
STRATEGY 2018 – 2021

INTRODUCTION

CHS Alliance, formed in 2015, brings together more than two decades of experience in quality, accountability and people management, and is the result of a merger between HAP International (a Swiss Association) and People In Aid (a UK-registered charity).

The last planning period encompassed massive changes for our organisation. Our focus for this planning period is the consolidation and expansion of operations, building on the foundations that are now in place.

This strategy is the guiding document for the secretariat of CHS Alliance. The secretariat can only achieve the outcomes outlined in this strategy with the active support of the CHS Alliance membership.

‘We’, ‘us’ and ‘our’ refers to both the secretariat and the membership. The membership adopted this strategy, through the CHS Alliance Board, in April 2017.

OUR VISION

People and communities vulnerable to risk and affected by disaster, conflict or poverty, influence and access quality assistance and can hold organisations accountable.

OUR MISSION

- To promote respect for the rights and dignity of people and communities vulnerable to risk and affected by disaster, conflict or poverty.
- To enhance the effectiveness and impact of assistance by building a culture of quality and accountability.

OUR VALUES

We put people at the centre. They inspire us to work with these values in mind:

- **Quality.** We continuously improve the quality of our own work. We help organisations strengthen and consolidate the quality of their assistance. We recognise excellence and raise its visibility.
- **Accountability.** We listen, we are responsive, and we ensure clarity of our approach and the effects of our work. We promote the accountability agenda amongst our membership and in the wider sector to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid.
- **Collaboration.** With others, we form a movement for quality and accountability. In isolation, we are irrelevant. In our collaboration, we are respectful and inclusive.

OUR MEMBERSHIP

CHS Alliance is a membership organisation with members operating in more than 160 countries worldwide in both the humanitarian and development sector. Our members share a commitment to the key role of quality and accountability in the sector, and collectively demonstrate this to affected communities, staff and donors.

Together, our members form a movement for quality and accountability. They share experience and lessons, and adopt and adapt each other's good practice. They use and contribute to evidence, tools and services. As a group, they amplify the individual voices. This gives the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) local and global visibility and influences the future shape of response.

CHS Alliance is committed to creating an accessible membership framework that recognizes the diversity present in the sector, and to creating an enabling environment for initiatives to emerge from any member.

OUR RELATION TO THE CHS

The CHS serves as a reference point for the work of CHS Alliance. Other organisations that provide important CHS-related products and services include Sphere, Groupe URD and the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative (HQAI).

The CHS puts people and communities vulnerable to risk and affected by disaster, conflict or poverty at the heart of humanitarian and development work. The CHS^{©1} is an evolving standard and a CHS Steering Committee will ensure its periodic revision to ensure its continued relevance. Its current essence is captured in figure 1.

¹ Copyright is held by CHS Alliance, Groupe URD and the Sphere Project.



Figure 1: the focus, values and commitments of the CHS

The CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action, and aims to help people affected by crisis in two ways:

- By outlining what organisations need to do to deliver high quality accountable assistance and protection, and
- By specifying what affected populations should expect from the organisations responding to their needs.

These expectations are framed around nine commitments, each supported by a quality criterion. For each of these, key actions describe what staff engaged in humanitarian action need to do to achieve high-quality response programmes consistently, and to be accountable to those that they seek to assist, while organisational responsibilities outline the policies, processes and systems organisations need to have in place to support their staff to deliver high-quality and accountable responses.

The CHS aligns closely with the wider Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda (TA) and specifically with the commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). The CHS incorporates the need for effective *people management* and highlights the importance of the well-being and security of humanitarian staff, recognizing that approximately 95% of staff are national staff from the affected population. The CHS indirectly supports many of the 23 principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD).

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) enhanced the visibility² of the CHS.

“Participants at the Summit recognized the need to ensure people affected by crises are not only informed and consulted, but put at the centre of the decision-making processes. People affected by crisis should be treated as partners, not

² Summary Report of UN Secretary General.

beneficiaries. Numerous commitments were made towards addressing this shift by donors, UN agencies and NGOs, including the adoption of the Core Humanitarian Standard”.

Advocacy for the adoption and implementation of the CHS was identified as a way forward to implementing Core Responsibility Four of the Agenda for Humanity³, and there is a clear link between the CHS and the commitments made under the Participation Revolution⁴ of the Grand Bargain.

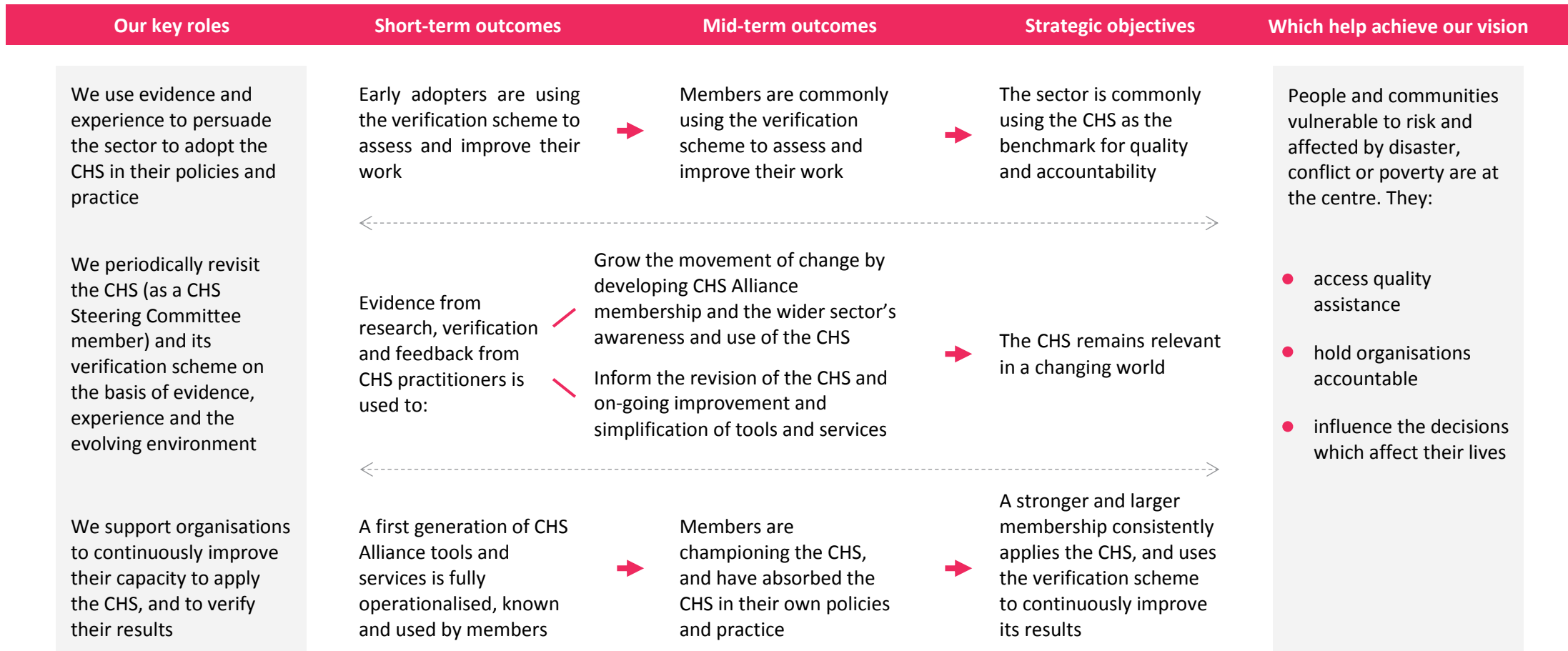
We seek to utilise the momentum the World Humanitarian Summit has created to the fullest extent possible.

³ People at the Centre, Special Session Summary.

⁴ Grand Bargain, A participation revolution: include people receiving aid in making decisions which affect their lives – final report 22 May 2016.

PUTTING PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE. BUILDING A CULTURE OF QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

THIS IS OUR THEORY OF CHANGE



Risks

- The multiplication of initiatives weakens the reach of the CHS
- Variable quality of self-assessments weakens the evidence base
- Limited motivation or capacity of members leads to non-compliance with membership requirements
- Changing donor priorities leave CHS Alliance underfunded

Assumptions

- CHS Alliance, Sphere, Groupe URD and HQAI collaborate closely
- The commitments to adopt the CHS made at the World Humanitarian Summit are acted upon and maintain the momentum they have created
- The CHS Alliance verification scheme and other research confirm the validity of the CHS *raison d'être*

ABOUT OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

The process outlined in the Theory of Change is non-linear. It may require many steps, loops and occasional regress to eventually move towards short-term outcomes, and from there to mid- and long-term outcomes. None of this is entirely predictable. Therefore, our Theory of Change is not set in stone. We will monitor progress and revisit the Theory of Change when needed.

CHS Alliance has three interrelated roles that are underpinned by the belief that the CHS, as a **verifiable standard**, enables people and communities vulnerable to risk and affected by disaster, conflict or poverty to influence and access quality assistance and hold organisations accountable.

Our key roles

In the initial stages of this strategy, the most important ways in which we will play our three key roles is as follows:

1. We will use evidence and experience to persuade the sector to adopt the CHS in their policies and practice by:
 - a. Collaborating with key stakeholders – INGOs, NNGOs, UN Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, donors, and academics.
 - b. Providing evidence and learning from verification (self-assessment and peer review).
2. We will periodically review the CHS (as a member of the governance of the CHS) and constantly review the CHS verification scheme:
 - a. Collaborating with the CHS Steering Committee to ensure the CHS remains relevant.
 - b. Improving and simplifying the CHS tools and services.
3. We will support organisations to strengthen their capacity to meet, and continuously verify against, the CHS by:
 - a. Providing capacity-building support to members on quality, accountability and people management.
 - b. Providing relevant training on the CHS, complaints response mechanisms and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
 - c. Providing guidance on the application of the CHS within the context of partnerships between international and national/local agencies.
 - d. Providing support to members to facilitate people and communities affected by crisis holding implementing agencies to account.

Together, these three roles form the engine for a process that will eventually achieve our long-term outcomes, which will bring us and the sector closer to achieving the CHS Alliance vision.

Our success indicators

We hope to achieve our strategic objectives by the end of 2021. Compared to the benchmark year of 2017, success in 2021 will look as follows:

1. The sector is commonly using the CHS as the benchmark for quality and accountability and people management:
 - a. Percentage of NGO practitioners, donors and academics referring to the CHS in its strategies and policies has increased by 50%.
 - b. The CHS is used as an enabler in two of the Grand Bargain work streams.
 - c. The number of searches on Google for the CHS and CHS Alliance has increased by 100%.
 - d. Satisfaction surveys of affected communities show improvements in the quality and accountability of the assistance that they receive.
2. The CHS remains relevant in a changing world:
 - a. CHS Alliance, together with Sphere and Groupe URD is an engaged member of the CHS Steering Committee.
 - b. The percentage of national NGOs and local actors using the CHS across the globe has increased by 80%.
3. A stronger membership and larger membership consistently applies the CHS, and uses the verification scheme to continuously improve its results:
 - a. Stronger membership: the number/percentage of members promoting, participating and contributing to CHS Alliance has increased by 50%.
 - b. Larger membership: the number of new members has increased by 25%, with representation from all regions.
 - c. Consistent application of the CHS: the percentage of members carrying out self-assessment or peer review has increased by 75%.
 - d. Continuous improvement of results: the number/percentage of members following up on verification findings has increased by 75%.
 - e. Increased evidence of people and communities affected by crisis holding implementing agencies to account.

ABOUT OUR RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

We are confident about the positive impact we could have, but aware of the sector's competing interests. We recognise that CHS Alliance is but a cog in the CHS wheel; that the CHS itself is one of several quality and accountability initiatives; and that these initiatives form only one of multiple fields of interest of the humanitarian and development sector and its donors.

As the secretariat and through our membership, we will closely monitor the environment in which we operate. We will ensure that we mitigate the risks we face, and that we do the utmost to ensure that our assumptions hold true.

We recognise the vital roles that other stakeholders – such as Sphere, Groupe URD and HQAI – play to advance the sector's quality and accountability agenda. We look forward to close collaboration. Our intention is to benefit from, contribute to and build on their work, not to compete with it.

OUR STRATEGIC ENABLERS

To achieve our outcomes, CHS Alliance must be fit for purpose. To ensure its ongoing health, we will prioritise the following strategic enablers:

Increased and predictable funding. We will maintain our current funding base by consolidating the relationships we have with existing donors. In addition, we will engage with new donors, to increase our funding base, with a focus on donors that show a strong commitment to quality and accountability by putting people at the centre.

In general, we will pursue core funding. We will pursue project funding only when doing so is of specific and mutual benefit to CHS Alliance and the donor.

We will ensure that our membership remains committed to and engaged with CHS Alliance. This commitment includes paying membership fees as required by our Statutes.

Fine-tuned systems, policies and processes. As CHS Alliance is the result of a recent merger, our working platforms, tools and systems are diverse. We will integrate, streamline and automatize them, and enhance their ownership among staff.

A staffing profile that reflects our global remit. We strive to have a diverse staffing profile that represents the perspective of our membership and the people they support. As we work towards diversifying our profile, we will challenge our existing structure, and explore new ways to represent CHS Alliance that reflects a membership that shares a strong commitment to the mission, vision and values of CHS Alliance.

The CHS Alliance Board will play an active role in ensuring that financial and operational capacity are aligned with this four-year strategy and that the Secretariat is fully accountable to both members and donors.

PREPARATION OF OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Executive Director and her management team will be responsible for the preparation of an Operational Plan for 2018-19 following the adoption of the Strategic Plan by the Board, and will review that plan on an annual basis. The Operational Plan will be driven by the priorities identified by the Board including the three interrelated roles identified in the Theory of Change and the core strategic enablers.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The CHS Alliance Board will hold the Executive Director and her team accountable for the implementation of the Strategy and Operational Plan to ensure that CHS Alliance is fully accountable to both members and donors.