CHSAlliance

**Core Humanitarian Standard
on Quality and Accountability**

Self-Assessment Manual

April 2025

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Introduction

The **Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS)** sets out nine commitments to ensure that organisations support people and communities affected by crisis and vulnerability in ways that respect their rights and dignity and promote their primary role in finding solutions to the crises they face.

The **CHS Alliance** is a global alliance of more than 240 national and international humanitarian and development organisations committed to making aid work better for people. We believe organisations deliver higher quality, more effective aid when they are accountable to the people they serve. All organisations working with people affected by crisis are encouraged to measure how they are meeting their Commitments through CHS Verification.

This manual presents the methodology, tools and processes for organisations conducting their **CHS Self-Assessment**. By conducting a CHS Self-Assessment, organisations…

- **LEARN AND IMPROVE**, as by conducting a CHS Self-Assessment, an organisation can reflect, learn, and improve on how it applies the CHS in multiple ways, including:

  - Systems and processes in place at organisational level ensuring the quality and accountability of interventions.
  - Implementation of those policies in the projects and activities.
  - Inclusion of quality and accountability measures in partnership practices and tools.

In addition, each organisation will automatically assess its performance on **Protection against Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH)** which is mainstreamed in the CHS. The CHS Alliance has used requirements from the nine CHS Commitments to develop the **PSEAH Index** that reflects how well the organisation performs in this area.

- **CONTRIBUTE TO RAISING THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES IN THE AID SECTOR,** and make concrete progress by enabling different actors to speak a common language and to use common tools.

- **SHOW THE ORGANISATION'S COMMITMENT** to working on and improving the quality and accountability of its activities towards people affected by crisis.

- **RAISE AWARENESS OF STAFF** in the organisation about the Core Humanitarian Standard and the commitment made by the organisation to apply it in its work.

- **BENCHMARK AGAINST OTHER ORGANISATIONS VERIFIED IN THE SECTOR,** by comparing results and identifying where fruitful exchanges of good practices might be possible.

- **PREPARE FOR AN EXTERNAL AUDIT AGAINST THE CHS,** when and if the organisation wants to continue towards an Independent Verification or a Certification through HQAI.

About the CHS Self-Assessment

The CHS Alliance has developed a standard process and tools to allow organisations to measure their performance against the CHS. These are designed to help organisations undertake the Self-Assessment in as robust and representative a way as possible, while adding as little as possible to workload. Organisations are strongly encouraged to use the process and tools including the **CHS Commitment Tracker**, an online platform that facilitates the self-assessment process. However, recognising that the exercise remains a Self-Assessment, organisations who may struggle with some of the steps or requirements are welcome to engage with the CHS Alliance team to find tailored arrangements to help them.

A Self-Assessment is a three-year cycle of continuous learning and improvement: once the self-assessment is completed for the first time, it must feed into an improvement plan. This process and plan should be renewed every three years to measure progress and ensure that the improvement plan remains up to date.

Overall, the Self-Assessment process follows **three distinct phases**:

The length of the Self-Assessment varies from one organisation to another based on size and available resources. However, based on the experience of user organisations, it takes on average three to six months from the preparation phase to the final validation of the assessment.

The Self-Assessment triangulates information from **four different sources of information**:

Systems and processes – Organisation's are required to have systems and processes in place to ensure that each CHS Commitment is applied systematically throughout the organisation and its work

Staff – Staff offer important perspectives on the extent to which the organisation meets the different requirements of the CHS.

Partners - Organisations collaborate with other organisations in various ways to support people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability. Partners' opinions and feedback are potentially a crucial source of information for many organisations. The nature of partnerships varies across different contexts, organisations, and programming. Regardless of whether an organisation works with people and communities directly or in partnership with other organisations, the CHS verification processes are designed to assess its performance. The focus of the assessment is on how the organisations ensure that quality and accountability results are ultimately achieved for people and communities through the collaborative efforts of their partnership.

Feedback from affected people and communities - People and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability are at the heart of the CHS. As defined in the CHS 2024 Glossary, this includes the totality of women, men, girls and boys with different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities who are affected by disasters, conflict, poverty or other crises and challenges. Therefore, perspectives from community members on how different requirements are being met are critical in any verification process. The CHS Verification Framework requires confirmation from people at the community level for all CHS requirements, where relevant. To conclude whether "People confirm that..." something is in place or not, it is important to look for *a general trend* across different groups of people and communities' representatives.

Related CHS Verification Tools

There are a set of CHS Verification Tools that can support organisations on their verification journey and self-assessment:

- **CHS Verification Framework** – outlines the expected results of meeting each requirement of the nine CHS commitments. It specifies measurable components for each requirement, ensuring a common understanding of what to verify to attest that the requirement is met. It is designed as the foundation for all types of CHS verification.

- **CHS Verification Guide** – is a practical reference tool designed to support organisations in verifying their alignment with the CHS. Building upon the CHS Verification Framework, this guide provides additional insights into what to look for when assessing compliance with CHS commitments, offering practical examples and possible sources of evidence. Following the 2024 revision of the CHS, this guide ensures a consistent and structured approach to navigate the verification process with clear, practical, and adaptable methodologies. It is an essential resource for supporting organisations in demonstrating and improving their accountability to people and communities. It is not intended to introduce additional requirements but to facilitate a consistent and effective verification process.

- **Mapping of CHS 2024 against CHS 2014** – is a table which shows how CHS 2014 indicators are now covered in CHS 2024 requirements. This mapping can help organisations transition to the CHS 2024 when verifying and in different areas of their work.

Overview of CHS Self-Assessment Process & Tools

Preparation

To begin the CHS self-assessment, the organisation's focal point for the Self-Assessment needs to fill out **the preliminary survey**. This is an online survey about the organisation's size, structure, and countries of operation. It provides the CHS Alliance with the information necessary to define the scope and size of the sample for the feedback to be collected from staff, partners, and communities.

Once reviewed, the CHS Alliance grants the organisations' focal point access to the **CHS Commitment Tracker** where they will be assigned as the **Internal Lead Assessor** for their organisation. They will have access to their organisation's verification record which confirms the organisation's sample size and contains the links to the data collection surveys.

The **organisation communicates internally and externally** with relevant stakeholders, including staff and partner, to inform them about the launch of their CHS Self-Assessment.

The **focal point plans upcoming activities** with relevant colleagues. This includes:

- creation of an internal working group to work on the **Review of Organisational Approaches**;
- discussions with staff who will be taking part in the process through the **Staff Survey**;
- selection of partners who will be sent the **Partner Survey**;
- selection of countries where feedback from affected people and communities will be collected for the **Community Perception Survey**;

See Annex 1 for a preparation checklist that can be used to support the focal point with planning.

Data Collection

During this phase, data is collected from the **four sources of information** through surveys. All surveys are administered online through links provided by the CHS Alliance. However to support with data collection, offline versions of all surveys are linked below and are available on the CHS Self-Assessment website.

The CHS Self-Assessment uses different methods to calculate sample sizes depending on the source of information. The sample sizes provided are the minimum acceptable to make the samples as representative as possible, however the final sample size can be discussed with the CHS Alliance. See below for additional information about each data collection tool and its process and sampling methodology:

	Review of Organisational Approaches to CHS Commitments
Tool	A desk review of the organisation's existing **systems and processes** to ensure that each CHS Commitment is applied systematically throughout your organisation and its work, including how it works in partnership. The review is submitted through an online survey.
Process	The focal point facilitates and **works with the organisation's internal working group** made up of representatives of various departments/roles to complete the survey.
Sampling Methodology	Not applicable - **one survey** must be completed for the entire organisation.

	Staff Survey
Tool	An online perception survey to collect feedback from **staff** on how the organisation applies the CHS.
Process	The survey is shared with a representative sample of staff. The number is calculated to define a minimum number of responses expected, based on the overall number of staff working for the organisation. Each staff answers the survey individually. There are a total of **86 questions grouped around the nine CHS Commitments**: ▪ Commitment 1 = 13 questions related to information sharing, communication and meaningful participation. ▪ Commitment 2 = 9 questions related to providing timely and effective support based on an understanding of context and culture, and diverse capacities, vulnerabilities, needs, risks. ▪ Commitment 3 = 7 questions related to supporting locally led action and decision making. ▪ Commitment 4 = 7 questions related to not causing harm to people or the environment. ▪ Commitment 5 = 12 questions related to managing complaints. ▪ Commitment 6 = 5 questions related to coordination with other stakeholders and partnerships. ▪ Commitment 7 = 8 questions related to learning and improving using M&E data and feedback. ▪ Commitment 8 = 17 questions related to effective management of staff and volunteers. ▪ Commitment 9 = 8 questions related to managing resources ethically and responsibly At the start of the survey staff can choose which CHS Commitments they would like to answer questions about based on their role and experience within the organisation. The focal point may also assign staff to complete specific questions based on their expertise. **All staff will be asked to respond to the questions for Commitment 8.**
Sampling Methodology	The sample is based on this Sample Size Calculator which is commonly used in the field of social science research, as well as in the aid sector by organisations trying to determine representative sample sizes for conducting needs assessment or post-evaluation monitoring. **The confidence level is 95% and the confidence interval (or margin of error) is five for staff**.

	Partner Survey
Tool	An online perception survey to collect feedback from **partners** on how the organisation works in partnership to apply the CHS.
Process	The survey is shared with a representative sample of partners. The number is calculated based on the overall number of partners the organisation works with. **Only one response is expected from each partner organisation.**
Sampling Methodology	The sample is based on this Sample Size Calculator which is commonly used in the field of social science research, as well as in the aid sector by organisations trying to determine representative sample sizes for conducting needs assessment or post-evaluation monitoring). **The confidence level is 95% and the confidence interval (or margin of error) is five for partners**.

	Community Perception Survey
Tool	An online perception survey to collect feedback from **people and communities** on how the organisation applies the CHS.
Process	The organisation must **choose one** of two options to integrate feedback from people and communities into its self-assessment: • Option 1 – the organisation can **triangulate community perception data that it already has** from other tools/processes as part of their regular monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) activities such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews. **OR** • Option 2 – the organisation can **collect new data using a full community perception questionnaire** provided by CHS Alliance. The questionnaires should be administered by conducting key informant interviews.
Sampling Methodology	The sample is a minimum number of countries where community perception data should be collected. It is calculated based on the overall number of countries in which the organisation works. See Annex 2 for reference. • If the organisation chooses option 1, they must submit **one community perception survey from each country selected in the sample.** • If the organisation chooses option 2, a minimum requirement of **20 full community perception questionnaires from each country selected in the sample** is expected from the organisation.

Organisations are encouraged to meet the following criteria during data collection:

- **Gender and age balance** – Women, men, girls and boys of different ages should be invited to share their perceptions, especially for the interviews with communities. A target gender balance of 50% must be respected in the CHS Self-Assessment. Interviews should also be representative of the organisation's target groups.

- **Diversity and inclusion** – Special efforts should be made to reach out to individuals from marginalised and vulnerable groups identified by the organisation in its context analysis.

- **Responses from countries should be collected at all levels**, including across geographical locations (i.e., local, country, regional and/or headquarters) and levels of seniority.

Analysis and reporting

Once the sample size has been reached and data collection is closed, the focal point will be granted access to their results through **Verification Dashboards prepared by the CHS Alliance**. A debriefing can be organised with the CHS Alliance team to go through the dashboard results.

The focal point then develops a **Self-Assessment report** using the template provided by the CHS Alliance within the CHS Commitment Tracker or an offline template. The report includes the key Self-Assessment statistics revealed by the surveys, summary of findings and an **Improvement Plan**. It should be validated internally by the organisation's Senior Management before it is submitted to the CHS Alliance for review and validation.

Validation

The **validation** of the Self-Assessment is offered to __CHS Alliance members only__. After the organisation submits its summary report and improvement plan, the CHS Alliance will validate the self-assessment based on the following two criteria:

- The **organisation has self-assessed its performance against the nine commitments and 50 requirements of the CHS** using the process and tools proposed in this manual, or an alternative tailored approach discussed and agreed upon with the CHS Alliance team prior to the assessment.

- The Self-Assessment **summary report and improvement plan** has been developed, validated by the organisation's Senior Management, and submitted to the CHS Alliance.

Upon validation, the organisation will receive a **validation letter** from the CHS Alliance recognising that the organisation has completed a CHS Self-Assessment - using the tools and following the processes recommended by the CHS Alliance - and a **stamp**.

Scoring Methodology

The scoring methodology of the CHS self-assessment follows the scoring of the **CHS Verification Framework. See Annex 3** for reference. Scores provide the organisation with an **indication of how it performs in applying the CHS requirements.** Scores should always be complemented with the thorough analysis of all of the comments and observations shared through the surveys from the four sources of information. The table below gives more precise information on how each type of score is generated:

    = scores that are part of the PSEAH Index

CHS			Data Source for scoring			
Commitment	Requirement	Measurable Component	Community Perception Survey	Partner Survey	Staff Survey	Coherent Org Approach Survey
1	1.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	1.2	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	1.3	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	1.4	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	1.5	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	1.6	a		x		x
		b		x		x
		c		x		x
2	2.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	2.2	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	2.3	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	2.4	a	x		x	
	2.5	a	x		x	
	2.6	a		x		x
		b		x		x
		c		x		x

CHS			Data source for scoring			
Commitment	Requirement	Measurable Component	Community Perception Survey	Partner Survey	Staff Survey	Coherent Org Approach Survey
3	3.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	3.2	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	3.3	a	x		x	
	3.4	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	3.5	a		x		x
		b				x
4	4.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	4.2	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	4.3	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	4.4	a				x
		b		x		x
	4.5	a		x		x
5	5.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	5.2	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	5.3	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	5.4	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c	x		x	
	5.5	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	5.6	a		x		x
		b		x		x
6	6.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	6.2	a		x	x	
	6.3	a		x	x	
		b		x	x	
	6.4	a				x
		b		x		x

Commitment	Requirement	Measurable Component	Community Perception Survey	Partner Survey	Staff Survey	Coherent Org Approach Survey
6	6.4	c		x		x
CHS			**Data Source for scoring**			
7	7.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	7.2	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	7.3	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	7.4	a	x		x	
		b			x	
	7.5	a		x		x
		b				x
8	8.1	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
		c			x	
	8.2	a			x	
		b			x	
	8.3	a			x	
		b	x		x	
	8.4	a			x	
		b	x		x	
		c			x	
	8.5	a			x	
		b			x	
		c			x	
		d			x	
	8.6	a			x	
		b			x	
		c			x	
	8.7	a		x		x
9	9.1	a	x		x	
	9.2	a	x		x	
	9.3	a			x	
		b			x	
	9.4	a	x		x	
		b	x		x	
	9.5	a			x	
		b			x	
	9.6	a		x		x

Annexes

Annex 1: Self-Assessment preparation checklist

Before beginning the Data Collection phase, there are a few preparatory actions that should be taken to ensure that the rest of the Self-Assessment will run smoothly. The following list is a suggestion for the focal point of the Self-Assessment in an organisation:

☐	**Get buy-in from your Senior Management**, ensuring that you have necessary resources for completing the Self-Assessment and a firm commitment to allocate resources to implement the improvement plan at the end of the process. If possible, an internal message should be sent to everyone in the organisation to announce the launch of the Self-Assessment and explain why the organisation is undertaking the exercise.
☐	**Gather a working group**, comprised of representatives of various departments/roles in the organisation to support the self-assessment process, **specifically the Review of Organisational Approaches to CHS Commitments survey**. The table below can help organisations identify the most relevant colleagues to include in the working group and/or consult for the survey: <table><tr><th>Department/Role</th><th>CHS Commitment</th></tr><tr><td>Programmes</td><td>1 – 7</td></tr><tr><td>Policy</td><td>1 – 7</td></tr><tr><td>Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>Communications</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>People Management / Human Resources</td><td>8</td></tr><tr><td>Finance, Logistics and Administration</td><td>9</td></tr></table>
☐	**Select partners you want to get feedback from** taking into account the mandate (humanitarian, development, both), location (country or region) and years of experience working with your organisation
☐	**If applicable, select the countries where community perception data will be collected from**, considering the number of years your organisation has been active in the country, and the type of intervention you implement in the country (humanitarian, development, both).
☐	**Develop a work plan** for the Self-Assessment, taking into account the data collection and the reporting phase.

Annex 2: Criteria for a representative sample

Number of country programmes	Minimum sample size
1 – 2	1
3 – 6	2
7 – 12	3
13 – 20	4
21 – 30	5
31 – 42	6
43 – 56	7
57 – 72	8

Annex 3: The CHS scoring grid

Scores	Meaning for all verification scheme options, including self-assessment and third-party audits	Guidance for scoring requirements
0	Your organisation does not currently meet the requirement and indicates a major issue that is so significant that the organisation's ability to meet the commitment is compromised. For third-party auditing schemes: • Independent verification: A major weakness. • Certification: A major non-conformity that compromises the integrity of the commitment which leads to a major corrective action request (CAR).	To give a score 0, **not all** of the measurable components of the requirement are verified to be in place **and** the issue(s) identified are so significant that the organisation's ability to meet the **commitment** is compromised.

1	Your organisation does not currently meet the requirement. For third-party auditing schemes: • Independent verification: A minor weakness. • Certification: A minor non-conformity that compromises the integrity of the requirement which leads to a minor corrective action request (CAR).	To give a score 1, **not all** of the measurable components of the requirement are verified to be in place.
2	Your organisation currently meets the requirement, but there is an opportunity for improvement that deserves attention so that the requirement is not compromised in the future. For third-party auditing schemes: • Independent verification: Requirement is met with an observation. • Certification: Conformity with an observation.	To give a score 2, **all measurable components** of a requirement are verified to be in place, however, one or more opportunities for improvement are observed which deserve attention so that the requirement is not compromised in the future.
3	Your organisation meets the requirement, with organisational systems ensuring it is being met consistently throughout the organisation. For third-party auditing schemes: • Independent verification: Requirement is met. • Certification: Conformity.	To give a score 3, **all measurable components** of a requirement are verified to be in place.
4	Your organisation meets the requirement in an exemplary way, demonstrating innovation and/or special recognition of performance, and organisational systems ensure this high quality throughout the organisation. For third-party auditing schemes: • Independent verification: Requirement is met in an exemplary way. • Certification: Conformity in an exemplary way.	To give a score 4, **all measurable components** of a requirement are verified to be in place. **In addition**, the following must be verified: • An organisational system (or systems) that demonstrate an innovative approach to meeting the requirement at a high standard throughout the organisation are in place. and/or • The organisation has been awarded special recognition of performance in relation to meeting the requirement at a high standard, and this is built into organisational systems so that the high quality is ensured throughout the organisation.