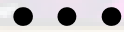


2023 ANNUAL REPORT

CHS Alliance





Contents

Highlights and key achievements	3
Foreword	5
Improved delivery of the CHS	7
Uptick in national organisations verifying against the CHS	8
Building a stronger CHS Alliance movement	11
CHS Alliance's global membership	12
Creating a more accountable aid system	13
Initiating new ways to hold power to account	15
2023 Financials	22



Highlights and key achievements

CHS Alliance is a global movement demanding greater accountability, agency and dignity for people affected by crisis.

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) is the means by which our movement rebalances power in the humanitarian sector in favour of people affected by crisis, driving more effective and accountable assistance.

Members of CHS Alliance, along with other key stakeholders, are instrumental in promoting the application of the CHS. In 2023, membership of the Alliance grew at an unprecedented rate. This can be attributed to the increased interest in Standard as a result of the global consultation for its revision, alongside considerable efforts to engage national organisations across the globe.

As a shared framework to articulate the expectations of people affected by crisis, the CHS guides organisations to align their operations with its Nine Commitments. As a measurable Standard, organisations can use the CHS to identify and understand shortcomings, and build action plans to improve. These verifications became even more widespread in 2023.

The coordinated, collective action of our members in the application and verification of the CHS continues to drive change in the humanitarian sector, creating a system and a culture that puts the needs and priorities of communities at the heart of humanitarian action. CHS Alliance would like to thank its members, donors and partners, all of whom contributed to the advancement of accountability to affected people in 2023.

Key Achievements 2023 – At A Glance



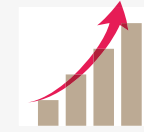
PEOPLE-DRIVEN AND PEOPLE-CENTRED CHS:

The CHS has been strengthened, simplified and made more accessible through the contributions of more than 4,000 individuals, including over 500 representatives from communities affected by crisis across 90 countries.



UPTICK IN THE NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS JOINING THE ALLIANCE:

More than 200 organisations from 50 countries are members of the CHS Alliance, with a record 33 new members joining in 2023.



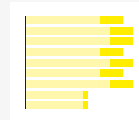
SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN CHS VERIFICATION:

Overall, more than 200 aid organisations are now measuring their operations against the Commitments of the CHS and committing to improve quality and accountability.



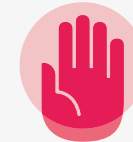
MOVING ACCOUNTABILITY CLOSER TO COMMUNITIES:

Most new CHS Alliance members in 2023 were national organisations, and a third self-assessing their application of the CHS were either local or national organisations.



APPLICATION OF THE CHS BRINGS POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS IN QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

CHS-verified organisations demonstrated improvements in seven of the nine Commitments, highlighting the longer-term impact of the application of the CHS.



SCALING UP EFFORTS TO STOP SEAH:

System-wide efforts have been scaled up to prevent abuse, exploitation and harassment, including improvements in SEAH investigations.



HARNESSING COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE TO TACKLE THE HARDEST CHALLENGES:

Hundreds of practitioners have been given a safe space to crowd-source solutions to fundamental issues blocking aid system transformation.



PROMOTING THE CHS TO SUPPORT MORE ACCOUNTABLE AID:

CHS Alliance have shared guidance and resources in more than 30 languages, including a tailored CHS package for post-earthquake responses in Türkiye and Syria. CHS training has equipped more than 40,000 people from 150+ countries.



The movement for accountability to people affected by crisis, once fringe to the humanitarian system, is now mainstream, global and demonstrating tangible improvements for communities assisted by aid.

• • • Foreword

The humanity at the core of humanitarian action can only be fully honoured when the dignity of each and every individual requiring assistance is recognised and respected. Whether people need protection from conflict, are recovering from natural disasters, or trying to cope with climate-induced displacement, they are also seeking agency over the assistance provided and accountability from the actors providing it.

This is why the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality & Accountability (CHS) is as important as ever. By promoting the primary role of people in finding solutions to the crises or vulnerabilities they themselves face, the CHS is potentially transformational. Those applying the Standard see this daily, as the CHS helps them to deliver better quality and more accountable aid.

In 2023 we have seen extraordinary interest in the CHS, globally and locally. More agencies than ever are applying the CHS and verifying against its nine commitments; engagement with the CHS revision process exceeded expectations; membership of CHS Alliance continues to grow at pace. A greater number of local and national organisations than ever before are applying the CHS.

The CHS is as relevant as ever. The 18-month revision consultation allowed us to listen to people affected by crisis and to understand their priorities. We were also able to hear from local and national organisations, to learn how they are using the CHS. The perspectives and experiences of international organisations, governments and donors brought additional value. The result is a markedly strengthened CHS: more relevant, user-friendly and accessible.

For all these reasons we expect 2024 to be even more impactful. The launch of the revised Standard is our collective opportunity to reaffirm humanity in all that we do, achieving better outcomes for, and with, people affected by crisis and vulnerability.

Tanya Wood, Executive Director, CHS Alliance

Lola Gostelow, Chair of CHS Alliance Board

CHS Alliance wishes to thank all its donors for making the transformational work of the Alliance – in collaboration with its members and other stakeholders – possible. Together, we continue to work tirelessly for better quality and accountability in aid.

THANK YOU
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● ● ● PRAGUE

Improved delivery of the CHS

A stronger CHS created with crisis-affected communities

The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) is a critical, sector-wide framework that ensures the quality, accountability and effectiveness of aid. After nearly ten years of its application and associated learning, in 2023 the Standard was revised, shepherded by the CHS custodians – CHS Alliance, Groupe URD and Sphere – but led by crisis-affected people and communities, organisations working on aid’s front lines, as well as donors and other stakeholders.

Harnessing our distinctive global, member-led model, CHS Alliance drew on partnerships and existing peer networks to conduct regional workshops, country consultations, and direct engagement with affected people and communities.

The revision process saw more than 4,000 individuals across some 90 countries contribute. More than 500 were representatives from communities affected by crisis and vulnerability. This input has been instrumental in shaping the revised CHS, reducing complexity, increasing accessibility, and – most importantly – strengthening the Commitments to people and communities facing crisis or vulnerability.

Efforts to strengthen the CHS also brought awareness and knowledge of the CHS to new stakeholders, country contexts and policy discussions, bringing together a wide range of actors, some of whom had limited familiarity with the Standard. CHS Alliance has already seen the impact of such engagement, with a surge in requests for support to meet the Commitments.

The CHS Commitment Tracker also facilitates stronger tracking of commitments individually and generally, articulates sector-wide trends and insights, and showcases current areas of strength and areas that require further attention.

As CHS Alliance continues to expand its country-level support and engagement, work to reinforce the CHS Verification Scheme is expected. Recently, the Alliance has been working with partners in different response contexts to look at how the CHS Commitments can inform collective accountability, with progress made on including the CHS in global tools and processes.

Investing in more accessible verification

The CHS Verification Scheme is a cornerstone of CHS Alliance's accountability efforts. Enabling organisations to measure their application of the CHS Commitments, the verification scheme offers three pathways for doing so, taking into consideration the diversity of organisations applying the Standard and their distinct needs. The three options, Self-Assessment, Independent Verification, and Certification, all share a holistic approach geared towards measurement and improvement. Self-Assessment is undertaken using tools provided by the CHS Alliance. Independent Verification and Certification are offered through HQAI, a third-party auditing service. All options ensure a deep analysis of policy and practice, observing work in action, consulting with staff, and hearing feedback from community members and crisis-affected people.

To accommodate the surging interest in verification pathways, CHS Alliance has invested significant resources in supporting organisations on this journey. In 2023, this investment focused on streamlining CHS Self-Assessment to make it more user-friendly, accessible and visible, with a particular emphasis on facilitating CHS verification for national organisations. The CHS Commitment Tracker, launched in September, now guides organisations undertaking self-assessment.

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● ● ● Uptick in national organisations verifying against the CHS

In 2023, CHS Alliance saw a record number of organisations verifying against the CHS. The total number of organisations verified has now reached 166, with many more in the process of verification as the year closed out. Organisations embarking on the verification are diverse, ranging from local to global, and collectively, their operational footprint and reach include the vast majority of humanitarian crisis contexts, supporting tens of millions of people.

The impact of CHS application and verification already has wide recognition among national actors. And in 2023, one-third of organisations undertaking CHS Self-Assessment were national organisations, a trend that is only growing.



CHS impact stories

Abdullah Al Kaff from Building Foundation for Development in Yemen describes the impact of undertaking verification against the CHS.

“Building Foundation for Development (BFD), Yemen, utilised CHS verification to increase trust with the communities we serve. Measuring against the CHS, we found out that community involvement was a key area for improvement.”

“To address this, BFD implemented measures to ensure community voices in decision-making, establishing robust feedback channels. We created accessible feedback mechanisms, incorporating oral feedback, audio recordings, and pictorial representations. Being a CHS Alliance member greatly helped us to make the most of the process and connect us with other national organisations going through the same improvements.”

“As a result, we have seen a significant increase in the number of complaints, which we celebrate as a sign that the people we help know how to give us feedback and trust that they can tell us what they think. For example, in one project, after we started proactively seeking feedback, we received 780 complaints and inquiries.”

“In response to what we hear, we change how we work. Communities tell us they now feel more valued and empowered, leading to a stronger sense of ownership of our humanitarian work and better outcomes in helping people rebuild their lives.”

[Read the full story](#)



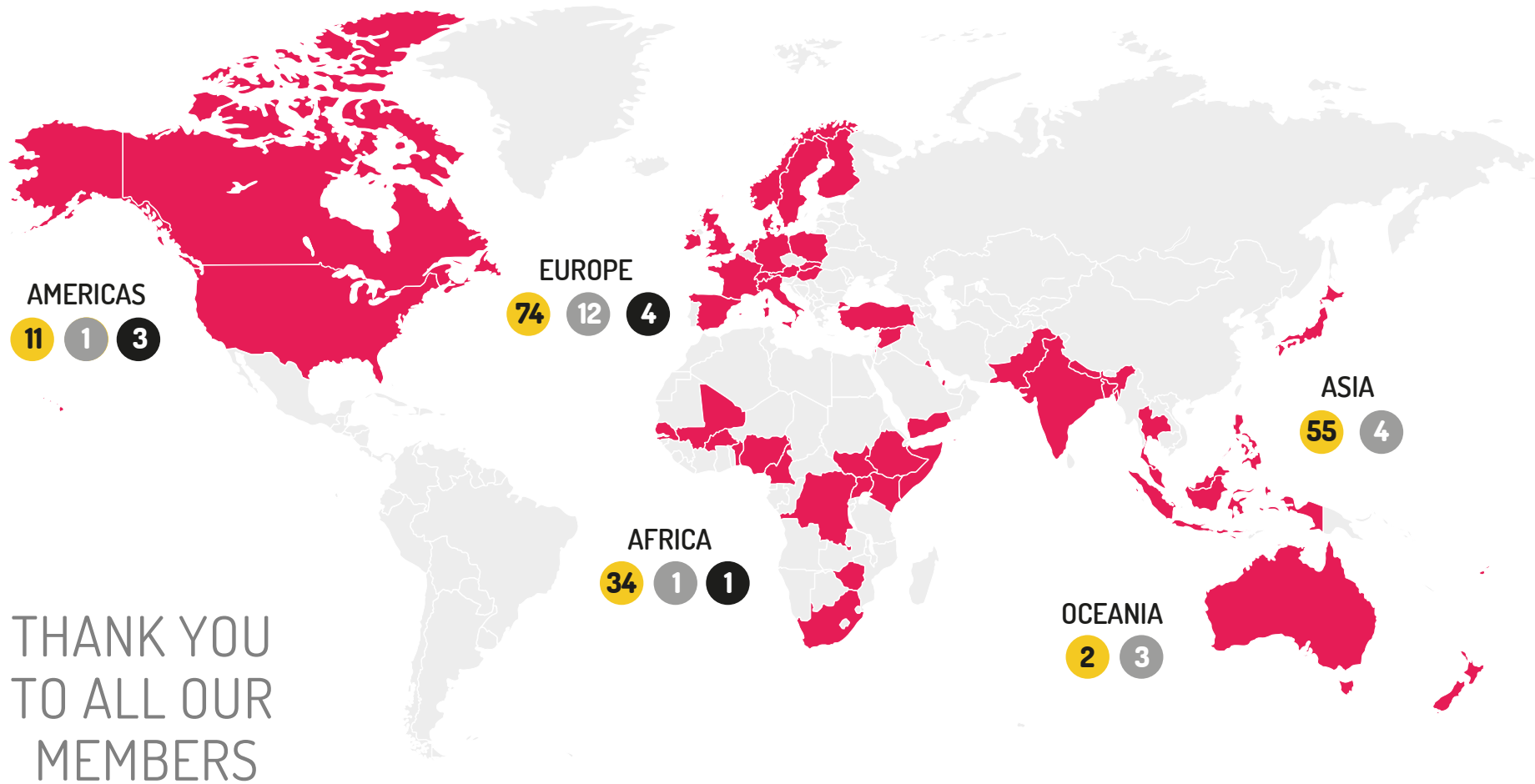
Building a stronger CHS Alliance movement

The strength of the CHS Alliance lies in the commitment and dedication of its members and those seeking to apply the CHS in their work. Through workshops, peer networks, communities of practice and collaboration, the Alliance and its members are spearheading a fundamental shift in how communities affected by crisis are served. In 2023, the Alliance experienced rapid growth, now counting more than 200 organisations from 50 countries – all united to improve quality and accountability in humanitarian action.

From local civil society groups to large international organisations and networks, the Alliance's diverse membership operates in every corner of the world, collectively reaching millions of people affected by crisis. CHS Alliance members operate in almost all humanitarian contexts, from famine prevention and response, support following sudden-onset natural disasters, work under Inter Agency Standing Committee scale-up activation, to addressing the protracted impact of climate change or conflict.

Among the 33 new members welcomed by CHS Alliance last year, the majority were national organisations, enhancing the diversity of the Alliance's membership and reinforcing the inclusion of front-line organisations. The increase in membership was facilitated through proactive outreach, peer networks, capacity sharing, and the reach of the CHS revision process. The membership surge among local actors also supports our work to increase the uptake of the CHS Verification Scheme.

CHS Alliance's global membership – location of our members' headquarters



KEY: ● Full members ● Associate members ● Global networks



Creating a more accountable aid system

In the span of less than ten years, the CHS has become a critical component and point of reference in system-wide efforts to affect change in the aid sector. The CHS is critical to discussions of power, partnership and transformation – and especially regarding the relationship between local, national and international actors. Engagement with crisis-affected people and communities under the CHS revision process has been instructive: the CHS is as relevant as ever and still represents a vision of aid that is shared by all humanitarian stakeholders, including crisis-affected communities.

The process of updating the CHS tapped deeply into the perspectives and expectations of crisis-affected people and communities. A wealth of engagement from all parts of the aid system has created a new wave of momentum for applying the Standard. CHS Alliance will be working to harness that engagement and momentum, working with its members, donors and other partners to ensure the CHS increases its reach and impact, articulating both the expectations of crisis-affected communities and the commitments of aid organisations.

Throughout 2023, CHS Alliance continued to co-chair the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force 2 on Accountability to Affected People (AAP) in collaboration with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

The Task Force's work strengthens collective AAP by increasing the accountability of leadership and supporting a more inclusive system and architecture, which has access to better quality funding and greater technical resources.

Collaboration under the Task Force has been instrumental in helping to integrate the CHS Commitments into global tools and guidance, such as the Collective AAP Framework and the IASC Results Tracker, which measures collective country-level accountability performance. The integration of the CHS in upcoming IASC tools and resources for operational response leadership underscores the central role it plays in building a stronger, more accountable aid system. The wide acceptance of the CHS demonstrates the growing consensus that it is a framework to effect real change.

Complementing efforts under the umbrella of the IASC, CHS Alliance also increased its collaboration with donors in 2023 by exploring ways to incentivise stronger commitments to and delivery on quality and accountability in the sector. Discussions and engagement with donors have also looked at how donors can better support organisations and country-level responses to meet specific CHS Commitments.



People supported by CHS Alliance member Concern Worldwide telling us how to make the CHS work better for them, in Dabnou, Niger. Credit: CHS Alliance.

In 2023 the scheme gathered and analysed data from more than 130 sensitive incidents, making it a crucial tool in the fight against abuse.

After a year's worth of reporting, [the findings from collated SEAH incidents](#) provide valuable evidence to inform and improve policies, strategies, and actions for better SEAH risk mitigation, prevention and response.

“[The scheme] will mean we can better analyse patterns and develop evidence-driven strategies and interventions to help target areas – both thematically and in terms of locations – with the highest risks of SEAH.”

Dr Kweku Ackom, Health Advisor, Safeguarding Unit, UK's FCDO.

[Learn more](#)



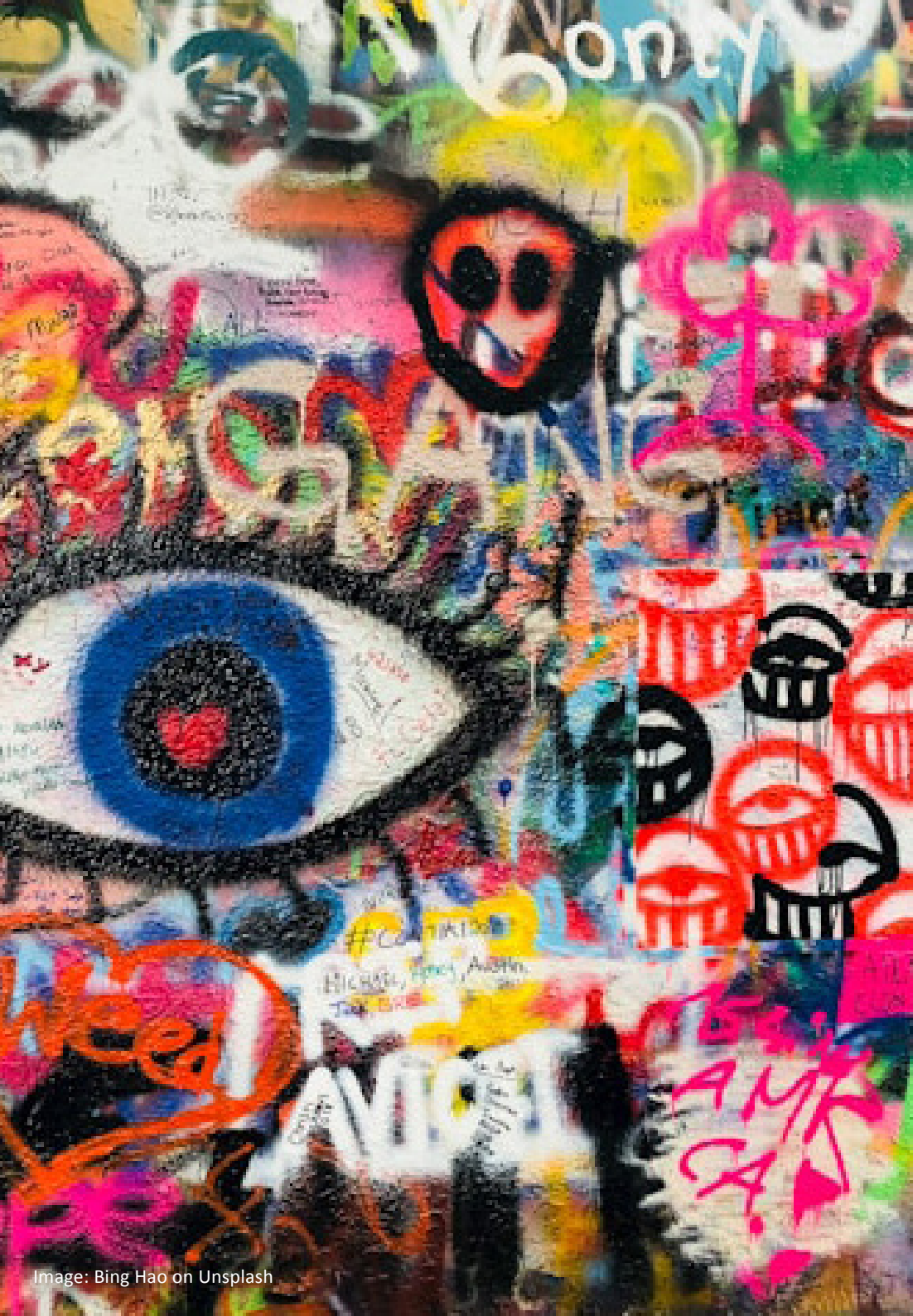


Image: Bing Hao on Unsplash

Calling for a victim/survivor-centred approach

How do we better support the victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse? How do our interventions on PSEAH ensure we are putting the rights and needs of victims and survivors at the centre of prevention and response?

In 2023 we worked hand in hand with local organisations and networks in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, to better answer these questions. During this time, we listened to hundreds of those directly affected by SEAH and trusted community intermediaries to co-create new ways to tackle and react to this type of abuse.

This work led to a foundational paper outlining what a victim/survivor-centred framework for protection from, and responses to, SEAH looks like in a humanitarian or development organisation.

“A victim-centred approach to PSEAH in Ethiopia is essential for building trust and confidence among survivors. It is also important for ensuring that survivors have access to the support they need to heal and rebuild their lives.”

Tiheys Tibebu Engeda, CHS Alliance’s Ethiopia Liaison Officer.

[Learn more](#)

Strengthening professional, sensitive investigations globally

Robust and high-quality victim/survivor-centred investigations into misconduct allegations are critical to tackling SEAH in the humanitarian and development sector. They help to hold perpetrators accountable, provide justice to those affected and act as a deterrent.

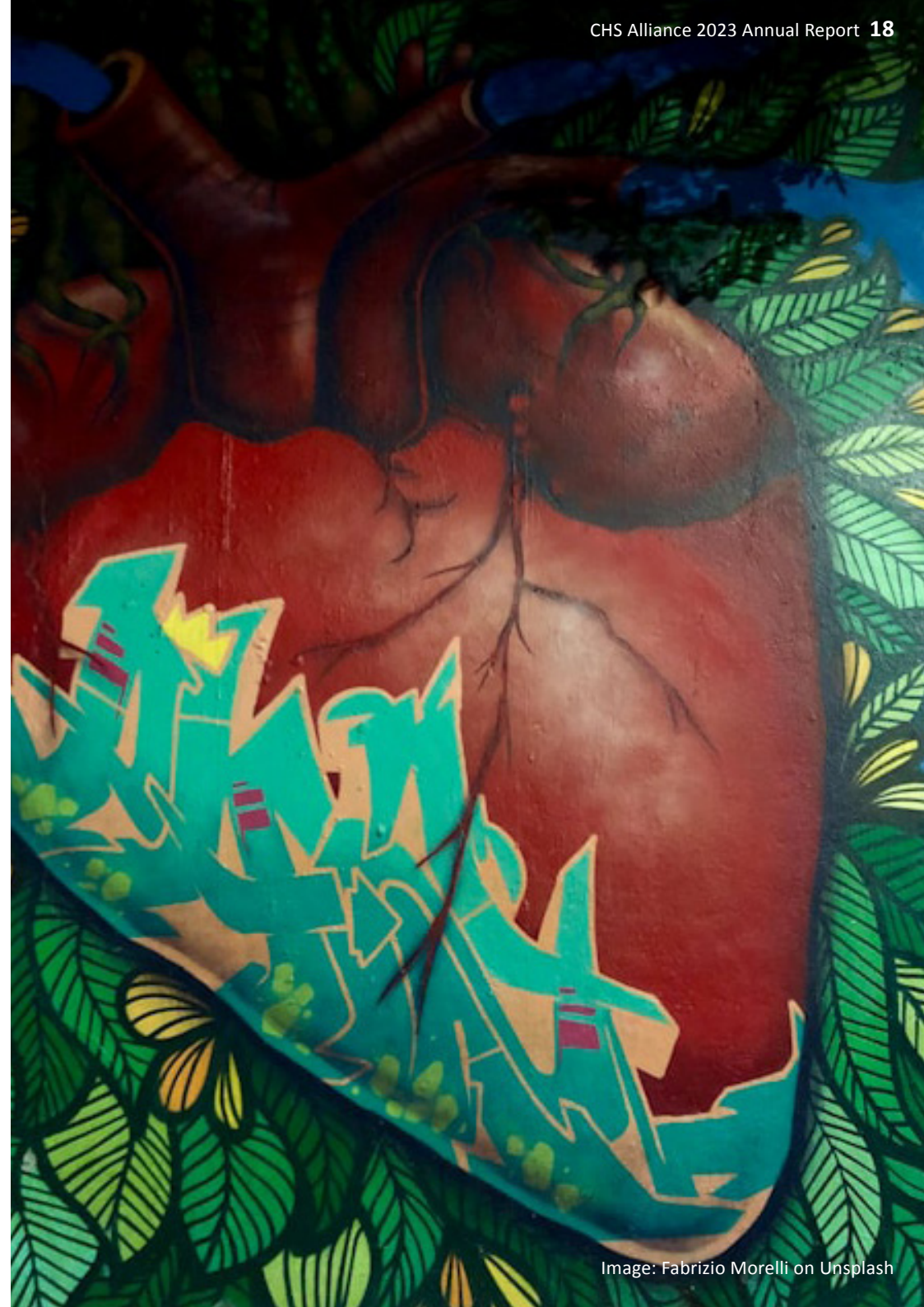
CHS Alliance, in partnership with Humentum and with support from USAID, is working to strengthen the global capacity for conducting victim/survivor-centred SEAH investigations.

In 2023, we focused on a huge scale-up of training for women and staff based in low- and lower-middle income countries to become qualified investigators.

“Equipped with this qualification my investigation will be more effective, meaning more perpetrators will be held to account. They’ll know that no one will get away with abusing their power for sexual gain.”

Talimba Bandawe, Investigator in South Sudan

[Learn more](#)



Stopping perpetrators of sexual misconduct moving between organisations undetected

Hosted by CHS Alliance, the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme tackles the problem of known sexual abusers moving between organisations undetected. Run by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, the scheme facilitates the sharing of misconduct data between employers.

It is currently implemented by more than 250 organisations. To date, more than 137,000 checks have been conducted, resulting in 385 applications being rejected at the recruitment stage.

The scheme flags those who have undergone SEAH-related disciplinary processes or who are subject to an ongoing investigation but who may not have been investigated by the police.

[Learn more](#)

Support to organisations as they seek to meet the Commitments of the CHS

In 2023, the CHS Alliance resource suite expanded to a repository of guidance in more than 30 languages. New, innovative resources launched publicly in 2023 include:

- A new learning package to help organisations manage complaints. An in-depth guide, ready-to-use toolkit, and engaging e-learning help organisations encourage complaints, handle them correctly and respond in a positive way to improve work and build trust.
- A pilot package on using the CHS in sudden-onset emergencies, including a guide to applying the CHS, drawing on member experience and chiefly targeting organisations operating in the 2023 post-earthquake Turkiye and Syria responses. This is accompanied by highly accessible resources in Turkish and Arabic. The package also included on-site training in local languages, support to coordination platforms and a helpdesk for urgent real-time support.
- The “Embodying Change” podcast, featuring key thought leaders, has promoted organisational culture change in humanitarian and development settings, reaching listeners in over 100 countries.

In addition, CHS Alliance developed a Knowledge Library that will be available for members in 2024 through the CHS Commitment Tracker platform. These resources will provide targeted guidance on applying all the CHS Commitments.



A global accountability community

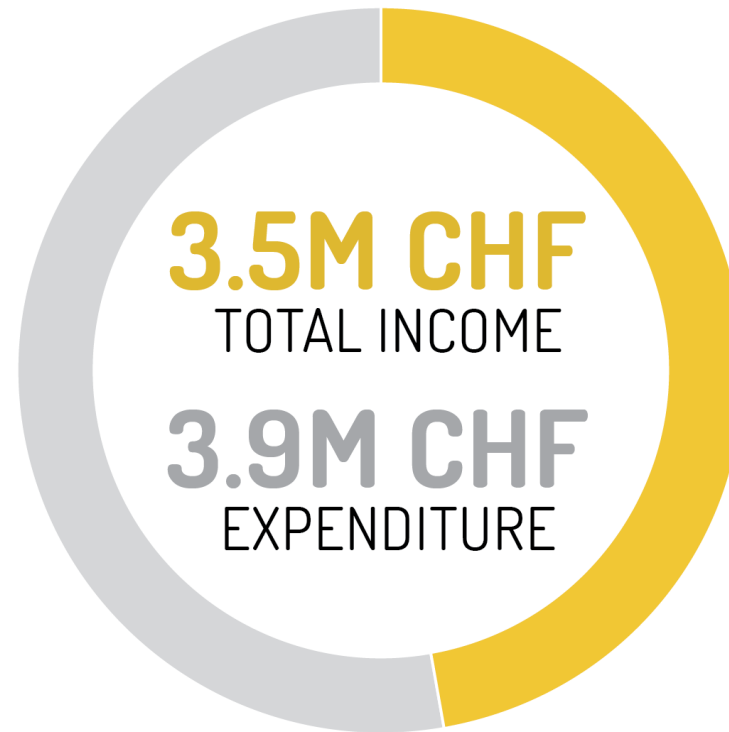
In 2023, CHS Alliance continued to support and grow a global accountability community by facilitating peer groups and communities of practice that provide safe spaces for professionals to discuss challenges and find solutions.

In recent years, our specialised virtual and face-to-face training has reached participants from more than 150 countries, equipping more than 40,000 people with technical knowledge and skills to meet CHS priority areas.

The Alliance has exciting plans to build on this strong foundation in the year ahead. By harnessing the power of our global network we aim to cultivate thriving communities of practice that share knowledge and peer learning, so that together we will better meet the CHS Commitments to people affected by crises.



2023 Financial income/expenditure



For the full, audited CHS Alliance 2023 financial report, see our [2023 financial statements online](#).



Published by: CHS Alliance

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Design: Weaver Creative, www.weavercreative.co.nz