



# **Finn Church Aid Global Programme Evaluation**

Final Report  
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# Executive Summary

Finn Church Aid (FCA) is the largest development civil society organisation (CSO) and the second biggest CSO actor in humanitarian aid in Finland. The organisation follows a rights-based approach to build human dignity and resilience in some of the most fragile countries in the world. In practice, FCA's global programme is divided into three thematic key areas. Right to Livelihood, Right to Education, and Right to Peace. All themes involve activities of humanitarian aid, development and advocacy, embedded in the continuum of linking relief, recovery, development and preparedness. In addition, FCA has four cross-cutting issues: gender equality, disaster risk reduction, climate change and conflict sensitivity.

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to provide evidence on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of Finn Church Aid's global programme in its different modalities (humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and advocacy) and to propose suggestions for further improvement. The evaluation covered years 2013-2016, coinciding with FCA's strategy period. The evaluation addressed the content and implementation of the programme, its themes and synergies, application of rights-based approach and cross-cutting issues, as well as the organisation of programme management, coordination, support and development. One of the emphasis of the evaluation was to understand the "missing middle" of the results chain, or the (formal and informal) processes that contribute or hinder achievement of set objectives. Main methodology used during the evaluation was contribution analysis, and the data was gathered through desk review of documents, semi-structured interviews, staff survey, field visits to Nepal and Uganda, financial analysis and direct observation.

During the period under evaluation Finn Church Aid has made significant strategic choices by focusing in niche themes and cutting its geographic presence from over 30 to approximately 15 countries, with the majority of them in Africa. The success in increasing funding and broadening its resource base is one of the organisation's real breakthroughs: While overall funding in 2013 was EUR 31.38 million, in 2015 it had rocketed by fifty per cent to EUR 47.3 million. Moreover, FCA was able to tap to new international sources and funding leveraged from international sources tripled. At the same time, private donations grew by 39 per cent. Finnish Government funding increased by 17 per cent between 2013 and 2015 until it was drastically cut by EUR 4.3 million in 2016 as part of ODA cuts that affected all development CSOs.

Together with rapid growth in financial resources and staffing, FCA has established country and regional offices (the latter eliminated in 2016 except for Middle East Office), kicked off self-implementation, deployed and seconded staff to other organisations, and woven new partner networks. The organisation has invested significantly in improving programme management, coordination, support and development by standardising planning, monitoring and evaluation tools and practices at the project and programme level; Adopted a risk management system that is linked to reporting and management lines; and Operationalised its commitment to obtain the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) certification. FCA has also gone through five organisational restructurings in only four years, the most recent one introduced in October 2016. In this ever-changing context FCA staff has shown strong commitment to the organisation's vision and mission, remarkable adaptation skills and risk tolerance.

The **main findings** of the global programme evaluation can be summarised as follow:

- FCA's choice to focus in three core themes and in less countries is paying off with increased subject-matter expertise, higher visibility and new funding opportunities. Moreover, its progress towards a clearly spelled Theory of Change; the roll-out of country programmes (as opposed to

previous stand-alone projects); and the introduction of global indicators to measure change are estimated to contribute to a more holistic approach and sustained results.

- The threefold implementation through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and advocacy provides FCA with the ability to work along the relief-recovery-development-preparedness continuum, and the concept of resilience is well suited also for fragile contexts. Most funding sources have restrictions that pose significant obstacles for working smoothly across the humanitarian – development continuum and especially in grey areas in-between. FCA can continue to lobby for more flexible funding, and to look for innovative funding partners to advance resilience of communities.

- Enhanced field presence and self-implementation has enabled FCA to quickly respond to humanitarian crises. Free self-funding, trust, and well-timed availability of humanitarian professionals are keys to adequate response (as evidenced by exemplary earthquake response in Nepal).

- Due to many changes advocacy's role and priorities are not clear to all FCA staff nor partner organisations. At the same time sharply targeted advocacy can significantly contribute to larger and more sustained results (as recognized by FCA).

- FCA has progressed remarkably in setting up a comprehensive quality management system. Guiding documentation is vast and compliant with donor requirements. Yet in daily work FCA staff relies more on previous experience, fellow colleagues and HO support, backing the case for more systematic sharing and learning within the organisation.

- Financial administration, staff's ability to manage diverse funding sources, and grant proposal writing are the most pressing capacity issues to be addressed.

- Highly capable and motivated staff that is able to try out new approaches and innovations is FCA's key asset. High staff turnover especially in fragile contexts is an increasing problem and can affect efficiency. Also HO-based thematic experts are stretched. More systematic resource pooling with other organisations can provide shortcuts to secure thematic expertise and to boost staff capacities.

- Regarding themes, FCA has excelled in building a solid reputation in advancing quality education, education in emergencies, peace and reconciliation. Globally FCA is still a small organisation, but through enhanced policy dialogue and work with duty-bearers (particularly with government institutions) it may be able to significantly scale up its results.

- In Right to Livelihood (R2L), FCA's contribution is harder to see than in the other two themes, partly because livelihood, income-generation and employment are advanced also by many other (I) NGOs and government institutions. The new private equity company FCA Investments Ltd can help access of small-holders and businesses to innovative development financing. In R2L, FCA could add more pronounced value as knowledge broker than as implementer.

- Thematic synergies are emerging in projects related to e.g. technical vocational training. Country programme approach, fully rolled out in 2015, is expected to contribute to increased thematic synergy.

- Rights Based Approach pushes FCA to analyse and tackle the root causes of poverty and supports the coherence of programme modalities especially through integrating advocacy initiatives to FCA's work. RBA is strongly reflected in programme objectives and projects. The further operationalisation of the Core Humanitarian Standard provides a great opportunity to

strengthen RBA not only in the international programme but organization-wide throughout all FCA operations.

- Four cross-cutting themes are considered to be quite numerous. In gender equality, there is room to work more broadly also in masculinity, sexual diversity and LGBTQ issues as raised up in the ACT working group
- Knowledge-sharing and learning within FCA is still sporadic and limited, but the organisation has identified the need for more systematic practices. Much can be achieved by building on already existing informal knowledge-sharing practices and by taking advantage of low-intensity technology, e.g. WhatsApp groups, YouTube videoclips, etc. FCA would benefit also from wider sharing with the in-country humanitarian and development community especially in its more stable programme countries.
- Innovation can take place in programme work and it does not always have to be technology-driven. FCA has shown agility and capacity to innovate e.g. in development financing, and by bravely trying out new programmatic approaches.

Specific recommendations for each evaluation topic can be found at the end of each chapter, as well as a separate table in Annex 10. As general recommendations the evaluation team suggests to redirect internal support from paper to people, boost leadership and people management skills, and encourage learning, sharing and peer-to-peer support both within the organisation as well as across FCA's partners and stakeholders.