



**CHS Alliance**

QUALITY. ACCOUNTABILITY. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Designing an  
**Improvement plan**

Making the CHS self-assessment count.

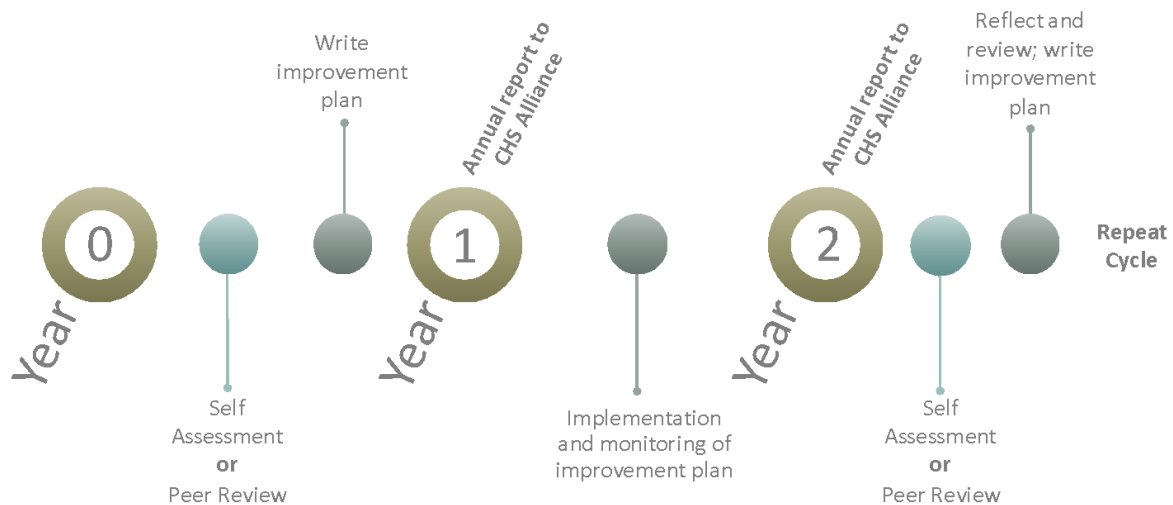
**v1.3, September 2016**

The purpose of this guide is to help organisations who have conducted a self-assessment, against the CHS develop and implement an improvement plan. While the guide is aimed at CHS Alliance members, it can be useful for any organisation, who has conducted a form of baseline assessment against the CHS and aims to strengthen its policies and practice on quality and accountable programming.

## Overview

A self-assessment against the CHS helps organisations to assess how well they are doing on key areas of accountability, quality and people management, identifying good practices as well as areas for improvement<sup>1</sup>. To support a process of continuous quality improvement, a self-assessment needs to feed into the design and implementation of an improvement plan – the topic of this document. The impact of measures taken as part of an improvement plan ought to be reviewed in light of the following self-assessment, as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 1



If you have completed a CHS self-assessment, you may have discovered your organisation is already doing well in some areas. You may also have realised that much still needs to be done. This document will help you to:

- 1. Analyse and understand the results of your self-assessment;**
- 2. Prioritise actions to include in your improvement plan;**
- 3. Write, resource, approve and submit your improvement plan; and**
- 4. Implement and monitor your improvement plan.**

These four steps are meant to help you develop a CHS improvement plan that is inclusive, realistic and achievable. Each step is described in more detail over the following pages. It is recommended to develop the CHS improvement plan in an inclusive manner, with key stakeholders of your organisation, including partners and people you aim to assist. This will contribute both to ownership and easier implementation of the plan. Make sure you involve the people that will support the implementation of the plan, across multiple functions (for example programme staff, technical advisors, HR, senior leadership, etc...) both at the Head Office and (country) programme level<sup>2</sup>.

You are also encouraged to link the activities of your improvement plan to existing (or already planned) activities/processes in your organisation in order to use synergies and facilitate implementation. For example, if your organisation is already planning to update its human resources policies this year, it would be a good idea to work with the HR team to ensure any areas for improvement identified during the self-assessment feed into the plans of the HR team and vice versa.

<sup>1</sup> Organisations are encouraged to use the CHS Alliance self-assessment tool, which can be downloaded here : <http://www.chsalliance.org/what-we-do/verification/self-assessment>

<sup>2</sup> Think in particular about countries and programmes who were involved in the self-assessment.

## Step 1: Analyse and understand the results of your self-assessment

The first step of the improvement planning process is to have a multi stakeholder team review the findings of your CHS self-assessment in detail (for most organisations, this will be your first CHS self-assessment, and hence a baseline). These findings form an evidence base that will help you prioritise the actions featured in your improvement plan. In order to do this, you need to first analyse and understand your results, using both the qualitative and quantitative data that can be found in the self-assessment. To illustrate this, we have reproduced below a sample of CHS self-assessment results, and also suggest in this section several points to consider when reviewing the results.

### 1. Overall perception

- Without looking at the figures, what seem to be the key learnings coming out of the self-assessment (qualitative side)? Excellent practice to build on, areas that are good, what strikes you could be improved, or areas that are bad/non-existent?
- What are the most important things you have learned about your organisation's policies and practice, linkages between the two, while conducting the self-assessment?

### 2. Overall performance

- Are there areas that seem to raise specific concerns or warrant praise based on the quantitative results?
- Is there alignment between the key areas you highlighted above and the figures you are looking at in terms of performance at the level of the various commitments?
- Do you feel the text linked to your score in the scoring grid reflect your situation?<sup>3</sup>
- If there are discrepancies between scores and your perception, where is the evidence to support either position stronger?

Figure 2

Score	Performance level
0 – 16 %	<i>Your organisation currently does not work towards application of this requirement, neither formally nor informally.</i>
17 – 33 %	<i>Your organisation has made some efforts towards application of this requirement, but these efforts have not been systematic.</i>
34 – 50 %	<i>Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards application of this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.</i>
51 – 66 %	<i>Your organisation conforms with this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time.</i>
67 – 84 %	<i>Your organisation's work goes beyond the intent of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.</i>
85 – 100 %	<i>On top of demonstrating conformity and innovation, your organisation's work goes far beyond the intent of this requirement and could serve as a textbook example of ultimate good practice. A score of 5 should only be attributed in exceptional circumstances.</i>

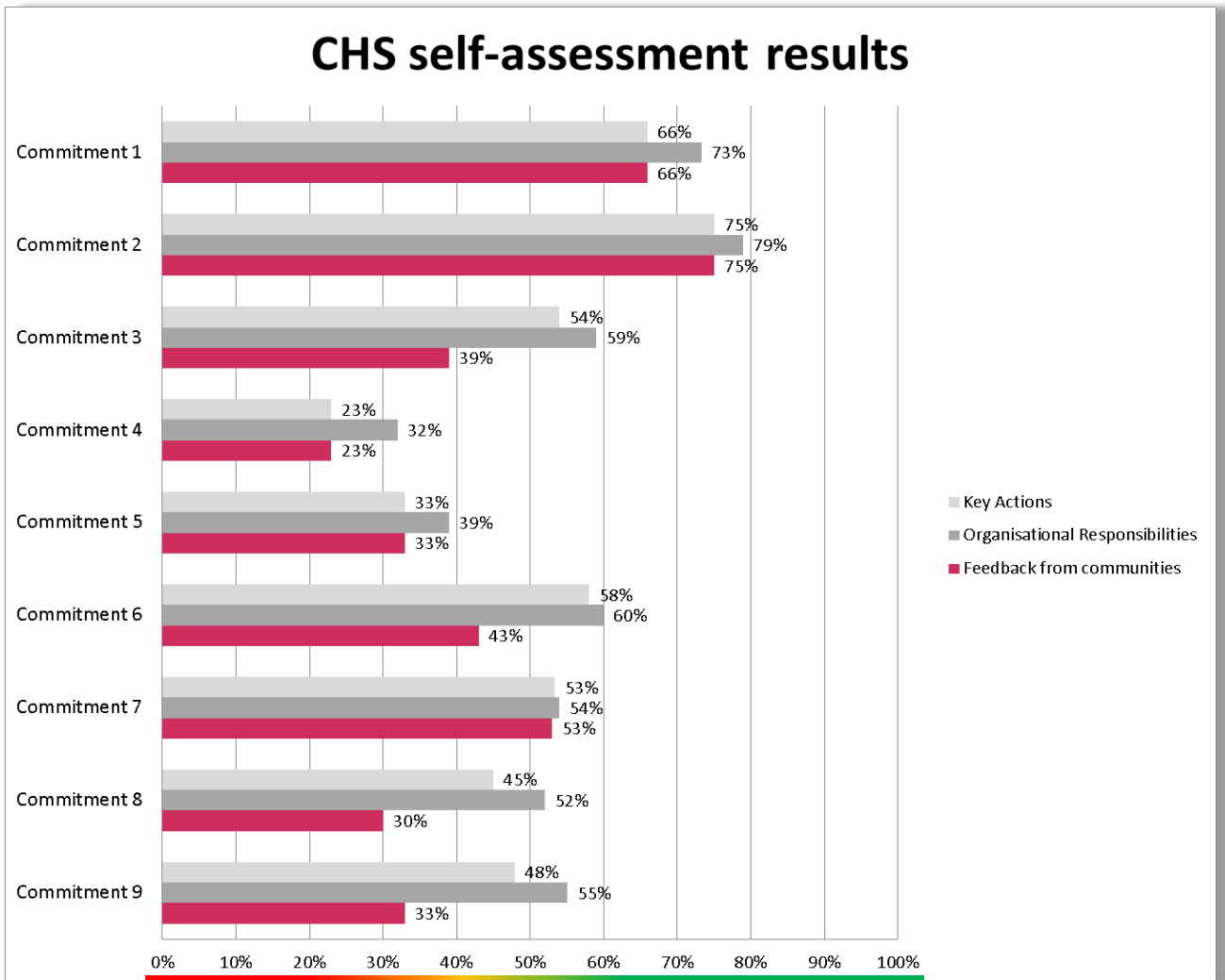
### 3. Stronger and weaker areas (see figure 3)

- Is there something in the results you didn't expect to find – whether strong or weak, and which challenges the perception people in your organisation have of its practice or organisational culture and values?

<sup>3</sup> See figure 2

- Do findings provide strong evidence to support the score, and make it clear what the reasons behind below or above average scores are?

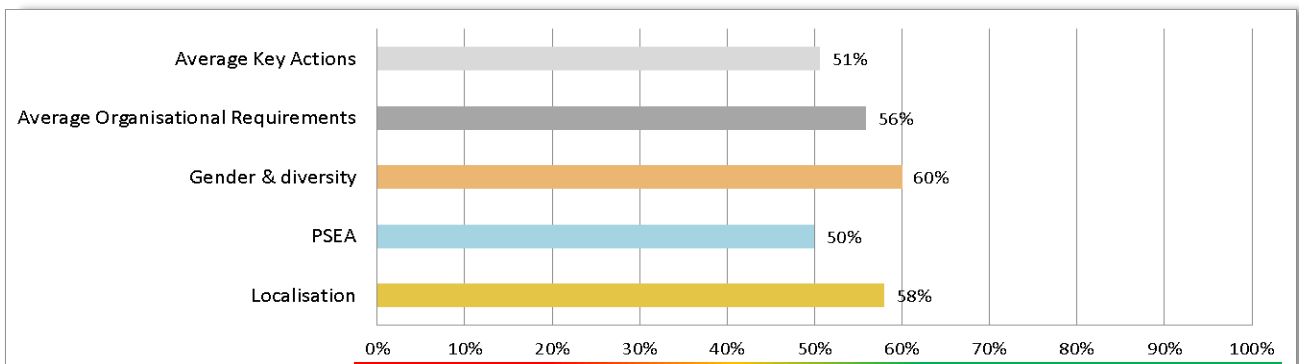
Figure 3



#### 4. Differences between policy and practice

- Are there any differences between results you get for your performance on Organisational Requirements and that on Key Actions (see figure 4)?
- For example, does your organisation seem to have well documented policies but weaker practice?

Figure 4



## 5. Specific themes

- Are the scores for specific areas such as gender and diversity, PSEA or localisation in line with overall results, or does it highlight particularly strong or weak results<sup>4</sup>?

## 6. Benchmarking

- If this is not the first self-assessment (or audit) you have conducted, are there significant differences with previous results? Were actions taken to address weaker areas successful?
- When you look back at overall results for Key Actions, are there major differences between the score you entered for in the summary report, and the scores that communities gave to your organisation on indicators linked to the different commitments<sup>5</sup>?
- If you have conducted self-assessments (or audits) in several countries, how consistent are results from different countries with each other? Does performance indicate consistency across countries, or on the contrary, is performance very much linked to factors specific to a given country?
- How do your results compare with those of organisations that are similar to yours<sup>6</sup>?

## 7. Partners

- If you work with partners, what have you learned about the way they perceive your relationship, and the things that could be done differently to improve the adoption of the CHS in programmes for which you work in partnership?
- If this is not the first partner assessment you have conducted, are there significant differences with previous results, and does it align with actions you have taken to address weaker areas?

## 8. Risks and opportunities

- Did the self-assessment exercise highlight issues that are potential areas of risk for your organisation and require urgent attention?
- On the other hand, have you identified outstanding good practice that could usefully be mirrored, developed, institutionalised or promoted with others in the sector?

## 9. Evidence base

- Was it equally easy or challenging to identify data and evidence for all commitments?
- Did you have to organise specific discussions with community members and partners to allow you to respond to questions in the self-assessment, or were you able to rely on information you collect on a regular basis?
- What could be done to ensure subsequent self-assessments rely on a more systematic and representative set of data and evidence?

## Step 2: Identify and prioritise actions to include in your improvement plan.

Once you have reviewed and analysed your self-assessment findings under step 1, you should have a good idea of what areas may need specific attention. Make sure you don't just concentrate on weaknesses, but also support and scale up good practice.

- To start with, review each commitment in light of your analysis and write down the areas that need to be improved. Separate issues that relate to Key Actions from those that relate to Organisational Responsibilities, but double check whether there is an overlap or linkage between policy and practice in issues identified.

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<sup>4</sup> See figure 4.

<sup>5</sup> See figure 3

<sup>6</sup> Once a large enough sample of self-assessment results will be available, CHS Alliance will make results and analysis available on [www.chsalliance.org](http://www.chsalliance.org)

- Pay particular attention to indicators that have a score of 0 or 1. Even though the commitment they are a part of may have a satisfactory score, having such strong weaknesses could compromise the integrity of your approach and undermine otherwise good work you're doing.
- Once you have identified the issues, write down the solutions/actions that are necessary to respond to the issue – including by scaling up good practice. If the solution/action to take doesn't seem obvious, don't limit yourself to the brainpower within your own organisation, and use the experience from peers, the CHS Alliance secretariat staff or the Alliance's Community of Practice<sup>7</sup>.

Resources in organisations are usually limited, making it a challenge to accomplish all activities within the same timeframe. Limited staff, limited time and limited funds make it necessary to prioritise activities so that you focus on what is important, but also feasible. Below, you will find some questions that can guide you in this process as you review the different actions you have now identified.

- How much impact do you expect this measure to have? In other words, how important is it?
- If you didn't implement this action, what would be the consequences? Would your organisation and its stakeholders be faced with a serious risk?
- What resources and/or time would be necessary to implement this measure? Is such an investment committed or could it be secured?
- How quickly would results be generated through this action?
- Is this action part of a set of measures that have to be taken together to have an impact?

If you find it helpful, you can now place the various actions in a matrix such as the one below to help you highlight the measures you should retain and the timeframe for their implementation.

Figure 5



### Step 3: Write, resource, approve and submit your improvement plan

You should now have a set of activities on which you can concentrate. However, before you start writing your implementation plan, you still may want to consider the following questions:

<sup>7</sup> See details about the CHS Alliance communities of practice here : <http://www.chsalliance.org/what-we-do/networks/chs-alliance-community-of-practice>

- Is the mix of actions selected effective? To have impact, it might be better to concentrate on a limited number of CHS commitments at a time and make solid progress rather than trying to improve everything at once. Still, make sure you account for actions that are linked to several commitments.
- Is there something you need to do to ensure that the impact of selected actions is sustainable over time? If you touch on Key Actions, are policies, resources and procedures in place to support good practice over time?
- Is your implementation plan ambitious as well as realistic? Have you considered issues such as workload, capacity, training needs or resources?
- Have you given a chance to partners and the people you aim to assist to review the improvement plan?
- Do you risk reinventing the wheel? Rather than rewriting a policy, or developing and testing a specific approach, could you achieve quicker results by getting examples or advice from peers and partners or through CHS Alliance secretariat staff<sup>8</sup>?

You're now ready to write your implementation plan. This plan will guide your organisation's improvement efforts in terms of quality, accountability and people management for the next two years. To ensure you can drive and assess progress, you should assign responsibilities and deadlines for each activity, as suggested in the table on the following page. You should also ensure that the improvement plan is supported and endorsed at the level of senior leadership. Once this is the case, you can submit your plan to the CHS Alliance Secretariat. CHS Alliance will not provide feedback or comments for every plan submitted, but will make examples available on the CHS Alliance Community of Practice platform when organisations get to this stage.

#### **Step 4: Implement and monitor your improvement plan**

The last step of the CHS improvement planning process is to start acting on your improvement plan and monitoring its implementation. In that respect, keep the following suggestions in mind:

1. Decide who will be responsible for leading and monitoring the implementation of the improvement plan. For most organisations, it will make sense to give this role to the CHS Alliance focal person, while involving a person at senior management level to champion progress.
2. Communicate the locations where programme level monitoring of the implementation plan will take place. It could be useful to already start thinking about the locations where you will conduct the next self-assessment.
3. Establish a monitoring schedule to review progress, and adapt the frequency to the amount of action you have selected. Review both progress of activities and challenges that prevent meeting deadlines, and involve senior management when it can help move things forward.
4. Adjust activities based on monitoring findings when necessary.

Once you have devised your improvement plan, you should submit it to CHS Alliance Secretariat. In January each year, you should report on progress in the CHS Alliance annual report template<sup>9</sup>. This template will point towards the appropriate sections, based on where you are in the self-assessment cycle.

The CHS Alliance remains available to support CHS Alliance members during the implementation and monitoring of their CHS improvement plan. Please don't hesitate to contact the CHS Alliance ([verification@chsalliance.org](mailto:verification@chsalliance.org)) when needed.

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<sup>8</sup> Try the CHS Alliance Community of Practice for example. If you are not a member yet, ask for an invitation at [verification@chsalliance.org](mailto:verification@chsalliance.org)

<sup>9</sup> The template will be available for download here : <http://www.chsalliance.org/membership/join-the-chs-alliance/full>

## Annex: CHS Alliance improvement plan

To be filled and submitted after endorsement by senior management of your organisation.

Action	Responsibilities	Resources required	Deadline
<b>1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs</b>			
<i>Explain here <b>what</b> issue from the self-assessment you aim to address, and <b>how</b> you will be doing it. Include information about <b>location</b> if appropriate, as well as possible <b>synergies</b>.</i>	<i>Note here <b>who</b> will be accountable for reporting on this action.</i>	<i>Note here resources not part of ordinary budget that will be needed to complete this action.</i>	<i>By when should this action be completed?</i>
Add lines as needed			
<b>2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>3. Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.</b>			
Add lines as needed			
<b>9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.</b>			
Add lines as needed			