

South Sudan country programme evaluation 2026

Time: April-August 2026

Carried out by: Out of the Box

Executive Summary

The Finn Church Aid (FCA) multisectoral South Sudan Country Programme implemented during the 2022–2025 programme period was aligned with its global strategy and organised around three thematic priorities: **Right to Livelihoods, Right to Quality Education and Right to Peace**. The programme combined humanitarian assistance, long-term development and advocacy applying FCA's Triple Nexus approach to address immediate needs while strengthening resilience, promoting recovery and tackling the structural drivers of vulnerability. Cross-cutting priorities included gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), climate action and environmental sustainability, conflict sensitivity, safeguarding and accountability.

The evaluation combined five methods of data collection: document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, field observation, and programme monitoring and secondary data. Purposive sampling was used to ensure representation across thematic areas, geographical locations and stakeholder groups. Fieldwork was undertaken in Juba, Malakal and Awerial (Mingkaman). Data was systematically compared and triangulated to identify consistent patterns, areas of convergence and divergent perspectives. In recognition of the fragile and conflict-affected contexts and the limitations including security and logistical constraints, the evaluation findings and conclusions reflect FCA's plausible contribution to observed outcomes and take into account the influence of contextual factors and the actions of multiple stakeholders.(as defined in Section 3.2)

Key Findings

The evaluation findings against the six OECD-DAC criteria are organised under programmatic, administrative and contextual subcategories:

1. Relevance & Appropriateness

The evaluation found that FCA's South Sudan Country Programme remained highly relevant and that interventions addressed the identified needs as well as national priorities. Consultation is well established but how community feedback influences strategic programme adaptation is not as clear.

Programmatic findings

- Programme design was informed by contextual analysis, community priorities and government engagement,
- FCA demonstrated a high level of adaptive management in response to an evolving operating environment
- Triple nexus approach significantly enhanced programme relevance

Administrative

- Monitoring and feedback systems provide a strong operational foundation but their contribution to strategic learning could be strengthened

Contextual

- Programme relevance was sustained despite the challenging operating environment

2. Coherence and Complementarity

The programme demonstrates a high degree of coherence and is closely aligned to national priorities and FCA's organisational strategy. The programme logic is more evident in practice than in formal documentation.

Programmatic findings

- Triple nexus approach provided a coherent framework for addressing complex and interconnected needs
- Alignment with government priorities and national systems
- Partnerships strengthened complementarity and reduced duplication

Administrative

- Internal coordination mechanisms generally supported programme coherence

Contextual

- The operating environment reinforced the need for integrated and collaborative programming

3. Effectiveness

The FCA programme was effective in achieving its intended outcomes even though the operating environment makes it difficult to isolate programme effects or sustain gains over time.

Programmatic findings

- FCA delivered meaningful outcomes by combining direct support with systems strengthening and capacity development
- Adaptive management significantly contributed to programme effectiveness
- Integrated country programme approach enhanced effectiveness by generating outcomes beyond individual project results

Administrative

- Strong programme management and monitoring systems supported effective implementation, although strategic use of evidence could be strengthened
- Safeguarding and complaint-handling systems represent the weakest area of administrative performance

Contextual

- Programme effectiveness was achieved despite significant external constraint
- **Partnerships**

Partnerships are a key enabler of programme relevance, effectiveness and sustainability. The approach has evolved towards longer-term institutional strengthening and localisation. There was strong collaboration but opportunities remain to deepen localisation.

Programmatic findings

- Long-term partnerships have become a strategic asset of the country programme
- Partnership approach increasingly reflects principles of localisation and capacity strengthening
- Partnerships strengthened programme quality by combining complementary expertise

- Regional partnerships with FCA Uganda demonstrated the value of cross-border collaboration, while highlighting the need for clearer partnership frameworks

Administrative

- Partnership management systems provide a strong foundation for collaboration

Contextual

- Strong partnerships enhanced programme resilience

5. Sustainability

FCA has laid strong foundations for sustainability through its long-term investment in systems strengthening, institutional capacity development and trusted partnerships.

Programmatic findings

- Sustainability has been strengthened through investment in institutions rather than parallel service delivery
- Long-term partnerships have strengthened local ownership and increased the likelihood of sustained outcomes

Administrative

- Strong organisational systems support sustainability, although greater emphasis on organisational learning would strengthen long-term performance

Contextual

- Sustainability will continue to be influenced by factors beyond programme control

6. Impact and Learning

FCA programme has contributed to strengthened institutional capacity, improved access to service, enhanced community resilience and increased social cohesion.

Programmatic findings

- Programme has contributed to meaningful long-term change despite operating within a highly fragile context

- FCA's greatest contribution has been strengthening resilience within institutions, communities and systems
- Programme has generated valuable learning that extends beyond individual projects

Administrative

- Monitoring systems provide a strong foundation for organisational learning but greater strategic synthesis is required

Contextual

- The South Sudan context requires a realistic understanding of impact and continuous organisational learning

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the evaluation are:

1. FCA has developed a distinctive operating model for programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts
2. Systems strengthening has been the principal pathway through which FCA has contributed to longer-term change
3. Long-term partnerships represent a strategic organisational asset that underpins programme quality, resilience and localisation
4. Adaptive management has enabled FCA to sustain programme effectiveness
5. FCA has established strong organisational systems, but strategic organisational learning represents the principal opportunity for future improvement
6. Resilience provides the most appropriate framework for understanding FCA's long-term contributions within South Sudan
7. Safeguarding and complaint-handling systems represent the evaluation's most significant accountability gap
8. Relevance at the point of design has not been fully sustained through implementation, particularly where resourcing has not kept pace with community need (see Conclusion 8 in Section 4.1 for the supporting detail).
9. The triple nexus model delivers its strongest results where it is structurally designed into a single delivery unit and stalls where it is added on afterwards
10. The peace portfolio 's reliance on a single funding source represents a point of risk for the continuity of FCA's peacebuilding work

Recommendations

The following recommendations build directly on the evaluation conclusion:

Country Office-Led Recommendations

The following nine recommendations sit primarily within the South Sudan Country Office's own authority to act, though several draw on FCA SAC for technical support.

No.	Recommendation	Lead	Timeframe
1	Develop and operationalise a Country Programme Theory of Change	FCA South Sudan Country Office (with technical support from FCA SAC)	Short-term (during development of the next Country Strategy)
2	Strengthen programme-level monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) to demonstrate cumulative programme outcomes	FCA South Sudan Country Office (Programme & MEL Teams)	Short- to Medium-term
3	Deepen localisation by strengthening shared leadership with national partners	FCA South Sudan Country Office, Government Partners and National Partners (and FCA Uganda for the regional-partnership dimension of this recommendation)	Medium- to Long-term
4	Strengthen measurement of institutional change, resilience and partnership outcomes	FCA South Sudan Country Office with FCA SAC MEL Advisors	Medium-term
5	Maintain and strengthen flexible, integrated programming approaches that support adaptive management	FCA South Sudan Country Office, FCA SAC and Development Partners/Donors	Ongoing
6	Strengthen safeguarding and complaint-handling systems, with priority attention to community-level awareness	FCA South Sudan Country Office (Safeguarding Focal Point) with FCA SAC Safeguarding Team	Immediate / Short-term

7	Address relevance decay during implementation and review targeting design	FCA South Sudan Country Office	Short-term
8	Develop a risk-mitigation and communication plan for teacher incentive continuity	FCA South Sudan Country Office, with FCA SAC on government and donor advocacy	Immediate / Short-term
9	Ensure the next Country Strategy is developed as a participatory, evidence-led process that systematically carries forward this evaluation's conclusions	FCA South Sudan Country Office, with FCA SAC	Short-term (during next Country Strategy design)

SAC & Cross-Cutting Recommendations

The following four recommendations sit primarily with FCA's Service and Accountability Centre (SAC), or — in the case of Recommendation 13 — span the boundary between the Country Office and SAC directly.

No.	Recommendation	Lead	Timeframe
SAC / Organisational Recommendations			
10	Establish a structured organisational knowledge management and learning system	FCA South Sudan Country Office with FCA SAC	Medium-term
11	Position the South Sudan Country Programme as a learning hub for programming in fragile and conflict-affected contexts	FCA South Sudan Country Office, FCA SAC and FCA Global Programme Team	Long-term
12	Use the Ministry of Peacebuilding and young mothers' education outcomes for deliberate amplification	FCA SAC	Short-term
Cross-Cutting: Country Office–SAC Boundary			
13	Clarify Country Office and SAC roles and responsibilities during the ongoing organisational restructuring	FCA South Sudan Country Office with FCA SAC	Short-term