



January - December 2022

DIAKONIA'S COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENT REPORT

DIAKONIA'S COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENT RESPONSE MECHANISM (CIRM)

Diakonia is committed to deliver development, humanitarian, and advocacy work in a transparent and accountable way to rightsholders, partners and local communities, and other stakeholders. This is expressed in Diakonia's Global Strategy and all operations are based on two guiding principles; Human Rights Based Approach and Diakonia's Feminist Principles. Policies and guidelines provide support and guidance in the daily work and the organization strives to be accountable to these commitments. Since 2021, these commitments and perspectives have been strengthened in Diakonia's agreements with partner organizations. Trainings and capacity building on relevant themes e.g., Anti-Corruption, Internal Control System, Child Safeguarding, Prevention and Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse are part of Diakonia's activities internally but also with our partners.

The CIRM mechanism is a tool with defined routines and decision-making procedures set up by Diakonia to enable everyone to safely give feed-back and raise issues of concern and report of breaches of Diakonia's commitments. It makes it possible for Diakonia to address raised concerns and learn from cases that have been handled. A Policy and a Guidelines for the CIRM that controls and regulates the work with complaints and incidents approved by Diakonia's Board of Directors in 2012 and the documents were updated in 2021.

Reporting on shortcomings regarding commitments can be done in various ways, for example directly to a staff member, in local CIRM reporting systems or via a whistleblowing system on Diakonia's web site that also makes it possible to report anonymously if someone so wishes. Senior Management Team at Diakonia's Head Office are regularly informed and updated on all ongoing cases in Diakonia and they take part in decision making regarding each case.

ANNUAL REPORT

This report focuses on CIRM cases that were finalized in 2022 and contains information that belong to the category of incidents or complaints that have been characterized to require investigations according to Diakonia's CIRM Policy.

The number of newly reported cases decreased from 17 in 2021 to 10 cases in 2022. In addition to the 10 newly reported cases, 13 cases from 2021 were handled, i.e. a total of 23 cases. Of these, 18 concerned partner organizations and five concerned Diakonia's staff.

Out of the total of 23 cases, Diakonia was able to close 8 cases in 2022 (five partner-related and three related to Diakonia's staff). Four of the partner-related cases resulted in the termination of partnership due to breach of contract or irregularities and in one case it was decided to implement an action plan to strengthen the organization's internal routines and capacity. 13 cases were sent over to 2023 for completion.

Regarding the five staff related cases, three cases were finalized in 2022. In one case, disciplinary action was taken and two cases were acquitted. Two cases have been forwarded to 2023 for completion.

Learnings from the partner related cases are incorporated in Diakonia's institutional learnings. Below, a short analysis regarding learnings from 2022 follows:

- The decrease in the number of cases, which we describe above, can to some extent be explained by the fact that we have strengthened our procedures and capacity to prevent incidents. But we also see a need to continue to strengthen awareness regarding routines and procedures in accordance with our guidelines and policies, and to continue to build a culture of transparency and trust throughout the organization.
- It is important to detect possible weaknesses in the partner's governance and internal management procedures at an early stage to be able strengthen the partner and to prevent that an incident occurs. A thorough assessment of the partner before the cooperation begins and thereafter having good routines for continuous monitoring are essential routines that can prevent that incidents occur.
- Diakonia must continue to support partners work with internal control and financial and administrative management. We see the need to adapt the tools, mechanisms, and routines to the different contexts as many partners operate in conflict and crises affected contexts. The situation for civil society organizations working for human rights, justice and democracy is worsening in many countries, and many organisations are harassed and even shut down by regimes and governments taking advantage of the polarised situations.
- Training and building capacity regarding code of conduct and other accountability issues are important and Diakonia must continue to encourage partners to develop these areas. This includes continuing to work preventively on e.g., Child Safeguarding and preventing Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse. Many partners now have their own complaints systems where rightsholders and others may raise issues of concern, and capacity to investigate cases. However, there is a need to support those partners that still do not have systems in place, and to ensure that rights holders are given the opportunity to make complaints safely and secure.

COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENT FINALIZED DURING 2022

The cases described are partner related and each case is presented with the year of reporting to Diakonia in the file number and the year when it was finalized.

File no:	CN1 2020	Year:	2022
Content of the complaint:			
It was identified that the partner had low burn rate and as a consequence, large balances. The organisation had weak capacity to deliver program results and the involvement of the Board in program implementation was also affecting the program implementation negatively.			
What we did:			
Diakonia conducted a thorough review and analysis of documentation and reporting in the partner organization. Meetings were arranged with the organization staff members and Board to discuss the situation and to establish a capacity building plan. Diakonia stopped payments and planned for repayments. A decision was taken to end the partnership and the back donor was informed.			
Lessons learned:			
The body or structure of an organization with highly concentrated power poses a risk to the management of the organization and the implementation of grants. Diakonia's capacity assessment tools are robust in detecting the potential risks of the partners prior to contracting. Diakonia should put in place measures and or implement sufficient capacity development activities/initiatives in the beginning of a partnership period.			

File no:	CN2 2021	Year:	2022
Content of the complaint:			
Diakonia was informed about an internal conflict in a partner organisation. The conflict concerned the governance of the organisation and affected the partners program implementation as well as financial management negatively. There was a risk of mismanagement of Diakonia's funds, according to information from the auditors.			
What we did:			
Diakonia immediately stopped further disbursement of funds and undertook an investigation of the partner. The partnership was finalized when the organisation didn't provide the requested information to Diakonia. Back donor was informed.			
Lessons learned:			
When there is a suspicion of internal conflict or when we suspect that internal control is not functioning in a partner organization, we need to act quickly and dedicate resources to follow up on the situation. If suspicions are confirmed, we need to stop payments and take measures, such as a specific audit, to follow up on the situation.			

File no:	CN3 2021	Year:	2022
Content of the complaint:			
The organisation was late in submitting the annual audit report When the audit was delivered it showed a number of observations, although no suspicion of irregularities. The organisation collaborated in providing clarity to the observations and the report was approved.			
What we did:			
Diakonia had an ongoing dialogue with the organisation to ensure that they produced the audit report. Diakonia supported the organisation to provide explanations to the observations and the report was formally approved. Due to changes in Diakonia's strategies in the program partnership was finalized.			

Lessons learned:
The organisation received core support, which for some type of organisations can be more challenging when it comes to reporting and follow up, and especially audit reporting. The choice of funding model must be thoroughly analysed when assessing the partner and before signing the contract and although core funding is the preferred funding model, sometimes project funding may be preferred for certain types of organizations.

File no:	CN4 2021	Year:	2022
Content of the complaint:			
Financial follow up of a partner showed suspicion of abuse of funds and gaps in the financial and governance procedures.			
What we did:			
Diakonia carried out an investigation. The management of the organisation accepted the allegation and to cooperate to solve the situation. An action plan, including a plan for the repayment of the abused funds, was established, and agreed on with the partner. When the action plan was discontinued, Diakonia decided to finalize the partnership. Back donor was informed.			
Lessons learned:			
Diakonia has a robust assessment process before entering a partnership which support us to identify weak partners and need for support. Thereafter, it is important to ensure that continuous capacity support measures are in place to from the start of the partnership to manage partners who are assessed to be weak. Important factors to consider in the capacity building plans are governance, internal control, and financial management.			

File no:	CN5 2022	Year:	2022
Content of the complaint:			
Diakonia was informed about a case of sexual harassment committed towards a female worker in a partner organisation.			
What we did:			
Payments were stopped until the investigation of the case was finalized. The perpetrator was fired from the partner organisation. An action plan to strengthen partners capacity to prevent that similar cases occur in the future was agreed upon, including the elaboration of a policy against sexual harassment and Code of conduct and the instalment of a mechanism for incident management. Diakonia ensured that the victim was offered both psychosocial and legal support. Partnership continued.			
Lessons learned:			
There is a need to prioritize and focus on strengthening our partners routines and capacity to prevent and manage cases related to sexual harassment and breaches of code of conduct.			

