HQAI is 5 years old. The CHS is 6 years old.

Where do we stand with the role of independent CHS quality assurance in promoting quality and accountability, spearheading participation, safeguarding, facilitating localisation and reducing duplication of due diligence processes?

© Martina Holmberg, Diakonia. Bicycle manifestation on International Women’s Day in Bangladesh.
HQAI offers three auditing services for organisations, networks and initiatives working in the humanitarian and development sector: certification, independent verification and benchmarking.

“The changes we made have significantly improved our relationships with the communities we work with.”

Rizwan Iqbal
ACT Alliance

Simplicity!
A new animation video describes our work effectively.

The diversity of HQAI’s audited partners in terms of sizes (1 to 150 country programmes), types (UN agency, National Societies of the Red Cross / Red Crescent Movement, national, international) and mandates (humanitarian, development, advocacy) demonstrates the flexibility of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) as a standard, and of HQAI’s methods to measure its application.

Small, big, national, international, network, group, humanitarian, development or both ... the diversity of HQAI’s audited partners is impressive (status 03/2021).
Read their stories on our website.
HQAI conducts independent audits against the CHS to help aid organisations continually and effectively improve their humanitarian and development work.

People at the centre.
HQAI collates data from documents, interviews, observation and includes direct feedback from people affected by crisis.

“I am deeply convinced that accountability and quality are becoming the new normal, not the exception.”
Elizabeth Wakilo
Board Member, HQAI

Organisations engage in a multi-year process of continuous learning. The formality of HQAI’s external processes stimulates faster improvement.

HQAI audits have the dual purpose of improvement and building trust. Local organisations can create a bond of trust with governments and INGOs alike.

“We see it as a trust building exercise.”
Anne de Riedmatten
Swiss Mission to the UN

From head office to the field.
Safeguarding concerns regarding affected people arise in programme delivery locations. It is imperative for HQAI to assess the effective implementation of policies and processes right there.

“CHS certification was a transformative experience. The way the auditors looked at the standard was different from the way we did.”
Prem Livingstone
EFICOR

Donors who require and/or recognise CHS Verification in their own processes create room for significant harmonisation of due diligence requirements, and subsequent economies of scale for the sector.

Independent, objective, professional.
HQAI’s certification scheme is accredited under ISO 17065.
Localisation

35% of HQAI’s audited partners are local organisations. A rising trend.

Group scheme: NGOs benefit from economies of scale and build local auditing capacities.

12/40: 30% of HQAI auditors are located in the Global South. Contributing to the localisation agenda.

HQAI’s Subsidy Fund

90% of the cost of an audit can be subsidised.

300’000 CHF already granted on subsidies to 10 organisations in 8 countries.

5 organisations received at total of 50’000 CHF in 2020.

Quality Assurance

60 organisations are registered under HQAI’s quality assurance schemes.

3 services: certification, independent verification, benchmarking.

ISO 17065 accreditation for HQAI’s CHS certification scheme is a recognition of rigour, independence and objectivity.

100 audits have been conducted since the inception of HQAI, each producing a wealth of information.

Donor Due Diligence (DD)

2: Denmark and UK’s Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) require independent CHS audits from their partners.

3: Germany, the Dutch Relief Alliance and the UK provide shortened DD assessments for organisations that have undergone CHS verification.

1: ECHO technically accepts FPA assessments conducted by HQAI, based on the CHS, opening the door to alignment.

Covering aid around the world: HQAI’s audited partners work in nearly 100 countries.
The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) sets out Nine Commitments that organisations can use to improve their work. As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian aid and development work. The CHS places communities and people affected by crisis at the centre and is a measurable standard.

Why is it important to measure?
Those who measure can track progress over time towards compliance with the standard. Doing it independently is the most rigorous way. This is what HQAI does. When we measure, organisations improve. HQAI offers independent verification and certification under the CHS verification scheme. Both services provide organisations with an external perspective on where they stand in the application of the CHS and point out areas of strengths and weaknesses.

The CHS Alliance’s 2020 Humanitarian Accountability Report revealed how much progress CHS-verified organisations have made in meeting their commitments to the children, women and men facing disasters globally. CHS Commitment 6 on coordination and complementarity is the closest to being fully met by verified organisations. Commitment 5 on welcoming and addressing complaints is least satisfactory.

“Evidence from the large number of organisations verified against the CHS, shows that we are building something that has commitment, investment and is driving real change.”
Tanya Wood, CHS Alliance

“We are empowered and actively participate.”
Serene, participant in a youth programme, Lebanon

COVID-19: To mitigate travel restrictions and their aftermaths on audits, HQAI has developed effective remote assessment techniques. However, these will not, and should not, completely replace face-to-face interviews in the future.

In 2020, HQAI auditors consulted 104 community members remotely.

© Pamela Huber, unsplash.
HQAI is a not-for-profit NGO registered as a Swiss association. Watch the video [HQAI in 90 seconds](#) to better understand who we are and visit the [website](#) to see our smiles.

**New people joined in 2020** and enriched the organisation with an incredible diversity of experience, skills and knowledge.

- **1 new President**: Kate Halff
- **1 new staff member**: Jeanine Byrom
- **4 new members**: Elsa Matilde Escobar, Rayelene Govender, Jason Phillips, Amany Qaddour
- **10 new auditors**: Andrew Bradley, Francesco Dagostino, Amina Deji-Logunleko, Mayumi Fuchi, Camille Guyot-Bender, Simon Lawry-White, Philip Miller, Lisa Partridge, Efehi Ubebe, Léa Valentini
- **3 new Directors**: Maria Emilia Correa, Daniel Hitzig, Elizabeth Wakilo

“I was attracted [...] to encourage **mutual respect** between organisations audited by HQAI and the communities they serve.”

Efehi Ubebe
Auditor, HQAI

Playtime: Trying to link pictures with names? Use the colour coding first. Names are listed in alphabetical order. Corresponding pictures are sorted clockwise starting on the top of each colour group.
HQAI turned five years old in 2020. As a founding member and now the President of HQAI, I am proud of all that HQAI has achieved in this short period. As demonstrated by the impressive facts and figures and the enthusiastic substantial quotes provided in this report, HQAI has achieved a lot!

With its independent audits of aid organisations’ work against the CHS, HQAI has shown that a systems audit approach has its place within the humanitarian endeavor. It brings an independent rigorous assessment of an NGO’s performance against a standard which articulates Nine Commitments to people and communities who face extreme destitution or whose lives have been turned around by crisis.

HQAI’s work helps organisations improve their performance in terms of quality and accountability; helps build trust between these organisations, the people they serve and their financial supporters; contributes to putting small local organisations on the same level playing field in terms of performance as bigger international ones, and contributes to reducing duplication and increasing efficiency by using CHS certification to harmonise and simplify due diligence and partner assessments.

Despite these achievements, we are still far from achieving the transformation that underpins the vision behind the CHS and the creation of HQAI: achieve sustainable quality and accountability aid outcomes at scale; ensure financial support to organisations based on demonstrated performance regardless of their size and origin; and harmonise and simplify due diligence requirements.

It is time for CHS-certified organisations and humanitarian and development donors committed to these aims to embrace and publicly promote CHS certification.

“I have found that interviewing community members individually, [remotely] can provide a rich source of information, as their comfort level may be higher than speaking out within a group. The downside is that due to time constraints, we speak with less people providing a smaller sample size.”

Catherine Blunt
Senior Auditor, HQAI

“The lack of recognition by donors weakens the appeal for organisations to engage in their verification journey. Too much time, money and goodwill are lost, although the appropriate tools exist to reduce duplication and lighten the burden.”

Pierre Hauselmann
Executive Director
HQAI

“DANIDA encourages colleagues to make independent quality assurance against the CHS mandatory. Experience has shown that it increases the speed to reach critical mass of CHS-verified organisations and raises the bar for more quality and accountability.”

Mille Døllner Fjeldsted
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark/DANIDA

HQAI warmly thanks its donors for their generous support in 2020.

When we measure, organisations improve

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