

DEMANDING
ACCOUNTABILITY
TO PEOPLE
AFFECTED BY
CRISES

DELIVERING
ON OUR
COMMITMENTS



CHS ALLIANCE STRATEGY

2022-2025



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FOREWORD

Whoever you are, wherever you are, in whatever circumstances you find yourself, you have the right to be treated with respect and dignity and to have your voice heard, even in crisis situations.

Countless people from all walks of life are moved to act by the desire to prevent and alleviate human suffering. Aid organisations have a vital role to support these efforts, to protect and restore humanity, respecting people's dignity and rights. Entrusted with public and private resources, aid agencies are expected to bring relief and hope. This requires more than good intentions – it requires rigour, vigilance and honesty. Most importantly, aid organisations need to take account of, and be held to account by, the people they assist.

Established in 2015, the CHS Alliance is a movement whose members are passionate about removing the barriers that prevent affected people from exercising their agency, influence and power, and demanding that organisations are more accountable to those they serve.

This strategy sets out the Alliance's ambition for even greater collective effort that delivers on the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) Commitments made to people affected by crises.

It builds on the incredible work done by our members over the last six years, the rich learning that has emerged from their efforts, as well as those of the Alliance's predecessor organisations, the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership and People in Aid.

It guides us in driving widespread adoption of the CHS to bring profound changes in the aid system: greater accountability, transparency and a sector that works more closely and meaningfully with people affected by crises. It demands that all organisations with the privilege to serve others deliver on their CHS Commitments, improving and verifying their efforts.

Organisational transformation and systemic change will take time, creativity, collaboration and persistence. It will not be easy, but we are convinced that a more collective, accountable effort is necessary and possible.



Lola Gostelow
Chair



Shama Mall
Vice Chair



Tanya Wood
Executive Director





AT A GLANCE



OUR VISION

People and communities at risk of, and affected by, disaster, conflict, poverty or injustice can access and shape quality assistance and hold organisations to account.



OUR MISSION

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



A CORE, VERIFIABLE STANDARD

The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) is a set of Nine Commitments made to people affected by crises. To be accountable to those they serve, organisations need to verify how they are delivering against the Commitments and make improvements where they are falling short.



A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Organisations from around the world are united in their endeavours to deliver on the CHS Commitments and in demanding greater accountability to people affected by crises throughout the aid system.



OUR GOAL

A greater number and diversity of organisations delivering on the CHS, by making improvements, verifying their performance and driving systemic changes needed for people affected by crises to hold organisations accountable.



OUR OBJECTIVES

1. Improved delivery of the CHS Commitments

CHS Alliance will facilitate improvements, by guiding organisations to verify their performance and supporting them in delivering the CHS Commitments.

2. A stronger CHS Alliance movement

CHS Alliance will encourage more, and more diverse, organisations from across the globe to join the Alliance, to bring members together to deliver the CHS and advocate for change.

3. A more accountable aid system

CHS Alliance will use evidence and learning from organisations applying the CHS, to influence and drive the system changes needed to bring about more accountability to people affected by crises.



OUR FOCUS

1. Support to, and commitment from, our members for greater accountability to people affected by crises.

2. Engaging with, and learning from, experiences and leadership of local and national actors.

3. Working with, and influencing, those who can bring about systemic change.



EMBODYING THE CHS IN DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

To achieve our objectives, we need to embody the CHS Commitments in our ways of working. This means taking a coordinated and complementary approach to working with others, learning constantly, treating our staff and volunteers fairly and equitably, and managing our resources responsibly, while welcoming, valuing and responding to feedback and complaints.

OUR GOAL

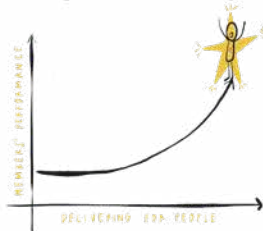
A GREATER NUMBER AND DIVERSITY
OF ORGANISATIONS DELIVERING ON THE CHS

BY MAKING IMPROVEMENTS
BY VERIFYING THEIR PERFORMANCE
BY DRIVING SYSTEMIC CHANGE

NEEDED FOR PEOPLE IN CRISES
TO HOLD ORGANISATIONS ACCOUNTABLE

OUR OBJECTIVES

IMPROVED DELIVERY OF
THE CHS COMMITMENTS



A STRONGER CHS
ALLIANCE MOVEMENT



A MORE ACCOUNTABLE
AID SYSTEM



OUR FOCUS



MEMBERS



HOW

BY EMBODYING THE CHS IN HOW WE WORK IN COLLABORATION
WITH OTHERS AND WITHIN THE CHS ALLIANCE TEAM



At the end of 2014, the humanitarian sector marked a significant collective achievement when it launched the Core Humanitarian Standard. This new Standard was developed through an extensive global consultation, based on the views of people affected by crises. CHS Alliance collaborates with its partners, Sphere and Groupe URD, as three copyright holders of the Standard.

The Standard makes Nine Commitments to the people we work with. When the Commitments are met, people are better able to take part in decisions that impact them, encounter fewer delays, and receive services that are locally-led, appropriate to the context, complementary and coordinated. They feel respected and confident to provide feedback and submit complaints. Every effort to prevent sexual abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment is made and, when it occurs, action is swiftly taken. People working and volunteering for aid organisations are supported to do their jobs effectively and are treated fairly and equitably. Resources are used for their intended purposes and managed responsibly, avoiding fraud and corruption and protecting the environment. There is continual learning to improve.

As the Core Humanitarian Standard, it acts as a foundation for technical standards that guide the sector's work. The Alliance works closely to support this alignment of standards, in collaboration with the Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP).

Every entity working with people affected by crises should conduct itself in accordance with the Standard. However, simply affirming commitment to the Standard will not drive the change that is desperately needed. That is why organisations are asked to verify their efforts, to ensure they are delivering on the Commitments and making the necessary improvements. CHS Alliance provides a Verification Scheme to enable this. We support organisations to undertake self-assessments, and our partner Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative conducts external verifications. The verification process drives improvements in organisations. Verified organisations also contribute to collective evidence to highlight progress and identify areas where change is critically needed.



OUR GOAL

OUR GOAL

A greater number and diversity of organisations delivering on the CHS, by making improvements, verifying their performance and by driving systemic changes needed for people in crises to hold organisations accountable.



OUR OBJECTIVES

To achieve this goal, we need to see:

1. IMPROVED DELIVERY OF THE CHS COMMITMENTS

CHS Alliance will facilitate improvements by guiding organisations to verify their efforts and support them in meeting the Commitments.

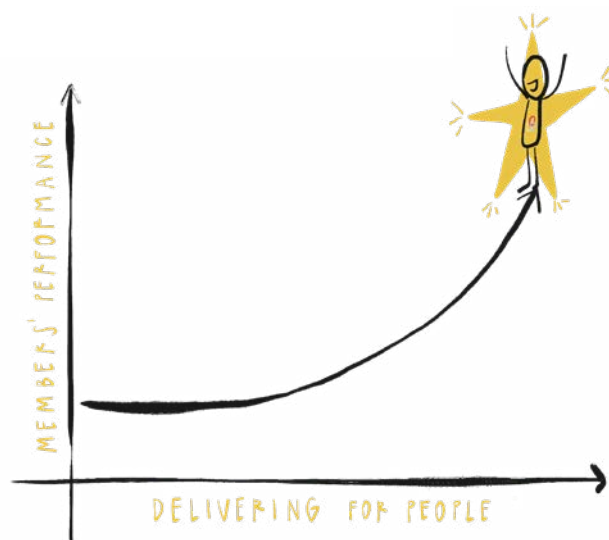
Accountability to people affected by crises is not simply a programmatic activity. It requires a culture of accountability embedded throughout the whole organisation.

Leaders must model accountability. Policies and processes must correspond to and reinforce organisations' values. These values must be reflected in the way staff and volunteers engage and interact with their partners and the communities they serve. The CHS requires a holistic approach to improving accountability across the whole organisation, from governing boards and senior leadership to programme staff and support services.

To create this culture of greater accountability to people affected by crises across organisations, it is not good enough to aspire to deliver on the CHS Commitments. Organisations need to verify their efforts. CHS verification is a rigorous and continuous process that looks at the whole organisation, from the viewpoint of the people served and their partners and staff. It assesses performance against each of the Commitments, clearly setting out areas where improvements need to be made.

CHS Alliance uses aggregated verification data to gather evidence of where accountability gaps persist. The trends are published in our Humanitarian Accountability Report, spotlighting areas that demand greater attention, most notably in welcoming and addressing complaints.

The data gathered over the past six years tells a clear story – there is a lot of work ahead to collectively meet our commitments to people and bring about needed cultural change for greater accountability.



CHS Alliance will continue to find ways, and work with others, to scale up its support to members in some of the most challenging areas: preventing sexual exploitation and abuse; improving how we engage better and adapt our programmes based on communities' feedback; managing complaints and investigations; and improving people management and organisational cultures to align with the CHS.

Through the delivery of this strategy, we aim to achieve:

- 1.1 CHS verification data shows more organisations have made **improvements against the CHS**.
- 1.2 Enhanced support for organisations **to verify their efforts**.
- 1.3 **Scaled-up support** to deliver on the CHS, through provision of tools, learning and training opportunities, good practice examples and referral to expert and peer support.
- 1.4 Increased number of **national NGOs verifying** against the CHS and championing the Standard.
- 1.5 More members **support in-country partners** to apply and deliver on the CHS Commitments.
- 1.6 Effective **collaborative partnerships** with other organisations, which drive research, guidance and advocacy to improve delivery of the CHS.
- 1.7 Partnerships with Inter Agency Standing Committee members and with Humanitarian Country Teams result in an ability to **measure collective country-level** performance against the CHS.



2. A STRONGER CHS ALLIANCE MOVEMENT

CHS Alliance will encourage more, and more diverse, organisations from across the globe to join the Alliance, to bring members together to deliver the CHS and advocate for change.

Accountability to people affected by crises cannot be the responsibility of a minority of organisations. It needs a global, collective commitment.

For people affected by crisis to be able to hold organisations to account, there needs to be a greater collective will to unite around a core set of commitments. This creates clear expectations for the people we serve, as opposed to a multitude of competing organisational approaches.

CHS Alliance is a global movement that unites more than 150 organisations: national and international, big and small, southern and northern. Organisations join to improve accountability to people affected by crises and to benefit from, and contribute to, a larger movement for change. Members are required to have in place codes of conducts that prohibit sexual exploitation and abuse and to verify their efforts to meet the CHS. Members must have, or develop, a public facing complaint mechanism, in addition to abiding by the CHS Alliance's membership complaint mechanism. The CHS Alliance creates opportunities for organisations to come together to share learning and find solutions to common challenges, through the CHS Exchange and other events, as well as via active communities of practice.

Yet to create greater impact for people affected by crises, we need more organisations – national and international NGOs, UN organisations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, governments and donors – working across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus to join the CHS Alliance movement and deliver on the Standard. That is why the CHS Alliance will encourage more organisations to join, with a particular focus on engaging with and learning from national and local organisations.

Through the delivery of this strategy, we aim to achieve:

- 2.1. More organisations join the CHS Alliance.
- 2.2. More organisations meet their membership requirements, including embarking on their CHS verification journey.
- 2.3. More people connect through CHS Exchanges, forums, training opportunities and communities of practice.
- 2.4. Increased representation and engagement of national organisations in the CHS Alliance.
- 2.5. Learning and perspectives from national actors influence and improve the work of the CHS Alliance.
- 2.6. Increased engagement with UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, governments and donors to encourage them to join the CHS Alliance and commit to the CHS.



3. A MORE ACCOUNTABLE AID SYSTEM

CHS Alliance will use the evidence and learning from organisations applying the CHS, to influence and drive the system changes needed to bring about more accountability to people affected by crises.

Accountability to people affected by crises is not just about organisational policies and processes. It requires a substantial collective and global effort to make systemic changes to challenge unequal power dynamics.

We must challenge outdated power dynamics that govern the current system and find new systemic ways of working grounded in, and based on, local realities. CHS Alliance will do more to base its work on what is happening in countries and through engaging with local leadership. It will require more national NGOs to champion the CHS.

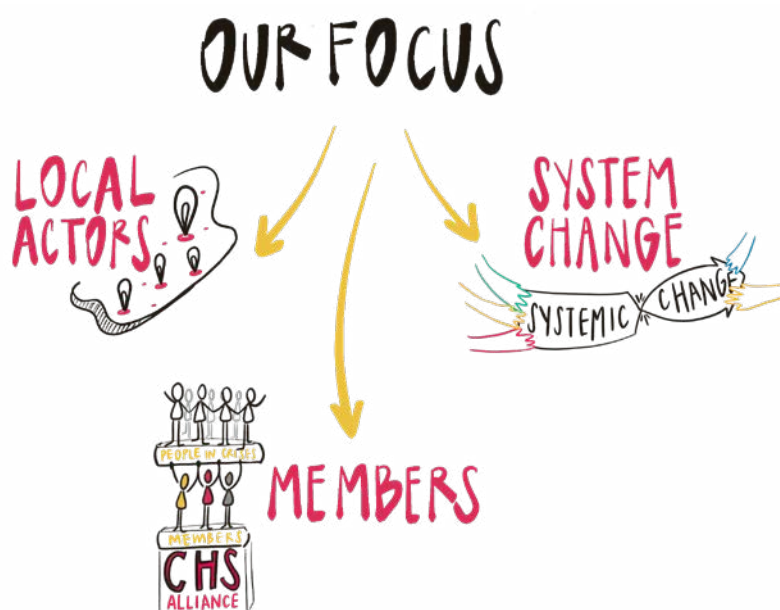
CHS Alliance will put greater engagement into working with system-level change, globally and at the country level to research, guide and contribute to new systemic ways of working, and advocate to those in power to bring about change.

It is no longer good enough to say we are doing good. We need to push for greater transparency in tracking progress on accountability, so we face the harsh realities of where we are failing and continue to invest in making improvements.

Alongside these efforts, we must ensure that the CHS itself is focused on the right areas to catalyse change. In 2022, the start of the process to revise the CHS will be launched. Together with the other CHS copyright holders, Groupe URD and Sphere, we will conduct an inclusive, consultative and transparent CHS revision process. We will learn from the work to date in delivering on the CHS, and ensure the Standard reflects the views of people affected by crises. We will ask for increased commitments by all aid actors for this updated Standard.

Through the delivery of this strategy, we aim to achieve:

- 3.1. CHS Alliance **members advocate strongly** for the CHS, promoting accountability to people affected by crises throughout the aid system.
- 3.2. CHS Alliance **members contribute to a more transparent aid system**, including engagement with the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and efforts to harmonise reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- 3.3. **Reduced duplication of due diligence processes** by national NGOs, by using CHS verification as a basis for core commitments.
- 3.4. Country-level research identifies ways to improve **country-level accountability systems**.
- 3.5. The **CHS is revised** based on learning from organisations and local perspectives, and has strong endorsement from across the aid system.
- 3.6. Greater transparency and **evidence showing progress** against the CHS Commitments through a new verification platform and publication of the Humanitarian Accountability Report.
- 3.7. Increased number of **donor and partnership agreements that include the CHS**, so all partners hold themselves accountable to an agreed core standard focused on the people they serve.



To achieve these objectives, we will focus on:

1. COMMITMENT FROM, AND SUPPORT TO, CHS ALLIANCE MEMBERS

Our members are the drivers of change. Members will improve how they work with people affected by crises, and will actively contribute to building a more accountable aid system.

Our focus in this strategic period will be on encouraging more organisations to join the movement. We will foster increased connection between our members. We will ask more of our members to be advocates for the CHS, while constantly seeking better ways to support them to deliver on the CHS.

2. ENGAGING WITH, AND LEARNING FROM, EXPERIENCES AND LEADERSHIP OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS

Accountability to people affected by crises requires connecting with and listening closely to people being assisted. For the CHS Alliance this requires stronger connections with the organisations and people working within communities.

Our focus in this strategic period will be on deepening our engagement in different contexts to learn from local leadership, together finding ways to create systems that drive greater accountability to people affected by crises. We will adapt our work as needed, based on this learning, so the CHS Alliance movement is more diverse and representative of the world we operate in.

3. WORKING WITH, AND INFLUENCING, PEOPLE WHO CAN BRING ABOUT SYSTEM CHANGE

The intent for greater accountability to people affected by crises has been recognised for many years, and there has been an increased effort by many organisations to do more. However, achieving systemic change will require bold leadership, to put aside organisational mandates and to coalesce around clear expectations on which we will be held to account.

Our focus in this strategic period will be to bolster our efforts to influence people in positions to effect system change. This includes working with leaders of CHS Alliance members, governing boards, Inter Agency Standing Committee members, humanitarian/resident coordinators, policy makers, national leaders, governments and donors to increase the momentum for change.

WHAT TO EXPECT

VERIFYING ORGANISATIONS' PERFORMANCE

IMPROVED DELIVERY AGAINST THE CHS COMMITMENTS

Commitment from, and support to, our members

CHS verification data shows more organisations have made improvements against the CHS

Enhanced support for organisations to verify their efforts

Scaled-up support to deliver on the CHS, through provision of tools, learning and training opportunities, good practice examples and referral to expert and peer support

Engaging with, and learning from, local leadership

Increased number of national NGOs verifying against the CHS, and championing the Standard

More members supporting in-country partners to apply and deliver on the CHS Commitments

Working with, and influencing, people able to bring about system change

Effective collaborative partnerships with other organisations, which drive research, guidance and advocacy to improve delivery of the CHS

Partnerships with Inter Agency Standing Committee members and with Humanitarian Country Teams result in an ability to measure collective country-level performance against the CHS

MORE ORGANISATIONS JOIN THE CHS ALLIANCE MOVEMENT

Commitment from, and support to, our members

More organisations join the CHS Alliance

More organisations meet their membership requirements, including embarking on their CHS verification journey

More people connect through CHS Exchanges, forums, training opportunities and communities of practice

Engaging with, and learning from, local leadership

Increased representation and engagement of national organisations in the Alliance

Learning and perspectives from national actors influences and improves the work of the CHS Alliance

Working with, and influencing, people able to bring about system change

Increased engagement with UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, governments and donors to encourage them to join the Alliance and commit to the CHS

A MORE ACCOUNTABLE AID SYSTEM

Commitment from, and support to, our members

CHS Alliance members advocate strongly for the CHS, promoting accountability to people affected by crises throughout the aid system

CHS Alliance members contribute to a more transparent aid system, including engagement with the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and efforts to harmonise reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse

Engaging with, and learning from, local leadership

Reduced duplication of due diligence processes by national NGOs, by using CHS verification as a basis for core commitments

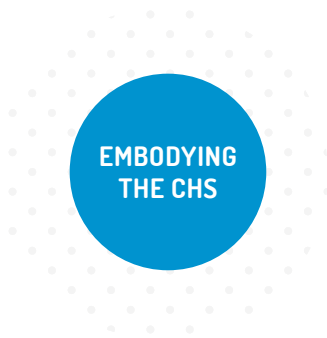
Country-level research identifies ways to improve country-level accountability systems

Working with, and influencing, people able to bring about system change

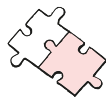
The CHS is revised based on learning from organisations and local perspectives, and has strong endorsement from across the aid system

Greater transparency and evidence shows progress against the CHS Commitments through a new verification platform and publication of the Humanitarian Accountability Report

An increased number of donor and partnership agreements include the CHS, so all partners hold themselves accountable to an agreed core standard focused on the people they serve



To achieve the ambitions in the strategy, the CHS Alliance team and our governing board need to embody the CHS Commitments in our way of working, from developing policies to establishing processes and how we engage with others.



WE WILL MAKE SURE OUR WORK IS APPROPRIATE AND RELEVANT

We will strive to ensure our work is relevant and adding value to the sector. We will continue to monitor this through membership surveys and requests for partner and donor feedback.

We are committed to adapting our approach based on the lived experiences of people affected by crises. We will do this through feedback gathered via the verification process, working with partners who help facilitate access to gathering the views of people affected by crises, as well as research we will directly conduct at times, to understand their various perspectives.



WE WILL MAKE SURE OUR WORK IS EFFECTIVE

To demonstrate how resources are managed and used effectively, CHS Alliance will develop annual operational plans in line with this strategy, which will be transparently reported on. The governing board will hold the executive director accountable for the implementation of these plans, and ensure risks associated with it are regularly monitored and addressed.



WE WILL BUILD OUR WORK ON LOCAL CAPACITIES AND AVOID NEGATIVE EFFECTS

We will continue to make sure that our internal policies are consistent with the CHS to reduce any negative effects of our work on people affected by crises. We will work with local and national actors in countries, and through our membership, to strengthen the role of the CHS.



OUR WORK WILL BE BASED ON COMMUNICATION, FEEDBACK AND PARTICIPATION

This strategy was developed following extensive consultation with members and partners, but we will never stop needing feedback. We will actively seek people's views throughout this strategic cycle and welcome hearing from organisations and individuals. We will continue to develop clear communications that inform audiences about our work, including people affected by crises, as well as ask for guidance and feedback in further shaping it.

CREATING ACCOUNTABLE CULTURES



WE WELCOME COMPLAINTS

We need to be able to address when and if things go wrong or do not meet expectations. We will continue to operate our CHS Alliance complaint mechanism and support our members to have their own complaint mechanism in place. We welcome complaints related to the CHS Alliance team, as well as complaints from any person who believes that a member organisation has not handled a complaint in line with their own policy, or in cases where a member does not yet have their own mechanism in place.

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OUR WORK WILL BE COORDINATED AND COMPLEMENTARY

We recognise that our vision is shared by other organisations and our efforts complement those of others. We will actively invest time and commitment to building strong collaborative partnerships that will help meet our mutual aims. We will actively look for opportunities to contribute to others' efforts where they align to our own and seek to minimise duplication of effort and resources.

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WE WILL LEARN AND IMPROVE

Delivering this strategy and its objectives will not be a simple or linear task. As we work together to challenge complex systemic structures, we will continually need to reflect on the best means to do this. We will adapt and implement changes based on our own learning, and communicate them clearly with our members, partners and people affected by crises. We will continue to learn from the experience and views of people from crisis-affected communities who sit on our governing board. We will be open to changing current ways of operating to find better approaches.

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OUR TEAM WILL BE SUPPORTED TO DO THEIR JOB EFFECTIVELY AND TREATED FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY

The CHS Alliance team, supported by the governing board, has to embody the values of the Standard. The team has grown over recent years and needs to ensure it is developing to make the best possible impact, while constantly checking it is embodying the CHS in how it works. We will assess the values that guide how we work as a team. We will welcome and act on feedback and value diversity, fairness and equity. We will learn from our own work on good people management and organisational culture, and actively explore better ways of working.

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WE WILL MANAGE OUR RESOURCES AND USE THEM FOR THEIR INTENDED PURPOSE

Our members are the backbone of the CHS Alliance. They not only deliver on the Standard, and advocate for others to do so, they also pay membership fees that enable us to conduct our work. This contribution is vital for us to remain a membership-led organisation. However, we are committed to ensuring that financial constraints do not become a barrier to an organisation's participation.

Government donors are essential partners, not only for their funding to enable us to meet our ambitions, but also for their recognition and support of the CHS. We will continue to strengthen the relationships with our current donors, while actively seeking new donors to come on board as both funders and partners in the CHS and broader accountability endeavour.

Good stewardship of natural resources is vital. We understand and acknowledge that the climate emergency will fuel future crises. As an organisation we have a responsibility to ensure we minimise our impact on the planet. Our policies and practices will be reviewed to ensure we are working to protect, not harm, the environment.

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THANK YOU

This strategy was developed over eight months, involving more than 150 people. It is informed by learning from people affected by crisis and information gathered from CHS verified organisations. It reflects views gathered from surveys, interviews and consultations with members, partners and donors. It builds on the work to date to influence the sector to adopt the CHS in their policies and practices, as well as to encourage and support organisations to verify, learn and improve. We are grateful to those who volunteered their time and insight to the process, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.



CHS ALLIANCE STRATEGY

2022-2025

JOIN US:
IT IS
TIME
FOR
CHANGE

We believe the Alliance is a strong catalyst for greater accountability to people affected by crises, but to achieve our ambition we need to unite.

If this strategy resonated with the changes you are trying to make in your organisation, please join us.

WWW.CHSALLIANCE.ORG