

Evaluation of the Uganda Country Programme

Type of evaluation: Country programme evaluation

Evaluator: Appraisal Consulting RV KY/Raisa Venäläinen, Richard Kibombo, Adibaku William Baru

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Evaluation of the Finn Church Aid (FCA) Uganda Country Programme 2016 – 2022 was carried out by three experts during the period February 2022 – June 2022. The evaluation aims to provide an understanding of the Programme’s evolution from 2016 to what it is today, and what have been the contributing factors for its growth. The evaluation used document review, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) as main means of data collection. A total number 37 interviews were conducted online or by phone.

The work of FCA Country Office in Uganda (UGACO) is guided by the FCA Global Strategy 2017 (updated May 2018) and FCA Global Programme. These guiding documents are transferred into Country Strategies, Country Programmes and related Annual Plans in each country of operation. For the evaluation period, the UGACO has a Country Strategy for 2017 – 2019 and the 2020-2023 is still a draft at the time of this evaluation.

The growth of the Uganda Country Programme has been exponential; in 2015, its realized was approximately 1,5 million euros, whereas in 2021 it was nearly 14 million euros. Since its establishment, since 2014, the UGACO has grown from being a one person’s office, into one employing over 300 persons in Kampala’s Country Office and in 7 field offices. Additionally, close to 3,000 teachers working in the schools supported by the Country Programme are on the payroll of UGACO. Furthermore, the Programme consists of long-term development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and advocacy. Humanitarian aid consists of 70 % funding base.

The three priority areas of the overall FCA work, also applied in Uganda, are Right to Livelihood (R2L), Right to Quality Education (R2QE) and Right to Peace (R2P). Currently, 65% of the projects focus on R2QE, in both development and humanitarian contexts. The R2L portfolio makes up 35% of the Programme with interventions built around skills development and entrepreneurship of youth and women and Linking Learning to Earning (LL2E) approaches and involving different forms of collaboration with the private sector. The share of the R2P theme is 5% of the total volume. The Country Programme is mostly self-implemented by UGACO, especially the humanitarian projects. The ToR of this evaluation refers to August 2021, when the

Programme consisted of 16 self-implemented (including two consortia) projects and five partner-implemented projects.

The growth pathway of the FCA Uganda Country Programme is phenomenal. In addition to the expansive fund flow and projects, it has gained important positions in the education sector coordination forums. The key milestone for the growth was when UNHCR selected FCA as an Implementing Partner (IP). Later, FCA Uganda was selected by UNHCR to be the Education Sector co-lead together with Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES).

Intensive fundraising has continued throughout the evaluation period. The analysis of data on applications during 2016 – 2021 shows that 56% of the applications were approved, 30% were rejected, and 14% are pending or are withdrawn. While the FCA Uganda has sought diverse funding base, the main growth has however, been based on the existing funding sources meaning that the existing partners UNHCR have extended and expanded their funding.

The Country Office focuses on financial growth, rather than development impacts. FCA Uganda has gained important positions particularly in the education sphere, based on the findings of this evaluation, it could take even more stronger role in policy dialogue. This requires sufficient resources and technical knowledge. Whereas there are good partnerships established with other implementing partners and government in particular, there are still lingering gaps in strengthening localization of operations, currently UGACO does not have a strategic direction of strengthening capacity and working with local CBOs. This greatly hampers sustainability efforts for FCAs operations over time. That said, localization is now a key issue in the two consortia (one for ECW funding and another for ECHO) where FCA is a member.

Overall, the refugee influx and the national policies in Uganda are the foundation of FCA Uganda's growth story. As a response to the massive refugee influx in 2016, the humanitarian funding to Uganda more than doubled from 148,3 million USD in 2016 to 348,7 million USD in 2017 which opened new funding opportunities to the humanitarian actors. Uganda is widely recognised as having one of the most progressive refugee policies in the world.

Enablers from the FCA side include provision seed funding which enabled FCA Uganda to get involved in humanitarian work, flexibility of MFA funding which can be used to leverage funding from other sources, relevant core business, presence in Uganda and refugee settlements. FCA Uganda has also invested in capacity strengthening and establishment of sound management systems. All interviewees paid tribute to good, visionary and courageous leadership of UGACO. However, there are also concerns on what would happen if this leadership was not in place because much of the growth is built on the leadership's competencies and network.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the team makes the following recommendations to the FCA and UGACO.

1. The SAC and UGACO together should clarify the different aims and uses of humanitarian and development assistance in Ugandan context and move towards

more systematic thinking on resilience-building from the very start of a humanitarian intervention.

2. FCA Uganda should finalize its strategy with focus on developmental impacts and complete its Theory of Change to be used as an overall framework for its operations. FCA Uganda also should analyse the relevance of implementing a standalone R2P project from the programme impact perspective. The Growth Plan in the country strategy should be complemented with analysis of developmental impacts.
3. The UGACO should define its role as a leading education actor in a humanitarian and development context and in terms of resilience building with focus on developmental impacts which are now becoming a core for the Ugandan transformative policies. This entails also defining means on how to build resilience of the systems. SAC as well as UGACO should ensure that there is sufficient (senior level) technical expertise for all domains of education and also for the upstream policy dialogue.
4. SAC and UGACO are encouraged to focus more on outcome reporting and make the lessons learned more visible e.g., by developing knowledge management systems to share lessons learned and for peer support within the Country Programme itself and between the various Country Programmes. In terms of reporting about policy advocacy, UGACO should report more on its initiatives and outcomes and also about lessons learned, which would benefit the whole FCA network.
5. In order to enhance policy level impacts, SAC should make better use of expertise of its own global network for instance by establishing an Education (or EiE) technical/advisory team consisting of experts and invited experts in the region to support knowledge sharing and to provide policy advise.
6. SAC should provide concrete guidance on what it expects from the localisation agenda. Similarly, UGACO should develop its strategic direction of strengthening capacity and working with local CBOs. as part of its localisation agenda in line with the Grand Bargain principles.