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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 partner organisations 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.

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 vision for the Church of Sweden's International work is life in the Realm of God, a healed Creation and a humanity in communion, justice, freedom and peace.¹ The Church of Sweden bases its international work on our identity as a church and as part of a faith community that believes in a God who stands in solidarity for those who are silenced or living in vulnerable situations. Every human being is sacred and human dignity cannot be violated. The Church of Sweden's International work (Church of Sweden) sees each person in the image of God, with a right to a life of dignity and human rights. We are committed to bring about positive change together with and for people who live in vulnerable situations around the world.

Working with partners is at the core of the Church of Sweden International work's existence. We are committed to coordinating and working in partnerships based on mutual respect and accountability as well as continual improvement. We are part of the worldwide church community and the global ecumenical movement, and members of the ACT Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. We prioritise working within the ACT membership however we also enter into partnerships outside of the Alliance with churches and church related bodies, civil society organisations (faith based and secular), community-based membership organisations, umbrella bodies, consortia and networks.

The Church of Sweden internal *Guidelines for Partner Collaborations* provides the framework for the Church of Sweden collaborations with churches, organisations, institutions and networks worldwide. The Guidelines describe the Church of Sweden's view of partner collaborations, our role, our expectations, mutual dialogue, follow-up and learning, and how partnerships are initiated and concluded. The Guidelines are used internally to provide direction for the regional teams, as well as externally to be transparent about how we work with partners. The Church of Sweden makes this document known to all partners on our website; <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/internationelltarbete/partner-collaboration-and-project-support>.

Relevant documents (to be found on our website):

- The Church of Sweden Guidelines for partner collaborations
- The Church of Sweden Partner capacity building framework
- Guidelines on a human rights-based approach for the Church of Sweden International work

¹ Our theology: A life-empowering faith as our driving force – steering document (Ks 2013/0272, approved on 29 April 2013), describes in more detail the life-affirming theology on which the Church of Sweden's international work is based.

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- Our theology: A life-empowering faith as our driving force

Structure, strategy and programmatic work

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

The strategy and direction of the international work of the Church of Sweden are defined in the Strategic plan which includes our vision, mission and values. The Strategic Plan 2018-2022 identifies five thematic areas within which the Church of Sweden wants to contribute to change in cooperation with its partner churches and organisations:

- Theology and Development
- Just Peace
- Gender Justice and Equality
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Fair and Sustainable Livelihoods

In relation to each area above, the Strategic plan defines thematic goals 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)		
Country programmes	Humanitarian programme	Global Policy Dialogue programme
Country-specific outcomes	Global outcomes	Global outcomes

The Church of Sweden International work is based on a number of principles for fair and sustainable development. These principles shape our working methods and our cooperative relationships at local, national, regional and global levels, thus forming our overall theory of

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change. A gender integrated rights-based approach is mainstreamed into all Church of Sweden's work.

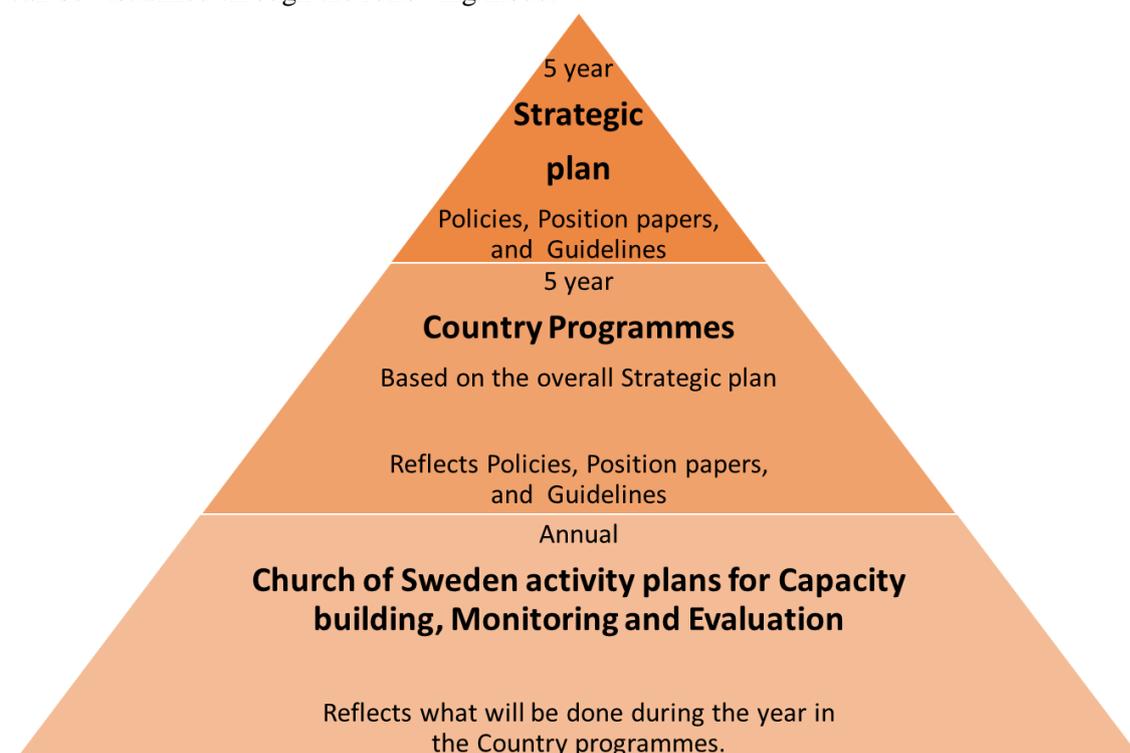
The *Country programmes* describe the changes that we want to contribute to in a particular country or region through the collaboration with our partners as well as through capacity-building, policy dialogue and advocacy work we undertake ourselves.

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, including:

- Monitoring of results in relation to the outcome(s) and bridging outcomes of the Church of Sweden 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 2018-2022
- Country/regional programmes

Commitment to quality and accountability

Accountability is a fundamental aspect of the Church of Sweden International work's governance, strategy and operational implementation. We define accountability as a mutual commitment, by the Church of Sweden International work, our partners and other stakeholders, to hold ourselves and each other accountable to the people we aim to assist by abiding to our policies, values and mutual agreements, while also assuring high quality and results in all our work. The Church of Sweden International work strongly believes in close dialogue and openness with our partners in order to learn from each other. The participation of rights holders/target groups in programmes and/or projects is at the core of the Church of Sweden's understanding of quality and accountability. The Church of Sweden International work is committed to:

1. A human rights-based approach
2. Gender mainstreaming
3. Promoting environmental sustainability
4. Equal and mutually accountable partnerships
5. Efficient, results-based, and appropriate response and to do no harm
6. Transparency and participation
7. Handling complaints
8. Be a learning organisation
9. Staff care and competency (staff code of conduct)
10. The ACT Alliance's Code of good practice, the Swedish requirements under the Swedish Fundraising Council, the Swedish Fundraising Control and the Swedish Principle for Transparency

The Church of Sweden International work is certified against the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)² for all of our programmes. All relevant aspects of quality and accountability standards are integrated into our planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) processes and tools.

² Certificate number: hqai-chs-2016-001

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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, 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;
- 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.

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

CHURCH OF SWEDEN MONITORING LEVELS IN RELATION TO RESULTS FRAMEWORK		
STRUCTURE	MONITORING LEVELS	RESPONSIBILITY
VISION		
STRATEGIC GOALS	Monitoring and learning at CoS strategic goals level (Impact)	CoS Policy advisors in cooperation with the Regional teams
PROGRAMME OUTCOMES	Monitoring of results at Programme Outcomes and Bridging Outcomes levels.	CoS Regional teams
PROJECT OBJECTIVES	Monitoring of results and compliance in relation to project agreements and CoS guidelines	CoS Regional teams
	Project monitoring (inputs/outputs/outcomes) through partner's own PMER systems	Partner organization

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;
- 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;

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- 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, *including the Church of Sweden Guidelines for handling 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 to the Church of Sweden International work website; <https://www.svenskakyrkan.se/internationelltarbete/how-to-make-complaints>.

Documents relevant to this section

- PMER model and tools;
- CoS Guidelines for handling complaints, international mission and diaconia;
- 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.