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The Church of Sweden International work: Guide to Partners

This document is an introduction to the international development work of the Church of Sweden. The aim of this guide is to provide the partner organisation with information about how we work, our strategy, structure and commitments. It also provides references to the relevant guidelines and agreements that constitute the framework for partner collaborations. The second part of the document, Annex A, provides information about how we work with financial support to partners and what the requirements for financial support are. In addition, Annex B and C provide example templates for project concept notes and applications.

Find out more about the Church of Sweden on our website www.churchofsweden.org.

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The Church of Sweden works in partnerships to achieve change

The Church of Sweden bases its international work on its identity as a church and as part of a worldwide fellowship. As part of the worldwide church, the task of the Church of Sweden is to participate in work for change together with and for people who live in vulnerable situations around the world. Our starting point is a life-empowering theology that is expressed through the active choice to be present among vulnerable people.

To carry out our assignment, the Church of Sweden always collaborates with partner organisations. Collaboration with other churches and organisations is at the core of our identity.

The Church of Sweden internal *Guidelines for Partner Collaborations* provides the framework for the purpose-driven collaboration that the Church of Sweden has with various churches and organisations, institutions and networks worldwide. The Guidelines describe the Church of Sweden's view of partner collaborations, our role in relation to the partners that we collaborate with, our expectations of our partners, the dialogue as a tool for follow-up and learning, and how partnerships are initiated and concluded. The Guidelines are used internally to provide the regional teams with direction for the work with partner organizations, as well as externally to be transparent about how we work with partners. The Church of Sweden should make this this document known to all partners.

Relevant documents:

- The Church of Sweden Guidelines for partner collaborations
- The Church of Sweden Partner capacity building framework
- Our theology: A life-empowering faith as our driving force

Structure, strategy and programmatic work

The international work of Church of Sweden is an integrated part of the national church structure and not a separate entity. A Commission for the international work is appointed by the Church board to govern the work and decide on strategy and direction, finances, guidelines and position papers. The Senior Management Team (SMT) of the international department is then responsible to manage the work of the department and operationalize the strategies and guidelines decided by the Council.

The strategy and direction of the International work of Church of Sweden are defined in the Strategic plan. This is also where the vision, mission and values of the Church of Sweden are expressed. The Strategic Plan 2014-2017 identifies five policy areas within which Church of Sweden wants to contribute to change in cooperation with its partner churches and organisations:

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- Health (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights)
- Gender Justice and Gender Equality
- Sustainable Livelihoods
- Peace and Reconciliation
- Faith and Learning (cooperation with and support to churches)

In relation to each area above, the Strategic plan defines a policy goal that describes the changes that the Church of Sweden wants to contribute to on an impact level. Based on the Strategic plan, the Church of Sweden then organises its work into *programmes* that define the results to be achieved during the period.

Strategic Plan for the Church of Sweden International Work:			
Policy Goals (impact level)		Specific tasks and mandates	
Country Programmes (several): Country-specific Outcomes	Global Policy Dialogue Programme Global Outcomes	Humanitarian Programme: Global Outcomes	Fundraising and Mobilization in Sweden

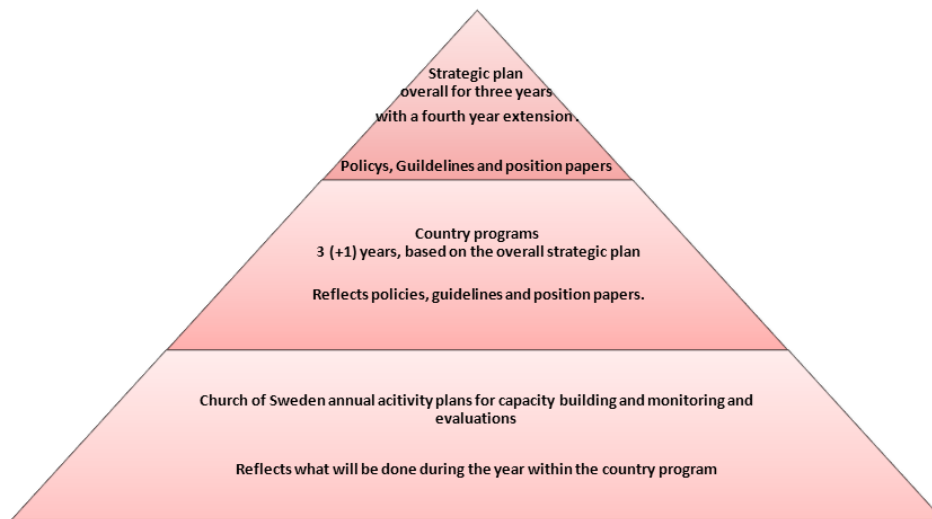
The *Country programmes* describe the changes that we want to contribute to in a particular country or region through the collaboration with our different partners as well as through the capacity-building, policy dialogue and advocacy work we undertake ourselves. Enabling environment (space for civil society) and Faith and learning are the starting point for Church of Sweden's work in the Country programmes. Furthermore, gender equity and equality, as well as a rights-based approach are integrated into all Church of Sweden's work. The programme plans are continuously developed based on results and experiences from previous and ongoing work as well as close contact with partners.

The programmes, in turn, are broken down into annual activity plans. The activity plan will include:

- Monitoring of results in relation to the outcomes and bridging outcomes of the CoS country programmes;
- Dialogue and follow up with partners on joint commitments, capacity building plans and joint learning;
- Monitoring of compliance in relation to partner agreements and guidelines.

The hierarchy of the documents that guide the international work of the Church of Sweden can be visualized through the following model:

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Relevant documents

- Strategic plan 2014-2017
- Programme documents

Commitment to accountability and quality management

The Church of Sweden is committed to quality and accountability in all its work and the principles of participation, transparency and accountability are to guide all that we do. We have committed ourselves to:

- Working in partnership and mutual accountability in accordance with Church of Sweden programmes, policies and guidelines
- Ensure and improve staff competency
- The ACT Alliance's Code of good practice, ACT Alliance's Code of conduct, and the Swedish requirements under the Swedish Fundraising Council, the Swedish Fundraising Control and the Swedish Principle for Transparency
- Participation
- Transparency
- Complaints handling
- Be a learning organisation

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The Church of Sweden is certified against the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)¹ for all of our programmes. The Church of Sweden wants the commitment to quality and accountability to permeate all work that we undertake. Therefore, relevant aspects of quality and accountability are integrated into our planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) processes and tools.

Contributing to change in the lives of rights holders

The Church of Sweden is committed to work for the realisation of human rights and to bring about change together with and for people who live in vulnerable situations around the world. The point of departure is the rights-based approach (RBA) and the principles of Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Empowerment and Linkages to legal frameworks. In the Country programmes, the desired changes (results) are formulated at outcome level as a sustained improvement in the lives of the targeted rights holders. To achieve these changes we engage in work to empower rights holders, enable an organised civil society and make duty bearers accountable to the rights holders. We will focus our monitoring of results in relation to these different actors. We also intend to track the results at organisational level i.e. improved capacity of the Church of Sweden and the partner churches and organisations and their relevance as civil society actors in their respective contexts, as outlined in the Church of Sweden Capacity building framework.

Results- and learning based management

The Church of Sweden is committed to manage its work based on results and learning. This requires looking beyond programme activities and outputs to focus on the actual changes it has contributed to in the lives of rights holders. In essence, a results- and learning-based management seeks to understand if we are doing the right things and in the right way. In order to apply a results and learning based management, the Church of Sweden as well as its partners need to:

- Define realistic expected outcomes based on an appropriate problem analysis;
- Clearly identify rights holders and together with them design programmes to meet their rights;
- Monitor progress toward results with the use of appropriate indicators or progress markers;
- Identify and manage risks;
- Continuously document lessons learned and integrate them into new planning and decisions;

¹ Certificate number: hqai-chs-2016-001

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- Report on the results achieved and resources involved. Both expected and unexpected results as well as successes and set-backs are experiences to document, report and learn from.

Monitoring and analysis of results in relation to the expected outcomes of the Church of Sweden *Country programmes* is the responsibility of the Church of Sweden. It will include follow-up on various projects and dialogue with various partners within a particular programme.

Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) at *project level* is the responsibility of each

CHURCH OF SWEDEN MONITORING LEVELS IN RELATION TO RESULTS MODEL		
Structure	Monitoring levels	Responsibility
Vision		
Policy goals	Monitoring and learning at CoS policy goal (impact) level	CoS Policy advisor (in collaboration with regional teams)
Programme outcomes	Monitoring of results at Programme Outcomes and Bridging Outcomes levels	CoS Regional Team
Project objectives	Monitoring of results and compliance in relation to project agreement and CoS guidelines	CoS Regional Team
	Project monitoring (inputs/outputs/outcomes) through partner's own PMER system	Partner organisation

partner organisation that has signed an agreement with the Church of Sweden. The work needs to be monitored continuously to give project managers as well as the Church of Sweden regular up-to-date information on implementation (e.g. use of resources, extent of reach, set-backs, risks and progress toward the achievement of expected outcomes). This helps to identify strengths, weaknesses and problems as they occur, and enables the implementing organisation to take timely corrective action during the project cycle. This in turn increases the chances of achieving the expected outcomes. Thus, learning and improvement requires a systematic approach to PMER in order to achieve the desired change.

Although partner organisations are responsible for the management and reporting at project level, the Church of Sweden is accountable towards its supporters and donors (the Swedish public, Swedish parishes and congregations and back donors such as the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and the European Commission) to ensure responsible and adequate use of the funds entrusted to us. The Church of Sweden undertakes this responsibility using a variety of monitoring methods:

- Assessment of partner organisations and project applications according to defined criteria as well as dialogue with partner on the collaboration and joint commitments, including capacity, quality and accountability;

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- Analysis of progress in annual narrative and audit reports and final project reports from partners;
- Monitoring visits with site observation and discussions with rights holders and other relevant stakeholders;
- Spot-checks;
- Evaluations, studies and surveys;
- Complaints and response mechanism.

Complaints and Response Mechanism

The Church of Sweden is committed to working closely with partners to identify and expose all forms of staff misconduct, including corruption, fraud, and (sexual) exploitation and abuse and to ensure child safeguarding. Therefore, the Church of Sweden has a system to receive and handle complaints. We encourage our partners and other stakeholders to submit complaints if needed and also to give feedback and comments on how we work. We also encourage partners to put in place their own system for receiving and handling complaints from those that are affected by their work.

A complaint can be submitted via email, letter or telephone or in person. Complaints should preferably be submitted by email to complaints.internationalwork@svenskakyrkan.se or complaints.internationalwork@churchofsweden.org. For further information on how to complain, go the Church of Sweden International mission and diakonia website or the Church of Sweden Guidelines for handling complaints.

Documents relevant to this section

- PMER model and tools;
- CoS Guidelines for handling complaints, international mission and diakonia and Format for making complaints;
- CoS Guidelines for sharing information; and
- ACT Alliance's Code of conduct on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power.

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Annex A: How the Church of Sweden works with financial support to partners.

Financial support

The Church of Sweden's financial support to its partners is regulated in agreements, and is one important component of the partnership. The financial support can either be a project/programme grant or general grant.

How to apply for financial support

The first step in applying for financial support is to present a concept note to the Church of Sweden. Concept notes are short presentations of the idea of a project. The Church of Sweden assesses the project idea against its strategies, programmes and plans, and communicates this to the applicant organisation. If the project idea is assessed to be of interest for the Church of Sweden a full application will be requested. The application is developed from the concept note. We will also accept full applications as a first step, i.e. partners can approach Church of Sweden either by using a concept note or by providing us with a full application. In any case, a concept note or application must be preceded by a dialogue with the responsible Programme Officer at Church of Sweden.

Concept notes and project applications may cover several years. Although applications cover several years, and the Church of Sweden has the intention to support the full period of the application, financial commitments are annual.

Church of Sweden has developed simple example *templates* that specify the information required in a concept note or full application. However, partners are welcome to submit concept notes or applications in any other format, as long as the required information is included.

Concept notes and applications are assessed by the Church of Sweden according to certain criteria defined in the *Assessment tool* for concept notes and applications. This tool is available from the Church of Sweden upon request.

Deadlines

Concept notes are assessed throughout the year to the responsible Programme Officer. If the project is assessed to be of interest to the Church of Sweden, the partner will be asked to submit a full application by August 15, again unless otherwise agreed with the Programme Officer.

The Church of Sweden will get back to the applicant organisation or church no later than **December 31** with a response whether the application will be approved or not. The Church of Sweden may communicate any details or inquiries with the applicant organisation or church

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from the moment it receives the application and until the decision is made. The Church of Sweden staff will continuously engage in dialogue with partners on their concept notes and/or applications during the planning process.

Financial and administrative regulations in financial support

Agreements

The Church of Sweden signs agreements with partners for approved applications. The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that the financial support given by the Church of Sweden is implemented in accordance with the approved application and is used in accordance with the Church of Sweden's regulations, including on accountability and quality management. All activities funded by a project grant or general grant should be characterized by the efficient use of resources, the promotion of good administrative practices and transparency in the management of funds, and the prevention of corruption.

The agreement constitutes of an overarching *Cooperation Agreement* signed with the partner specifying the conditions for financial support from Church of Sweden. A sub-agreement, the *Funding Commitment*, is signed for the specific approved application including financial commitment, transfer and reporting schedule and other terms specific for the approved application.

The standard forms for the Cooperation Agreement and Funding Commitment are available at the Church of Sweden website.

Use of funds

Funds granted from Church of Sweden may only be used for the purpose, goals and objectives as specified in the approved Application and related annual plans and budgets. Funds allocated for a specific year shall be used within that year. Balances at year-end may only be carried forward to the following year if this has been agreed upon with the Church of Sweden in writing prior to the end of the specific year.

Funds are released by the Church of Sweden normally in two installments, and with intervals as per agreement. Transfers are made upon request from the partner, and provided that conditions attached have been fulfilled. The first installment is released upon the signing of the year's funding commitment. The second installment is released after the Church of Sweden has received and approved (i) the narrative and audited financial reports from previous years, and for project grants (ii) the partner's progress report that includes a budget and expenditure analysis and estimate of funds needed for the remaining part of the year (within the total amount granted for the year). The partner's bank account to which the Church of Sweden transfers funds is signed by two authorized representatives of the partner in conjunction.

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Procurement

It is important that good business practice is observed when procuring goods and services with grants from Church of Sweden. The advantage of competition shall be utilized and tenders and tenderers be treated objectively in order to achieve competition on equal terms.

Procurements of goods and services using grants from the Church of Sweden shall be in accordance with the partner's procurement policy and regulation respecting the Church of Sweden's procurement regulation which constitutes the minimum requirements on procurement (appendix 2 to the Cooperation Agreement). All procurements above the contract value of EUR 25 000 for goods and EUR 35 000 for services shall be listed in a procurement plan.

Third party agreements

In the case where other organisations or churches than the partner are implementing parts of the activities, and to which the partner conveys funding from the Church of Sweden's grants, the partner shall sign agreements with the implementing parties. There shall be an unbroken chain of agreements including the final beneficiary organisation. Such third-party agreements shall contain terms and requirements equivalent to those related to the partner in the Cooperation Agreement and the partner is responsible for monitoring the compliance of such agreements.

Responsibility to mitigate corruption, fraud and other abuse of funds

The Church of Sweden has a strong focus on mitigating all forms of corruption and fraud. The aim is to prevent, detect and handle all kinds of incidents of fraud and corruption together with partners. The Church of Sweden aims to actively work to mitigate fraud and corruption, and expects all partners to do the same. Partners are required to inform the Church of Sweden if any incident occurs, to investigate it and to take appropriate action based on the findings. When financial support is granted by the Church of Sweden, the agreement will include paragraphs to ensure this and to ensure transparency. It will also include the option for the Church of Sweden, or its back donors, to carry out its own audits and checks. Back donor requirements may influence the scope of the external audit. The Church of Sweden also has a strong focus on internal control mechanisms. The Church of Sweden expects partners to have relevant and acceptable internal control systems in place so that they can plan, monitor, control and follow up on activities and finances. Such mechanisms are important to the Church of Sweden in its overall assessment of applications for financial support. The Church of Sweden's manual against fraud and corruption is available upon request.

Revision and changes in the project

For approved applications covering several years the partner shall each year revise the annual plan and budget prior to the next year's financial commitment can be signed. A procurement

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plan shall be attached for procurements above the contract value EUR 25 000 for goods and EUR 35 000 for services.

Major changes (in purpose, goals, objectives, time frame, activities, budget, staffing and methods) are acceptable to CoS only when mutually agreed and confirmed in advance and in writing by CoS (e.g. email). In cases of doubt on what level should be considered “major changes” in the specific case this should be communicated with the Church of Sweden, eg. need for reallocations between activity budgets above 10% within an approved application.

Reporting requirements

Church of Sweden requires an annual report presenting the results of the previous year's work and will compare them in relation to the plan and budget presented in the approved application. Reporting is made in accordance with the type of financing, i.e. project grants and general grants. For project grants a specific annual report shall be produced including a narrative report and an audited financial report. For general grants the annual report constitutes the organization's annual report and audited financial statements.

Annual audited financial report

The annual audited financial report should be submitted in local currency for the whole organisation, including an income and expenditure statement and a balance sheet. The report should be in line with existing IFRS standards or the equivalent. It should be possible to identify each grant from the Church of Sweden in the audited financial report, income statement or in the audited notes to the financial statements. The project audited financial statements shall detail the income, expenditure and closing balance for the project funded by the Church of Sweden, comparing the approved original budget and result. The project audited financial statement shall be submitted to the Church of Sweden along the project annual report, and also be in annex with the organisation's audited annual financial report. In the event of the Church of Sweden co-financing a project, the financial report should comprise the whole project, detailing the contributions from other donors.

Audits

The Church of Sweden requires that the annual financial reporting on the grants is audited. There shall be an unbroken chain of audit reporting including the final beneficiary organisation.

The audit should be performed by an independent certified/chartered auditor. The auditor should be a member of IFAC or an equivalent national body with international auditing standards. A copy of the auditor's certificate shall be shared with Church of Sweden as soon as the auditor has been procured. The audit for the organisation shall be carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISA), the audit for annual financial

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statements for project grants shall be in accordance with ISA 800/805. Management letters and the organisation's response and action plan shall also be shared with Church of Sweden.

For audits on funds in third-party agreements the partner shall ensure that the auditor and audit complies with the audit requirements.

Documents relevant to this section

- Example template for a concept note (Annex B)
- Example template for a full project application (Annex C)
- Agreement templates