

MINUTES OF THE CHS ALLIANCE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

05th December 2024: 13.00 – 16.00

6th December 2024: 11.00 – 14.00

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Attendees

A total of 251 participants from 54 countries registered for the General Assembly.

- 148 attended on Day One
- 125 attended on Day Two

Speakers

CHS Alliance board Lola Gostelow (LG), Shama Mall (SM), Michael Moriarty (MWM), Susan Otieno (SO), Sarah Pelicaric (SP), Carly Sheehan (CS), Rehema Kajungu (RK), Coleen Heemskerk (CH), Michael Barnett (MB)

CHS Alliance staff Rosa Argent (RA), Jon Beloe (JB), Bonaventure Sokpoh (BS), Tanya Wood (TW)

External Manuel Bessler, Grand Bargain Ambassador (MB), Gemma Connell, UN OCHA (GC), Aleksesjs Ivashukm, Apatride Network (AI), Nour Jarrouj, Moving Minds Alliance (NJ), Christian Saunders, UN (CS), Peter Taylor, FCDO (PT)

I- Session One: Welcome

Bonaventure Sokpoh (BS) presided over the session, warmly welcoming all participants to the General Assembly. He highlighted the importance of the Alliance as a critical network for enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of aid. Bonaventure opened the event in conversation with Nour Jarrouj (NJ) and Aleksejs Ivashuk (AI), from the UNHCR Refugee Advisory Board, who shared their expertise on the importance of amplifying the voices and perspectives of people affected by aid to drive meaningful improvements in the sector.

II- Session Two: Members' Vision

Shama Mall (SM) opened the second session as the Vice Chair of the Alliance and emphasised that listening to members is a core value of the network.

She underlined that it is the members who form the backbone of the Alliance, which has seen significant growth since the last General Assembly, now boasting over 230 members, with 46% being national NGOs.

SM highlighted that meaningful change stems from collective efforts and encouraged members to share their views. She then handed the floor back to BS to guide an interactive exercise using mentimeter that asked members to feedback on the following questions:

- [My organisation is committed to the CHS' Alliance because...](#)
- [As a network of organisations committed to the CHS Alliance's mission, we can create more meaningful change for people affected by crisis if...](#)

III- Session Three: Updates and Reflections

SM underscored the importance of member engagement and collaboration in ensuring the event's success. She explained that the General Assembly was specifically designed to gather valuable input from members to shape two key documents: the Strategy and the Statutes.

She provided an overview of the Governance Calendar, highlighting the upcoming 10-year anniversary and member meeting. Before moving forward, she invited participants to reflect on the Alliance's achievements over the past three years.

This session was opened with reflections from LG as Chair of the Board. The Finance, Risk, and Audit Committee (FRAC), Membership and Nominations Committee (MNC), People and Culture Committee, and Complaints Committee leads (SO, MM, SP, CSh) each provided a concise report on their key accomplishments, before the ED report was delivered by TW. A dynamic Q&A session lead by MS then followed.

IV- Session Four: Strategy Process

This session was run by Jon Beloe (JB) and focused on the Strategy Process, providing an overview of the timeline for updating the strategy. A refreshed proposal will be presented to members by mid-June, including a suggested extension until the end of 2027.

The session also introduced upcoming follow-up discussions to gather members' input on key strategic questions. These discussions will focus on shaping the future across three strategic pillars: Community impact, organisational impact, and a more accountable aid system.

V- Session Five: Impact on Communities

Strategic session #1 was led by Rhema Kajungu (RK) and JB and explored how the CHS Alliance can drive impactful improvements for communities through the new CHS LOCALED approach.

Participants were divided into groups to discuss the following key questions:

- What are your hopes for this new approach?
- What challenges might we encounter with this new approach?

The discussions provided valuable insights to refine this initiative further.

VI- Session Six: Election Results

This session celebrated the announcement of the newly elected board members and confirmed Lola (LG) as the Chair for the next term. LG expressed her gratitude to Shama and the outgoing board members, recognising their invaluable contributions to the Alliance.

The seven elected or re-elected members of the Governing Board were announced by RK as returning officer for the election, noting that quorum had been reached.

- Susan Otieno, Executive Director, ActionAid International Kenya
- Anna Karoliina Muinonen, Senior Quality and Accountability Advisor, Finn Church Aid
- Michael Wickham Moriarty, Director of Strategic Finance, Plan International
- Palwashay Arbab, Head of Communications, Community World Service Asia
- Catherine Skehan, Head of Evaluation, Learning and Accountability, Action Against Hunger

- Brian Beckett, Director of Performance and Accountability, British Red Cross
- Anani Ghida, Founder and Director, ABBAD - Resource Centre for Gender Equality

- Michael Barnett, George Washington University, was elected as an independent for a second term.

The session concluded with the confirmation of the Auditors (PricewaterhouseCoopers Switzerland) for the next term, marking a positive and forward-looking close to the election process.

Meeting ended 15.48pm, 5th December 2024

Meeting resumed 11.00am, 6th December 2024

VII- Opening remarks from Manuel Bessler, Grand Bargain Ambassador

Manuel Bessler emphasised the importance of placing people at the heart of humanitarian decision-making, highlighting that the impact of actions and the commitments made are more crucial than the actions themselves. He also stressed the need to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders by fostering better communication and deeper mutual understanding, considering this a significant step forward. Finally, he reiterated that while mastering standards is essential, it must be accompanied by concrete implementation.

VIII- Session seven: CHS Alliance: Impact on organisation's effectiveness

Strategic session #2 was run by Coleen Hemskeerck (CH) and opened with an overview of the significance of CHS verification, highlighting recent trends and progress made. Participants then worked in breakout groups to discuss what aspects of the CHS verification process are working well, areas that could be improved, and ideas to help more organisations demonstrate how they meet CHS Commitments.

After the group discussions, the leads shared their key insights during a plenary session. The session concluded with a summary of actionable recommendations to enhance the verification process and better support organisations in meeting CHS standards.

IX- Session seven: CHS Updated Strategy and Statutes

This session was led by Lola Gostelow (LG) and Rosa Argent (RA) and began with a reminder of the ongoing process for updating the strategy, emphasizing the importance of aligning the strategy with the statutes.

The discussion on statutes reviewed the current proposed changes, which had been previously shared with participants. The updates were also outlined through slides to ensure clarity and accessibility. No voting took place. Regarding membership categories, the session explored the opportunities and challenges in defining these categories and the associated requirements, to align with the strategy update. Members were asked to share their initial views in a Zoom poll and the poll will be shared with members post the GA for those who wanted more time to share their views.

The session concluded with a summary of next steps and a focus on maintaining coherence across all related updates.

X- Impact on a more accountable aid system

Strategic session #3 focused on the growing global movement demanding accountability to people affected by crises and examined the role of the Alliance in influencing collective accountability to people affected by crises.

The session featured a panel discussion led by Michael Barnett (MB) that gave members the opportunity to hear external perspectives from donor and UN representatives, Gemma Connell OCHA, Christian Saunders, UN, and Peter Taylor (FCDO) on how the Alliance can advance efforts to improve collective accountability.

XI – Closing

The GA was formally closed by LG after some reflections from TW and herself as Chair.

Annexes

II- Session Two: Members' Vision

MY ORGANISATION IS COMMITTED TO THE CHS ALLIANCE BECAUSE...

Quality and accountability is important

It is a framework that supports us to deliver our mission with quality to affected people

We want to continuously improve our quality and accountability, and be part of a movement to support each other

It is important we are accountable to the people we help

Quality and accountability is a core element of shifting the power to local actors

We want to continuously work to listen to communities to improve services and reduce the risk of harm

AS A NETWORK OF ORGANISATIONS COMMITTED TO THE CHS ALLIANCE'S MISSION, WE CAN CREATE MORE MEANINGFUL CHANGE FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRISIS IF...

We build local capacities

Collaborate not compete

Share best practice and hold each other to account

If we consult with communities

We engage directly with people affected

Localised response and practices

V- Session Five: Impact on Communities**Hopes for CHS LOCALED:**

- Enhance direct accountability and create stronger feedback loops
- Promote collaboration, co-creation, and peer-to-peer learning
- Increase inclusivity, including people with disabilities.
- Encourage system-level change and better adoption of the CHS
- Ensures the approach is adaptable to diverse cultural and local contexts.
- Reduce reporting burdens and foster honest discussions about gaps.

Challenges for CHS LOCALED:

- Accessibility concerns, including language and technological barriers
- Funding constraints and potential resistance from international actors to relinquish control
- Balancing varied capacities and resources of participating organisations.
- Risks of becoming another coordination initiative without meaningful impact.
- Addressing sensitivities around data sharing and evidence from affected communities.
- Ensuring clear communication about the initiative's purpose and securing community resources for participation.