



MISSION EAST

CHS Certification Audit Report

ME – CER – 2017 – 006

2017-05-25

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1. General information

Organisation Name:	Mission East (ME)	Verification Ref / No:	ME - CER - 2017-006
Type of organisation: <input type="checkbox"/> National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> Federated <input type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct assistance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Through partners		Organisation Mandate: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input 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)	Mission East has programming in 7 countries and Head Offices in Copenhagen and Brussels. Mission East has 33 local partner organisations as at end of 2016.	Programme Site sampled:	1
Head Office Locations:	Copenhagen, Denmark and Brussels, Belgium (HO visit)	Field locations verified:	Iraq
Date of Head Office Verification:	29-30 March 2017	Date of Field Verification:	21 - 25 April 2017
Lead Auditor:	Phillip Miller	Second auditor	Annie Devonport

2. Scope

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

3. Schedule summary

3.2 Verification Schedule

Name of Programme sites/members/partners verified	Location	Mandate	Number of projects visited	Type of projects
ME Country Office	Erbil	Humanitarian		
ME field office Kirkuk	Kirkuk	Humanitarian		
Nazrawa Camp	Kirkuk	Humanitarian	2	Distributions and Child Friendly Spaces
ME field office Dohuk	Dohuk	Humanitarian		
Humanity (partner NGO)	Derabun and Khanke (around Dohuk)	Humanitarian	1	Child/Youth Friendly Centres

3.2 Opening and closing meetings

3.2.1 At Head Office:

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	29/3/17	30/3/17
Location	Brussels	Brussels
Number of participants	13	12
Any substantive issue arising	Nil	Nil

3.2.2 At Programme Site:

	Opening meeting	Closing meeting
Date	21/4/17	25/4/17
Location	Erbil	Erbil
Number of participants	9	11
Any substantive issue arising	Nil	Nil

4. Recommendation

In our opinion, Mission East (ME) conforms to the commitments of the Core Humanitarian Standard. We recommend certification.

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

Lead Auditor's
Name and
Signature

Phillip Miller

Date and
Place:

25 May 2017,
Australia



5. HQAI Quality Control

Quality Control by: Elissa Goucem	Quality Control finalised on: First Draft: 2017-05-31 Final: 2017-06-08
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6. Background information on the organisation

6.1 General

Mission East is an international relief and development organisation, which works to help vulnerable populations, supporting communities' capacities to organize and assist themselves, through activities ranging from disaster relief to development assistance. It was established in 1991 and its original focus was on former Soviet republics in East Europe. Mission East maintains two Head Offices in Copenhagen (Denmark) and Brussels (Belgium) as well as a small office in Germany.

As at end of 2016, Mission East had 272 staff of which 28 were based in its Head Offices and German office. Of the other 244 staff, a little over half were based in Afghanistan. In terms of size of budget, Mission East's programming in Iraq is its largest programme.

The vision of Mission East is to empower people and communities in crisis affected countries to lift themselves out of poverty and marginalization.

Mission East works in response to community needs, in Disaster Response and Rural Community Development.. As well as direct implementation, Mission East works with and through local and international partners. Mission East's 'Values in Action' are honesty, integrity, compassion, respect for all people and valuing the individual.

6.2 Organisational structure and management system

Mission East is governed by a board of five members who are all European based. The Managing Director reports to the Board.

Mission East's organogram for its HOs showing relationship with Country Offices is below.

□

6.3 Work with Partners

Mission East implements 16.28% of its work through partner organisations and these represent a wide range of civil society organisations in the countries in which it has programming. Mission East sometimes elects to directly implement some of its humanitarian response and this decision is usually based on whether they can find local partners that can respond quickly and to the standards required. Similarly, Mission East directly implements some non-humanitarian programming where it feels that there are no local partners with the required capacity to implement the project to the levels required. Partnership arrangements are governed by partner agreements and Memoranda of Understanding and Mission East has standard templates for both of these documents. Mission East builds capacity of local organisations with which it works. Capacity building is based on gaps identified through partner assessments and ongoing monitoring and covers compulsory trainings that are seen as important by Mission East. In some locations, including Tajikistan, Mission East implements projects with the overall objective of raising capacity of local partner organisations. Through such projects Mission East has developed partner assessment tools.

6.4 Certification or verification history

Mission East has not previously sought CHS certification. Mission East has been recertified against People in Aid 2nd level kitemark most recently in 2013.

7. Sampling

7.1 Rationale for sampling

The information used to base the selection decision on was provided to the auditors in the standard HQAI programme selection form and through responses to subsequent requests for information.

Two countries and country programmes were shortlisted based on factors that made them relevant to visit, including level of security, scope of programming (development, humanitarian presence in-country, volume of partners and projects, level of country budget, accessibility of project sites within the audit timescale and the future plans for this country office based on the rationalisation that ME is undertaking.

Through this process, the following programme sites were rated as unsuitable:

- Afghanistan, was discarded due to insecurity;
- Armenia, development programme with limited activities which were not representative of the whole range of Mission East programming;
- Nepal, was discarded due to logistical constraints and closed emergency programme (development activities only);
- Myanmar was discarded because Mission East has a very small programming there;
- North Korea (DPRK) was discarded because of a small programming and no presence in country.
- Tajikistan was not shortlisted as ME is only implementing development programmes. Additionally, projects were widely spread in different locations across the county, limiting opportunities to visit more than two project sites in the time available.

Iraq was selected as the Kurdistan Region is accessible and provided the auditors with the opportunity to sample ME humanitarian programming.

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

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

Type of people interviewed	Number of people interviewed (some were interviewed jointly)
Head Office	
Senior Management Team	3
Middle Managers and Staff	9
Partners	0
Programme sites	
Management and Staff (CO)	6
Management and Staff (field office)	9
Partners	
Humanitarian staff	2
Other Stakeholders (govt and UN)	3
Total number of interviews	33

7.2.2 Focus Group Discussions (interviews with a group >6)

Type of Group	Number of participants	
	Female	Male
IDPs (humanitarian beneficiaries)	20	17
Total number of participants	20	17

8. Report

8.1 Overall organisational performance

Within Mission East, there is a high level of commitment from staff to genuinely live and apply the standard to drive quality. Being a small organisation provides opportunities for information and learning to be shared quickly and there were clear and open pathways for communication between HO and PS. This facilitates quick decision making, through monitoring and adaptation in practice. However, Mission East does not have all the necessary systems, policies and guidance in place to ensure and demonstrate how it systematically applies the CHS. Without these quality assurance instruments the organisation may not be able to ensure that all commitments of the CHS are fully understood, consistently applied and staff held accountable across the organisation (See section 8.3).

Mission East performs best in providing effective, appropriate and timely humanitarian aid. It is proactive in coordinating and seeks complementarity with government and other non-government actors. This was highly appreciated amongst stakeholders. There are examples of where Mission East provided leadership in the sector in reducing risks for its beneficiaries in the most dangerous humanitarian contexts. However, ME does not have the processes in place to make sure its activities are always guided by an understanding of risk to the beneficiaries.

Mission East has recently started rolling out improvements in its complaints response mechanisms. Whilst communities and staff are aware of these and flow systems are in place, communities had not been consulted about their preferences for complaints processes.

Mission East is a learning organisation and demonstrates how it identifies weaknesses through monitoring or complaints systems, takes measures to remedy the shortcomings and have processes in place to track mitigation of poor performance. Mission East has most of the policies and processes in place to ensure its human resources support the delivery of its programming. It plans and tracks the use of its resources to promote efficiency and takes measures to minimise the possibility of misuse of funds.

8.2 Summary of non-conformities

Non-compliance	MAJOR	MINOR	TIME FOR RESOLUTION
Commitment 1			
Commitment 2		2.7: The decision-making processes to ensure timely response to humanitarian crises are not documented	1 year
Commitment 3		3.2: Mission East Assessment processes do not ensure that the results of existing community hazard and risk assessments or preparedness plans guide activities 3.8: ME does not have a policy or systems in place covering how personal information gathered from communities and people affected by crisis should be stored and managed	18 months 1 year
Commitment 4		4.6: Mission East does not have policies in place ensuring that the organisation engages communities and those affected by crisis, reflecting their identified priorities and risks, at all stages of its work	1 year
Commitment 5		5.1: Communities and people affected by crisis are not consulted on the design, the implementation and the monitoring of complaints handling processes.	18 months
Commitment 6			
Commitment 7		7.4: ME has no overarching policy or procedure that describes how the organisation evaluates and learns from its practice and experience	1 year
Commitment 8			

Commitment 9		<p>9.4: Mission East does not have mechanisms in place to ensure local and natural resources are used taking their actual and potential impact on the environment into account</p> <p>9.6: Mission East does not have policies and processes governing how the organisation accepts and allocates funds and gifts-in-kind ethically and legally; requires it to use its resources in an environmentally responsible way; and ensures that its independence is not compromised by the acceptance of resources from donors.</p>	<p>18 months</p> <p>1 year</p>
TOTAL Number		8	

8.3 Strong points and areas for improvement

1. Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant

Score: 2.9

Needs and contextual analysis are undertaken by ME and these inform design and programmes. There is evidence that programmes are adapted to meet changing needs and contexts and monitoring processes ensure there is ongoing analysis of the context.

ME policies commit to providing impartial assistance based on need. Systems and tools include the collection of disaggregated data. ME does have systems and processes in place to ensure vulnerabilities and capacities of different groups is taken into account in the design and implementation of programmes, however not all assessments include the specific needs of those with disabilities.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 1

Interviewed communities and people affected by crisis confirmed that they had been consulted over their needs but information about risks they faced and their capacities had not been sought.

2. Humanitarian response is effective and timely

Score: 2.4

Mission East has processes in place that promote quick decision-making at Head Office level about humanitarian response. Mission East also has many practices which make their humanitarian responses effective. There are numerous examples of practice which show how the organisation is achieving the indicators related to timely and effective humanitarian action. However, there are shortcomings in regard to the lack of policy and guidance which means that the organisation might not be able to ensure these practices are consistent across the organisation. These shortcomings relate to the lack of a systemic approach to ensure the safety of communities; ensuring relevant staff are accountable for the timeliness of decision-making and referral of unmet community needs. Mission East uses different recognised technical standards appropriately throughout the project cycle and has monitoring systems in place which identify issues and lead to remedial actions and learning.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 2:

People affected by crisis reported that Mission East's and partners response had been very timely and appropriate. They also confirmed that Mission East and partners monitored the performance of the project and made changes after they became aware of changing needs.

3. Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects

Score: 2.3

ME's overall approach includes building capacities of local organisations and structures. Whereas there are examples of where ME is doing this, ME does not ensure the use of existing hazard and risk mapping across all country programmes.

Policies are in place to prevent negative effects such as exploitation, abuse or discrimination and to strengthen local capacity. Whilst ME does identify and act upon most potential or actual unintended negative effects, the area of environment is not systematically included in processes.

Whilst examples exist of ME taking care to safeguard personal information collected from communities and people affected by crisis there is no overall policy or process to ensure this happens systematically.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 3:

People affected by crisis and communities stated that they felt stronger as a result of programme activities with more confidence to handle the future. They stated that ME understood their situation.

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

Score: 2.0

Mission East uses information from communities and those affected by crisis to design and implement its programming appropriately. Generally, this includes an appropriate level of knowledge about the programme and why Mission East made particular programming choices. Mission East has guidance about information sharing with communities. Mission East uses appropriate media to communicate with communities and provides opportunities for community members to provide feedback. Nevertheless, ME does not guide staff on facilitating feedback from community members who are more vulnerable. It doesn't have policies in place to govern how staff should engage communities in ways that reflect the risks they face, nor policies and processes to ensure it represents communities and people affected by crisis with dignity. Mission East doesn't provide guidance to its partners about what information their staff must provide to communities and the requirement to ensure inclusive representation and engage beneficiaries throughout the project cycle.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 4:

Community members and people affected by crisis were confident that they could provide feedback to Mission East and gave examples of where they had done so and felt their concerns had been listened to. Communities also felt staff were very respectful and communicated with them in ways they appreciated.

5. Complaints are welcomed and addressed

Score: 2.3

ME has a culture of welcoming complaints. A recently launched policy is still in the process of being rolled across the organisation. ME has systems in place which allow communities and people affected by crisis to safely access a complaints mechanism. But communities and people affected by crisis are not involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of complaints. The policy on complaints mentions that complaints which do not fall within the scope of ME may be referred on but this is not a requirement as the decision is left to the discretion of a senior manager.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 5:

People affected by crisis and communities were aware of how they could complain but did not know when response could be expected. They expressed that they had not been asked about their preferences for making complaints and receiving responses.

6. Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary

Score: 2.8

Mission East takes time to understand the roles of the range of stakeholders relevant to their work and provides them with regular information. Mission East has systems and practices in place through which it ensures that its humanitarian responses are coordinated with other organisations. Feedback from government and non-governmental stakeholders confirmed that Mission East took measures to ensure its actions complemented those of other actors. Mission East partner agreements explicitly state the different responsibilities and mandates of both parties.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 6:

People affected by crisis valued how Mission East worked with other organisations and confirmed that the services they provided did not overlap with other organisations.

7. Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve

Score: 2.5

ME has processes in place that capture learning through its monitoring and evaluation practices. A platform through which it shares learning within the organisation exists and is available to all ME staff. However, the commitments to learning through these mechanisms is not formalised and documented.

ME has mechanisms through which it uses learning to adapt its programming.. ME also has formalised channels through which it shares learning externally (but not necessarily with communities). However, learning is not systematically shared with partners and communities.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 7:

Communities reported how ME had modified activities based on ideas provided by community members. They could not provide examples of instances of Mission East sharing the results of learning with them.

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

Score: 2.8

Mission East has policies and systems that support staff to be effective, gain the skills and knowledge required of them, and understand the organisation's expectations of them. Mission East's Human Resources policies promote fairness and equity and the organisation takes steps to ensure compliance with local Labour Law. Mission East has processes in place to make sure all staff are aware of and agree to abide by its Code of Conduct. There are also processes in place to make sure staff adhere to policies relevant to their functions.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 8

Communities and people affected by crisis were positive about the capacity, attitude, behaviours and skills of Mission East staff and felt they demonstrated the skills needed for the job.

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

Score: 2.3

There are policies and systems in place which help Mission East manage resources effectively (finance budgeting, monitoring and reporting) as well as audit, and measures to detect and prevent fraud. Mission East also has review and assessment processes in place ensure resources are used efficiently. Nevertheless, Mission East doesn't have policies or practices to ensure that its impact on the environment is considered. Mission East has processes in place to understand the capacities of partner organisations to manage funds properly. Weaknesses identified in assessments of partners are the basis for Mission East capacity building to strengthen their finance systems and reduce potential for misuse of funds or corruption. But Mission East does not have policies in place governing the acceptance of gifts or ensuring its independence is not compromised by accepting donations.

Feedback from people affected by crisis and communities on Commitment 9:

Communities stated that Mission East had not discussed potential environmental impacts with them. Community members felt they could complain if they became aware of any corrupt practices by Mission East staff.

9. Organisation's approval

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 Signature:

KIM HARTZNER, MANAGING
DIRECTOR



Date and
Place:

JULY 25, 2017
COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Document date : 2017-05-25

10. HQAI's decision

Certification Decision:	
Certification	Intermediate audit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certified <input type="checkbox"/> Preconditioned (Major CARs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Suspension of Certificate (Major CARs)
Deadlines: Minor CAR 2.7: 12 months Minor CAR 3.2: 18 months Minor CAR 3.8: 12 months Minor CAR 4.6: 12 months Minor CAR 5.1: 12 months Minor CAR 7.4: 12 months Minor CAR 9.4: 18 months Minor CAR 9.6: 12 months	

Certification Decision Pierre Hauselmann HQAI Executive Director Humanitarian quality assurance Initiative	Date: 2017-07-25
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Appeal:

In case of disagreement with the conclusions and/or decision on certification, 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 take action 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.

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?

Score	Key actions	Organisation responsibilities
0	Operational activities and actions systematically contradict the intent of a CHS requirement. Recurrent failure to implement the necessary actions at operational level. A systemic issue threatens the integrity of a CHS Commitment (i.e. makes it unlikely that the organisation is able to deliver the commitment).	Policies and procedures directly contradict the intent of the CHS requirement. Complete absence of formal or informal processes (organisational culture) or policies necessary for ensuring compliance at the level of the requirement and commitment.
	Score 0 means: The organisation does not work currently towards the systematic application of this requirement/commitment, neither formally nor informally. This is a major weakness to be corrected as soon as possible.	
1	Some actions respond to the intent behind the CHS requirement. However: There are a significant number of cases where the design and management of programmes and activities do not reflect the CHS requirement. Actions at the operational level are not systematically implemented in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.	Some policies and procedures respond to the intent behind the CHS requirement. However: Relevant policies exist but are incomplete or do not cover all areas of the CHS. Existing policies are not accompanied with sufficient guidance to support a systematic and robust implementation by staff. A significant number of relevant staff at Head Office and/or field levels are not familiar with the policies and procedures. Absence of mechanisms to ensure the monitoring and systematic delivery of actions, policies and procedures at the level of the commitment.
	Score 1 means: The organisation has made some efforts towards application of this requirement/commitment, but these efforts have not been systematic. This is a weakness to be corrected.	

Score	Key actions	Organisation responsibilities
2	<p>Actions broadly respond to the intent behind the CHS requirement:</p> <p>Actions at operational level are broadly in line with the intent behind a requirement or commitment.</p> <p>However:</p> <p>Implementation of the requirement varies from programme to programme and is driven by people rather than organisational culture.</p> <p>There are instances of actions at operational level where the design or management of programmes does not fully reflect relevant policies.</p>	<p>Some policies and procedures respond to the intent behind the CHS requirement. However:</p> <p>Relevant policies exist but are incomplete or do not cover all areas of the CHS.</p> <p>Existing policies are not accompanied with sufficient guidance to support a systematic and robust implementation by staff.</p> <p>A significant number of relevant staff at Head Office and/or field levels are not familiar with the policies and procedures.</p> <p>Absence of mechanisms to ensure the monitoring and systematic delivery of actions, policies and procedures at the level of the commitment.</p>
<p>Score 2 means: The organisation is making systematic efforts towards application of this requirement/commitment, but certain key points are still not addressed. This is worth an observation and, if not addressed may turn into a significant weakness.</p>		
3	<p>Actions respond to the intent of the CHS requirement:</p> <p>The design of projects and programmes and the implementation of activities is based on the relevant policies and reflects the requirement throughout programme sites.</p> <p>Staff are held accountable for the application of relevant policies and procedures at operational level, including through consistent quality assurance mechanisms.</p>	<p>Policies and procedures respond to the intent of the CHS requirement:</p> <p>Relevant policies and procedures exist and are accompanied with guidance to support implementation by staff.</p> <p>Staff are familiar with relevant policies. They can provide several examples of consistent application in different activities, projects and programmes.</p> <p>The organisation monitors the implementation of its policies and supports the staff in doing so at operational level.</p>
<p>Score 3 means: The organisation conforms with this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time.</p>		

Score	Key actions	Organisation responsibilities
4	<p>As 3, but in addition:</p> <p>Field and programme staff act frequently in a way that goes beyond CHS requirement to which they are clearly committed.</p> <p>Communities and other external stakeholders are particularly satisfied with the work of the organisation in relation to the requirement.</p>	<p>As 3, but in addition:</p> <p>Policies and procedures go beyond the intent of the CHS requirement, are innovative and systematically implemented across the organisation.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>They can relate the examples to improved quality of the projects and their deliveries.</p>
	<p>Score 4 means: The organisation demonstrates innovation in the application of this requirement/commitment. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.</p>	
5	<p>As 4, but in addition:</p> <p>Actions 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.</p>	<p>As 4, but in addition:</p> <p>Policies and procedures go far beyond the intent of the CHS requirement and could serve as textbook examples of relevant policies and procedures.</p> <p>Policy and practice are perfectly aligned.</p>
	<p>Score 5 means: On top of demonstrating conformity and innovation, the organisation receives outstanding feedback from communities and people. This is an exceptional strength and a score of 5 should only be attributed in exceptional circumstances.</p>	