes facilitates funding of the interventions identified by communities in developed plans, to enable more timely interventions that reduce the severity of humanitarian emergencies and lessen their impact on vulnerable communities. However, the rollout of locally-identified interventions identified through such plans is currently low due to funding cuts experienced by the organisation, which has necessitated the prioritisation of life-saving interventions.	
Feedback from communities: Communities confirm that SCI closely works with and supports community leadership in reinforcing the resilience of communities. Communities provided examples of Early Warning Systems in place and how to respond in the event of crises. However, communities do not always have a full understanding of how to engage SCI regarding anticipatory actions and disaster risk reduction actions that are outside the organisation's planned interventions.	
Commitment 4: People and communities access support that does not cause harm to people or the environment.	2.6
SCI builds a shared understanding of risks across its operations to help innovate, take advantage of new opportunities and manage current and emerging risks. SCI has policies, processes and tools for conducting risk assessment, analysis and reporting during programming. There is risk management governance system in place, comprising the board of trustees, country office leaders and SLT. The governance sets the tone on the organisation's risk culture, management and mitigation.	

The Save the Children Association Risk Framework (SCARF) guides risk management processes. The SCARF focuses on key risk areas including business continuity, organisational culture, data protection, governance, financial sustainability, partnerships, safeguarding, advocacy, innovation, donor compliance, combating fraud and quality programming. Country offices conduct assessments against the SCARF annually and identify the top 5 top risks to address. Quarterly follow-up meetings are held to monitor progress on addressing the identified risks.

SCI identifies potential risks to programming during proposal development using the Proposal and Award Risk Tool (PART) which is mandatory for all new awards. Mitigation measures for risks identified are planned and budgeted for during proposal development.

Country offices maintain the Safeguarding and Counter-Fraud Risk Assessment and Risk Directory which acts as a 'bank' of risks associated with thematic areas and functions. The Directory is updated annually and is used for cross-functional discussion, ensuring that risks related to harm, exploitation, abuse, neglect, aid diversion, fraud, and corruption are identified, contextualised, and mitigated. Risks identified are considered and included in country strategies and Emergency Preparedness Plans (EPP). SCI's Safeguarding Specialists follow up on safeguarding risks. Staff and SCI representatives sign off against the organisation's Safeguarding Policy. Staff take mandatory PSEAH trainings and SCI conducts awareness to stakeholders on how to report safeguarding cases using Datix and safeguarding focal points.

SCI has an Environmental Policy which requires that the organisation's activities are aligned with principles of environmental sustainability and climate change action. The policy provides direction on improving the organisations environmental performance through minimising the negative environmental impact of programmes, operations and supply chain. The Policy is complemented by the Environmental Sustainability and Social Change Screening Tool which identifies and addresses potential and actual negative impacts of programmes on the environment. The tool analyses the focus of projects and interventions offered, against environmental considerations to be made. The screening tool is however not systematically applied across programmes.

SCI ensures safe and ethical management of data and information to minimise risks for communities. The organisation's Data Protection Policy sets out the principles applied in handling and safeguarding personal data entrusted to the organisation and the obligations of staff in relation to data gathered during programming. The organisation complies with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) protocols. Staff take mandatory annual data protection training and completion is verified by HR. Country offices have IT focal points to monitor the implementation of data protection protocols including data protection audits. Partnership agreements address data protection obligations. Paper-based data is stored in secured lockers. The Data Protection Policy is complemented by the IT Acceptable Use Policy and IT Incident Procedure Form.

SCI publishes an Annual Report on the organisation's programmes and impact, which includes a risk statement by Trustees, covering the SCARF's risk areas. The report also covers the organisation's environmental performance. SCI communicates global risks that have an impact on communities and partners in its programmes. However, monitoring, redress and feedback on risks identified by communities is sometimes conducted on an ad hoc basis (see commitment 1).

Feedback from communities: Communities express that SCI interventions are safe and no negative impacts have resulted from the organisation's programmes. Communities are unsure about how data and information they provide to the organisation is stored but trust it is used for the right purposes.

Commitment 5: People and communities can safely report concerns and complaints and get them addressed.

2.8

SCI has well-established procedures in place with the purpose of ensuring that community members can report both sensitive and non-sensitive complaints through feedback and complaints handling mechanisms (FCHM). The functioning of these mechanisms is communicated to communities by staff and community volunteers, who regularly interact with communities and monitor that FCHMs are functioning.

SCI's feedback and reporting mechanisms have a systematic process for enabling, recording, tracking, and assigning cases for review, referral or subsequent investigation as appropriate. The organisation uses a database tool to capture and manage all complaints and staff confirm using this systematically. Staff demonstrated how the organisation ensures timely responses and how complaints are referred onwards where necessary.

SCI uses a wide range of strategies and communication tools to promote complaints mechanisms in complex contexts, explaining how complaints mechanisms can be accessed in different contexts. The organisation demonstrates its clear commitment to applying a survivor-centred approach in addressing misconduct through policies, guidance and procedures. Examples were given of Country Programmes with specifically child-friendly FCHM, and the organisation encourages learning and exchanging on good practice examples on how to set-up child-friendly FCHMs between Country Office teams.

Staff are provided training and information on FCHMs, and partners are required to have functioning FCHMs in place. Partners are obliged to report any complaints or safeguarding incidents to SCI and partners confirmed this practice.

Feedback from communities:

Communities reported that they feel they can safely give feedback, raise concerns and complain, if necessary. Communities also confirmed that SCI responds quickly and adequately to feedback and concerns and gave examples on how these led to changes in programme implementation.

Commitment 6: People and communities access coordinated and complementary support.

2.5

Coordination with government, local authorities, community leaders and local and international NGOs is an area of strength for SCI. The organisation ensures that its work is aligned with, and complements, locally led actions, community-based efforts, and the activities of relevant stakeholders.

SCI staff at country level are familiar with the plans and activities of other relevant actors through their participation in sectoral and cross-sectoral coordination groups. The participation of SCI staff in national and sub-national coordination mechanisms also facilitates complementarity. SCI often plays a leading role in the coordination of child protection, nutrition, WASH, and education interventions.

SCI has policies and processes in place that outline the organisation's approach to partnership and localisation, including its Global Strategy 2025–2027 and the SCI Localisation Policy and Guidance. The organisation also has guidance and tools to manage partnerships, such as the Partner Mapping and Identification Tool, and use of standard partner agreements, which include expectations on PSEAH. Local and national partners are assessed using an assessment tool and partnerships agreements clearly state funding, reporting, accountability and safeguarding requirements. Partners report that assessments and contracts are often very comprehensive but respectful, realistic and fair.

Satisfaction surveys with partners are done by an external service provider which look at topics like flexible funding, capacity strengthening, information and risk sharing and strategic planning. Survey results show partner satisfaction at 78% in 2025 with some divergence across different regions. Partners interviewed in this audit stated overall satisfaction in partnering with SCI but identified some areas for improvement: Partners reported that they do not feel fully informed about SCI's strategic plans, have limited knowledge of current developments, and stated that they had not been consulted regarding future collaborations. They also indicated that opportunities to collaborate on resource sharing or decision-making were limited. Some partners perceived their role as primarily service providers at the project implementation level, rather than as strategic and equitable partners. The organisation is dedicated to localisation and working equitably with partners. This is readily demonstrated through its policies. There is, however, a weakness in delivering on its policy commitments on equitable partnerships.

Feedback from communities:

Communities appreciate the community-led programmes and feel that SCI and partners engage well with other organisations. Communities state that the work is community based and they recognise the organisation's commitment to coordination and collaboration with other stakeholders to increase programme effectiveness and efficiency.	
Commitment 7: People and communities access support that is continually adapted and improved based on feedback and learning.	3.0
SCI has organisational structures and practices in place to ensure that learnings are consistently captured and assessed to adapt and improve programming. SCI monitoring, evaluation and learning procedures, tools and quality benchmarks emphasise learning. SCI's global network demonstrates a high level of thematic expertise. Reports show that SCI continuously assesses information from community consultations, learning events and feedback and complaints to adapt programme design, including collecting relevant disaggregated data to inform decisions. SCI consistently ensures that learnings and adaptations carried out within programming are shared with community representatives and stakeholders. Staff reports and documents confirm regular monitoring output and outcomes of projects and evaluations are regularly commissioned. SCI continues to engage in a range of fora at the international level to share learning and innovation such as being a Cluster Lead Agency in the Global Education Cluster Steering Group and active membership in The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. SCI also hosts the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, a global learning initiative set up to strengthen humanitarian capacity by providing learning, training and development opportunities for people and organisations around the world.	
Feedback from communities: Communities feel that their feedback is listened to and that actions are being made based on what they convey to SCI. Community members have identified positive changes in programmes due to learnings gathered through consultations, feedback and complaints.	
Commitment 8: People and communities interact with staff and volunteers that are respectful, competent, and well-managed.	2.9
SCI demonstrates a strong commitment to diversity, fairness, transparency, and non-discrimination through its staff recruitment and performance management policies. The organisation has dedicated, high-quality staff at all levels, supported by extensive resources, tools, and training opportunities. SCI has robust recruitment, screening, and induction processes in place. All staff are required to sign a policies and procedures checklist confirming that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct and other key organisational policies. In addition, staff must complete all mandatory trainings, including safeguarding. Some staff noted that these inductions are too comprehensive and lack sufficient prioritisation. The organisation provides an extensive range of online training resources, guidelines, and toolkits to support staff in carrying out their roles effectively. There are also global initiatives, programmes, and resources available to support staff health, safety, and well-being. Staff safety and security are further prioritised through mandatory Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) for those travelling to high security-risk countries. There is a strong culture of quality and accountability at all levels of the organisation, with staff supported to deliver on these commitments. Overall, HR policies are widely perceived as fair and ethical. SCI ensures that all staff adhere to its Code of Conduct and provides multiple appropriate channels for raising concerns, including whistleblowing mechanisms. Staff express confidence in the integrity of SCI's systems, and the organisation's staff are viewed by partners, stakeholders, and communities as capable and dedicated. SCI leadership places strong emphasis on promoting a culture of quality and accountability, which is fully endorsed by staff across the organisation. Recent changes to the	

organisational and management structure of the organisation, including significant reductions in staffing have led to staff taking on new roles or additional roles. The overall effects of the restructuring and downsizing on staff continuing to have the necessary support, skills and competencies to fulfil their new roles will be assessed during the next audit.

Feedback from communities:

Communities express that staff are professional and competent, and that they behave respectfully and in a culturally sensitive way. Communities and partner staff feel that SCI staff listen to them, and that they can approach them with any concerns.

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

2.8

SCI has policies, systems and processes to ensure resources are managed ethically and responsibly. All humanitarian funding is in line with SCIs ethos and strategies and is spent towards activities identified in respective response plans or EPP, and as guided by the Humanitarian Fund Handbook.

SCI has finance teams in all operations, and all staff take mandatory training and are aware of their obligations to manage associated risks of corruption, fraud and conflict of interest. Project kick off meetings are held for staff (finance, programmes and MEAL) and partners for all awards with the requirements of the Finance and Procurement Manuals which guide the effective, efficient and ethical management of resources outlined. SCI signs agreements with partners, and these are clear on financial management requirements and procedures to follow. The details of the Humanitarian Fund Operations and Compliance Handbook, which has a list of mandatory requirements for all Humanitarian Fund allocations and a list of general eligible and ineligible costs are shared with partners.

SCI has a scheme of delegation that describes financial approval limits. The organisation has a clear process for raising purchase requests, orders, invoices, receipts and approvals. There is clear segregation of duties on who takes each respective function. SCI tracks and reports expenditure against budgets and planned activities through AGRESSO, PROSAVE and PRIME systems. Financial monitoring meetings are held between programme and finance teams monthly. The organisation conducts annual statutory audits, and specific donor audits if required. Internal and external financial reports are developed and shared with staff, board and donors. Financial contributions by SCI members are made visible on the Humanitarian Fund Dashboard, alongside deficit between pledges, actuals donations made and gaps yet to be met.

SCI conducts annual financial risk assessments and major issues relating to risk, compliance and sound financial management are identified through regular monitoring and spot-checks and discussed in Quarterly Financial Risk

Review meetings. SCI uses the Datix system through which stakeholders can report any concerns of fraud, in line with the SCI's Fraud Procedure.

The SCI Supplier Sustainability Policy outlines standards to be followed by suppliers including demonstrating how they address environmental management in their work. Suppliers sign off a declaration of compliance against this policy.

SCI recently implemented substantial changes in organisational and management structures with staff reductions or reassignment of roles and responsibilities amongst the global, regional and country teams. There are global teams dedicated to offering technical support to country offices and SCI has the Global Expertise and Humanitarian Surge Platform (GEHSP) which is dedicated to identifying, developing and deploying skilled and experienced talent from across the movement to meet the needs of domestic and international programmes and humanitarian response. However, access to the above technical capacities and implementing key interventions by country programmes may be hindered in the long run due to the restructuring and resource cuts. The impact of the restructuring and resource cuts to programming will be re-evaluated in the next audit.

Feedback from communities: Communities and stakeholders express satisfaction that SCI uses its resources responsibly and for the intended purposes. However, communities do not have a full understanding about budget constraints in the organisation and the limits of available resources to support interventions they propose.

** 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 open weaknesses

Weaknesses	Type	Status	Resolution timeframe
2026-1.2: SCI does not ensure that information about expected behaviour of staff, including PSEAH, is systematically shared with people and communities.	Minor	New	By the 2028 Renewal Audit
2026-1.3: SCI does not ensure that communication is done in languages and formats that are easily accessible and understandable for communities, including PSEAH.	Minor	New	By the 2028 Renewal Audit
2026-4.2: SCI does not systematically identify and address potential negative impacts of its programmes on the environment.	Minor	New	By the 2028 Renewal Audit
2026-6.4: SCI has not established a coherent organisational approach to ensure collaboration and partnerships are based on a commitment to equitable decision making and resource sharing	Minor	New	By the 2028 Renewal Audit
Total Number of open Weaknesses	4		

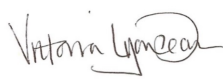
6. Claims Review

Claims Review conducted	☒ Yes ☐ No	Follow-up required	☐ Yes ☒ No
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7. Lead auditor recommendation

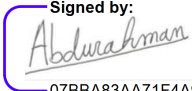
INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION In my opinion, SCI demonstrates a high level of commitment to the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and its continued inclusion in the Independent Verification scheme is justified.	
Name and signature of lead auditor: Birgit Spiewok 	Date and place: Berlin, 19 Dec 2025

8. HQAI decision

Certificate renewed:	☐ Issued ☐ Preconditioned (Major CARs)
Start date of the current certification cycle: YYYY/MM/DD Next audit before YYYY/MM/DD	
Registration in the Independent Verification Scheme maintained:	☒ Accepted ☐ Refused
Start date of the current verification cycle: 2025/08/04 Renewal audit completed by 2028/08/04	
Name and signature of Head of quality assurance:  Victoria Lyon Dean	Date and place: 30 January 2026

9. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

Space reserved for the organisation	
Any reservations regarding the audit findings and/or any remarks regarding the behaviour of the HQAI audit team: <i>If yes, please give details:</i>	☐ Yes ☐ No

Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings: I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit I accept the findings of the audit	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ No
Name and signature of the organisation's representative: Signed by:  07BBA83AA71F4A9... Abdurahman Sharif	Date and place: London 13th February 2026

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.

Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale*

Scores	Meaning for all verification scheme options, including self-assessment and third-party audits	Guidance for scoring requirements
0	Your organisation does not currently meet the requirement and indicates a major issue that is so significant that the organisation's ability to meet the commitment is compromised. For third-party auditing schemes: Independent verification: A major weakness. Certification: A major non-conformity that compromises the integrity of the commitment which leads to a major corrective action request (CAR).	To give a score 0, not all of the measurable components of the requirement are verified to be in place and the issue(s) identified are so significant that the organisation's ability to meet the commitment is compromised.
1	Your organisation does not currently meet the requirement. For third-party auditing schemes: Independent verification: A minor weakness. Certification: A minor non-conformity that compromises the integrity of the requirement which leads to a minor corrective action request (CAR).	To give a score 1, not all of the measurable components of the requirement are verified to be in place.
2	Your organisation currently meets the requirement, but there is an opportunity for improvement that deserves attention so that the requirement is not compromised in the future. For third-party auditing schemes: Independent verification: Requirement is met with an observation. Certification: Conformity with an observation.	To give a score 2, all measurable components of a requirement are verified to be in place, however, one or more opportunities for improvement are observed which deserve attention so that the requirement is not compromised in the future.

3	Your organisation meets the requirement, with organisational systems ensuring it is being met consistently throughout the organisation. For third-party auditing schemes: Independent verification: Requirement is met. Certification: Conformity.	To give a score 3, all measurable components of a requirement are verified to be in place.
4	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. For third-party auditing schemes: Independent verification: Requirement is met in an exemplary way. Certification: Conformity in an exemplary way.	To give a score 4, all measurable components of a requirement are verified to be in place. In addition, the following must be verified: - An organisational system (or systems) that demonstrate an innovative approach to meeting the requirement at a high standard throughout the organisation are in place. and/or - 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.
	Guidance notes for scoring commitments: - 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