

ACCOUNTABILITY IN ACTION

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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“I am very proud to be part of an expanding movement of courageous and committed actors that are working hard to change, and to bring change.”

Lola Gostelow,
Independent – Chair of Board

FOREWORD

2025 was a year of profound turmoil. The escalation of terrifying conflicts, intensifying climate crisis, alongside the sharpest contraction in global aid funding in decades created a perfect storm. As a Secretariat, we felt this pressure acutely, navigating difficult decisions as we joined our members in feeling the weight of steep and sudden financial cuts.

However, these challenges only heightened what is at stake for the mission of the CHS Alliance and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). In an era of shrinking resources, accountability is no longer a “value-add” - it is the baseline for legitimacy.

In this climate of volatility, 2025 proved that our greatest strength lies in our collaboration- moving towards collective, systemic solutions. Whether through the launch of CHS Country Cooperatives or the doubling of engagement in our Harmonised Reporting Scheme, we continued to prove that accountability is a shared responsibility. By aligning around collective solutions, sharing learning, and pooling resources we become a movement that advances safer, more accountable, and effective aid.

Critically, this movement is increasingly driven from the ground up. Despite the strain on the sector, CHS Alliance grew at pace, finishing the year with 280 members, with 60% now comprised of national and local NGOs. This shift ensures that the CHS is not just a global standard, but a locally-owned reality.

We extend our sincere thanks to our members, partners, and donors. Your principled leadership is the reason the CHS commitments held strong in 2025. Together, we are building an aid system that is not only more effective but more accountable to the communities it works alongside .

With gratitude,

On behalf of the entire CHS Alliance team

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 – A Year of Resilience and Determined Collaboration



The year 2025 changed almost everything in the aid sector, mostly showing its vulnerabilities and imperfections. I am glad CHS Alliance stood strong addressing challenges by focusing on accountability.”

Yegana Guliyeva,
Independent – Board Member



Even in times of turmoil, being part of a Board that champions accountability gave me hope. Hope that humanitarian action can remain principled and people-centered.”

Palwashay Arbab,
CWSA – Board,
Safeguarding Lead

In 2025, the CHS Alliance navigated a “perfect storm” of escalating global conflict, climate crises, and unprecedented funding contractions. Yet, the CHS Alliance movement rallied, maintaining its values and commitments to people affected by crisis.

A Global Standard, Locally Rooted

The CHS is only as powerful as its application in the most challenging contexts. In 2025, we saw the shift of how these universal commitments were channelled into local action.

- **National Leadership:** A landmark **60% of our 280 members** are now national and local NGOs.
- **More Verification Pathways:** Development of the **Independent Validation of the Self-Assessment (IV-SA)**, providing another option to balance accessibility with rigour needed for improving accountability.
- **Country-Led Accountability:** The launch of **CHS Country Cooperatives** formalised context-specific collaboration, allowing members to drive quality and safety at the community level.

Integrity in Action: Strengthening the PSEAH Ecosystem

In 2025, we continued to build a suite of support grounded in a **victim/survivor-centred approach**, linking reporting, recruitment safeguards, and investigations.

- **Harmonised Reporting:** The Harmonised Reporting Scheme (HRS) more than doubled participation to **102 organisations**, half of which are national actors.
- **Closing Recruitment Loopholes:** The Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS) expanded to **382 organisations**, preventing **677 perpetrators** from moving undetected across the sector.
- **Professionalising Investigations:** Over **1,300 individuals, 63% women**, across 108 countries trained through the Investigator Qualification Training Scheme (IQTS), with 270 certified SEAH investigators, operating in 69 countries.

2025 Impact at a Glance



MEMBERSHIP

280

total members,
with 60% now national
and local NGOs.



VERIFICATION

194

organisations
completed verification;
45 of these national NGOs.



SAFEGUARDING

1,300+

individuals trained
in investigations.



TRANSPARENCY ON SEAH

102

organisations
now part of the Harmonised
Reporting Scheme (HRS).



SAFER RECRUITMENT

382

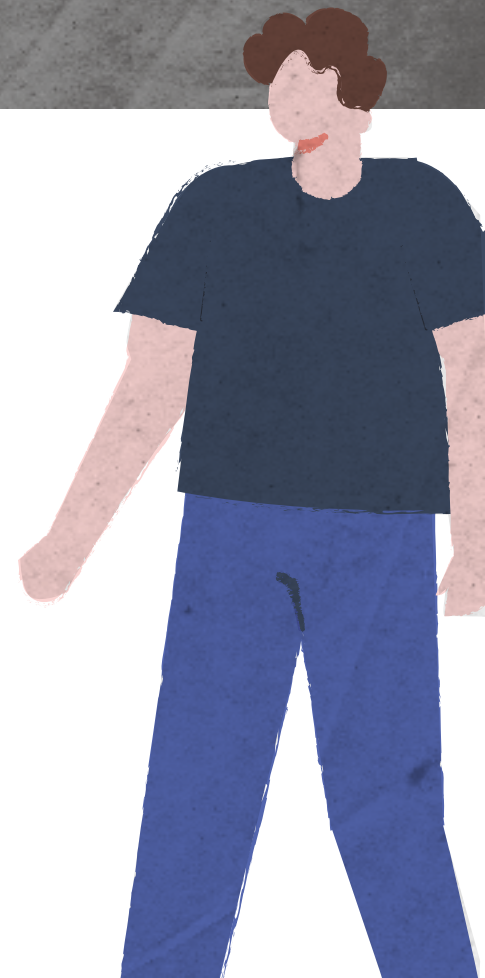
organisations
globally using the Misconduct
Disclosure Scheme (MDS), with
677 applications being rejected
since its conception.

Systemic Accountability: Convergence and Recognition

The basis of the CHS is a collective endeavour, putting aside logos to unite around the commitments made to people affected by crisis.

- **Global Recognition** – 491 organisations have endorsed the CHS, 12 donors require or formally request the use of the CHS and a further 15 donors and key stakeholders recognise the CHS without making it a formal requirement.
- **Due Diligence Passporting:** FCDO took an important step to promote accountability and reduce overlap by announcing that they will passport CHS Certification in their due diligence process.

As we move into 2026, the CHS Alliance remains committed to turning these collective promises into a safer, more effective reality for the communities we serve.



HOW WE MET OUR OBJECTIVES IN 2025



Improved Delivery of the CHS Commitments

The CHS Verification Landscape: Momentum in the Face of Adversity.

In a year defined by difficult trade-offs and global instability, the CHS Alliance stood firm, ensuring that the Core Humanitarian Standard—the bedrock of how we work for and with people in crisis—remained a non-negotiable priority.

Despite the most challenging operating environments in decades, participation in CHS verification processes continued to expand. As of December 2025, **194 organisations** had successfully completed a formal verification option:



112

Self-Assessments



35

Independent Verifications



47

Certifications

Critically, the largest surge in new participants came from **national NGOs** highlighting a growing appetite for formal recognition and verification by local actors. This shift represents a fundamental change in the accountability landscape, empowering local actors to lead the way in a more equitable and effective aid system.



Quality and accountability to affected populations must to remain at the center of all our work.”

Coleen Heemskerk,
Act Church of Sweden
- Board Member

Enabling Organisations to meet their Commitments

The true value of the CHS Alliance lies in accompanying organisations as they strive to meet their commitments. Over the past year, we delivered a comprehensive suite of tools specifically aligned with the updated **2024 CHS** to ensure a seamless transition. Key resources included:

- **Guidance for the new CHS:** New tools aligned to the 2024 CHS were delivered. This included a comprehensive **Verification Guide**, the **CHS 2024 Self-Assessment Manual**, and an updated **PSEAH Index**.
- **Updated CHS Commitment Tracker:** In line with the new manual and guidelines, the CHS Commitment Tracker—the online platform supporting the self-assessment process—was updated to reflect these changes. The platform now serves over **190 active participants** as a vital tool for benchmarking performance and helping drive continuous improvement with tools available in Arabic, French, and Spanish.

Beyond the Secretariat's efforts, the most profound impact is seen in the **surge of member's championing the CHS**. Members are providing targeted support to their own staff and partners and sharing their learning with others in the **Verification Community of Practice**.

Adapting the Verification Scheme to meet the expanding needs

As the diversity of organisations engaging with the CHS expands, so too must our approach. In 2025, we made significant progress to ensure the Verification Scheme is meeting the changing sector dynamics.

This resulted in a decision to introduce a new verification modality: the **Independent Validation of the Self-Assessment (IV-SA)**. By combining the internal learning and improvement benefits of a self-assessment with an external layer of independent assurance, the IV-SA will provide a limited, yet rigorous external assurance to enhance the accessibility of the pathways for CHS Verification. Full roll-out will take place in 2026.



"I'm super excited to have a new option in the verification scheme that helps organisations have their self-assessment recognised and acknowledged."

Catherine Skehan,
Action Against Hunger – Board Member



"In a challenging year for the sector, I was proud that the CHS Alliance remained principled and practical, supporting members to uphold standards even under pressure."

Marie-Claire Dejean-Pannier,
Danish Refugee Council
– Board Member
and HR focal Point



OBJECTIVE 2

A stronger CHS Alliance Movement

A Landmark Shift to a Locally-Led Movement

2025 saw the CHS Alliance mature into a truly global movement for more accountable, effective, and safer aid.



EXPANDING OUR REACH:

We welcomed 38 new member organisations throughout the year, expanding our network to **280 members**.



NEW CONTEXTS:

Our reach extended into new countries, in 2025 we welcomed members from **Belgium, Honduras, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Niger, Ukraine and Venezuela** for the first time.



THE POWER OF LOCALISATION:

This expansion was pivotal for tipping the CHS Alliance membership to have a **majority, 60%, national and local NGOs making up the membership**.



“Our membership has grown to its highest level yet. This growth isn’t just about numbers — it’s about the organizations committing to quality and highest form of accountability to affected people. Each new member brings fresh perspectives, and a spark of energy that makes the Alliance stronger to overcome challenges that seem insurmountable.”

Rehema Kajungu,
TPO Uganda – Board Member





I'm looking forward to seeing members collaborate and work together to help each other learn and improve against the Standard; the Country Cooperatives are going to be an exciting initiative to facilitate this... I would really encourage members to proactively share their lessons learned through the various avenues the CHS Alliance has, to help us all capitalize on the wealth of knowledge and experience across the Alliance."

Carly Sheehan,
Oxfam – Vice Chair of Board

A powerful network for Peer learning

2025 saw a notable shift towards working at country and local levels, further driving the success of the CHS. This also means ensuring the CHS is known and understood at the community level—helping bring aid actors closer to the communities they serve and strengthening accountability.

The CHS exists to ensure communities know exactly what to expect from aid actors and 2025 saw a notable shift towards country- and local-level working, strengthening accountability further.

This is why the growth and diversity of the membership is so critical. It translates into a powerful network of peer learners. Our **Communities of Practice** grew in size and enabled members to share challenges, test solutions and learn together, reinforcing accountability as a shared responsibility rather than an individual organisational burden.

We saw a ground swell of CHS Alliance members actively supporting their partners to meet CHS Commitments and hence amplify the mission of the Alliance for the local communities.

Our ambition: CHS LOCALED At the end of the 2024 the Alliance community were excited about a new and much-needed programme called CHS LOCALED. This was to activate a network of peer assessors to be able to collectively assess and support organisations meet their CHS Commitments. While this programme was launched at the end of 2024, it had to be stopped at the start of 2025 due to USAID funding cuts.

Our adaptation: CHS Country Cooperatives Strengthening accountability at the country level remained a central priority and without the resources to meet all the ambitions of the CHS LOCALED, the members rallied and launched the CHS Country Cooperatives in late 2025. This is a powerful step in the formalisation of country-led accountability and how the CHS translates to local realities.

These platforms bring together CHS Alliance members within the same context to strengthen collaboration, peer learning, and continuous improvement. The Cooperatives aim to translate collective commitments into coordinated, country-led action that delivers safer, more accountable, and higher-quality support adapted to the specific needs of communities affected by crisis. A number of countries have already started the process, and we are excited to see where the future will take us.

Looking ahead to 2026 the secretariat will push forward to find ways to resource the collective assessments, to truly bring the learning to where it matters most, at the community level.

OBJECTIVE 3

Integrity in Action – Strengthening the Prevention of Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH) is the cornerstone of a trusted humanitarian system. In 2025, the Alliance continued to ensure practical and pragmatic approaches to meet some of the accountability gaps surrounding PSEAH, including safer recruitment, harmonised reporting, and reinforcing investigative capacity.

Data-driven decisions: Harmonised Reporting Scheme

The number of organisations using the SEAH HRS doubled to 102, with over half being national actors. The scheme provides an important and credible overview of SEAH trends, providing a sobering look at the challenges faced. For example, two out of every five victims are children. Only one in three cases are substantiated and just half of this result in dismissal. Only one in five incidents are reported directly by survivors, and only half of those survivors receive immediate support.

Data is not only diagnostic; these figures are used as a call to action: to better protect vulnerable individuals and ensure safe and trusted complaint mechanisms are in place, backed by credible investigative capacity.

The growth in organisations participating has been complemented by growing donor support, with Irish Aid and ECHO encouraging the use of the HRS. The CHS Alliance has also joined forces with the UN to produce joint analysis of the SEAH situation using HRS and UN iReport data for the first time.

Safer recruitment: Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS)

The MDS, delivered with the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, expanded to 382 organisations globally, with increasing participation from local organisations, preventing known perpetrators from moving undetected between employers. In 2025 over 29,000 recruitments were checked using MDS, since its conception **677 applications have been rejected** based on MDS information

Professionalising Investigations: Train–Sustain–Retain

Reporting is only effective if it leads to a professional response. Through the **Investigator Qualification Training Scheme (IQTS)**, we are building global expertise that is locally available:

- A **Global Network**: Over **1,300 individuals** across **108 countries** have completed IQTS training, with **270 certified investigators** now active in **69 countries**.

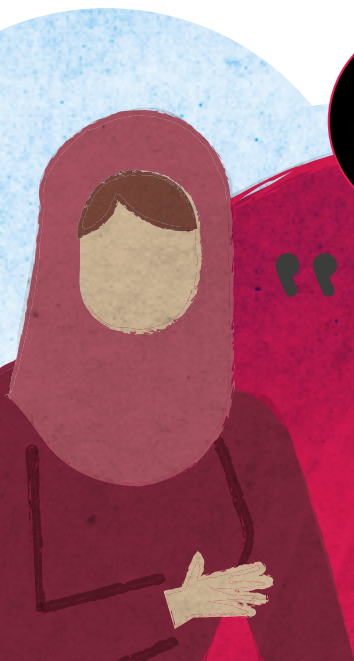
Resilience in Delivery: When US funding cuts threatened this programmes, CHS Alliance worked with our partner **Humentum** to find a new way of delivering, with Humentum providing online delivery and CHS Alliance delivering vital in-person training including with the UN and RC / RC Movement in Nigeria and Ethiopia.



Looking ahead, I want the Alliance to continue strengthening safeguarding standards and expanding the reach of its PSEAH work. For me, this is about more than compliance, it's about dignity and protection for communities in fragile contexts."

Palwashay Arbab

CWSA – Board, Safeguarding Lead





Conflicts are deepening, humanitarian space is shrinking, and communities are paying the price. In this environment, the Alliance has an important role to play in ensuring that accountability does not get set aside in the name of urgency. My ambition is for CHS Allianceis to step up as a stronger voice for communities who are not being heard, and to hold the sector to its commitments even when that is uncomfortable.”



Anani Ghida,
ABAAD - Board Member

Working to better understand and address local realities

Strengthening systems requires both global alignment and local ownership. The Closing the Accountability Gap programme demonstrated how to operationalise a survivor-centred approach in practice. With support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, key guidance from this programme was translated into French, Arabic, and Spanish.

In Ethiopia, a session in Bahir Dar convened 18 organisations, including GBV and Child Protection actors, to strengthen understanding of survivor journeys, referral pathways and coordinated response mechanisms.

In 2026, we will build on this work and launch the **EMPOWER programme**, a three-year initiative in Bangladesh and Ethiopia. This programme will focus on improving survivor-centred access to justice and positioning Women’s Rights Organisations as the primary leaders in SEAH prevention.

Collective Solutions to PSEAH

Protecting people from SEAH requires not only strong individual organisational practices but also collective solutions. With funding cuts having a detrimental effect on PSEAH gains, CHS Alliance launched a PSEAH Fund at the end of 2025. This encompasses the above-mentioned schemes and programmes. We are grateful for the support and commitment the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office has shown to the PSEAH Fund and look forward to inviting other investors to contribute.



OBJECTIVE 4

A more accountable Aid System

From Fragmentation to Convergence

In an era of shrinking resources, the “luxury of fragmentation” is no longer a possibility. This section highlights our work to align with the ongoing changes in the global humanitarian architecture, ensuring that the CHS and its broader mission of accountability to affected people is a bedrock of efficient, functional working realities across countries and funding streams.

Donor Recognition: A Powerful Catalyst for Quality and Accountability

Recognition from funding bodies is a vital driver for the widespread adoption of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). When donors endorse and require CHS verification, they do more than demand compliance; they signal that quality and accountability are non-negotiable foundations of effective aid.

In 2025, the CHS Alliance accelerated this momentum by moving from individual donor conversations to a more structured, collective approach:

- **Member-Led Advocacy:** We launched the **CHS Donor Recognition Working Group (WG)** in late 2024, which became a vibrant forum for strategic advice in 2025. This group brings together members and partners to share evidence and influence how funders adopt the CHS into their policies.

- **A trusted credible standard:** Major donors increasingly view CHS verification as a solid indicator of an organisation’s commitment to quality and accountability. In 2025, we saw a clear trajectory of greater donor confidence, with more funding bodies requesting CHS verification as a prerequisite for multi-year partnerships. New pooled funds and foundations, such as Sweden’s Radiohjälpen Foundation, or the Sahel Regional Fund, are using or requesting CHS Verification for humanitarian applicants to ensure consistent quality and accountability across its funded projects.
- **Strategic Alignment:** In cooperation with our partner **HQAI**, a number of mapping exercises were conducted of the CHS against donor frameworks and due diligence processes. For example, mapping of the **Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (CAPSEAH)**, confirmed that the CHS 2024 continues to meet all CAPSEAH minimum actions. Work was also initiated to map the CHS against the Netherlands-based PARTOS 9001 standard certification, to be completed in 2026.



Passporting: Driving Efficiency and Localisation

While recognition sets the standard, **passporting** provides the practical efficiency needed in a resource-constrained environment. Passporting—using CHS verification to satisfy donor due diligence requirements—is a key systems change approach to reducing duplication and lessening the heavy administrative burden on aid organisations.

- **Reducing Duplication:** By aligning the CHS with donor due diligence systems, we can actively reduce the burden of duplicative, overlapping audits. In this regard, in 2025 we have witnessed substantial progress, as for instance with:
 - **FCDO (UK)**, who now provides a streamlined due diligence process for CHS-certified organisations.
 - **Sida (Sweden)**, who actively incentivises CHS verification by offering an option to cover up to 80% of CHS Certification costs for its partners.
 - **OCHA Country and Regional Pooled Funds Passporting Pilot:** A major 2025 achievement was the completion of strategic mapping between CHS certification and OCHA Pooled Funds' Implementing Partner Assessments. This work has paved the way for a formal passporting procedure and a pilot programme launching in early 2026.

- **Sahel Regional Fund** requests evidence of CHS verification and several CHS-audited organisations in Burkina Faso saw their CHS audit results passported for eligibility to the fund.
- **Empowering Local Actors:** Passporting is a critical tool for localisation, as it allows organisations, including national and local NGOs—who now make up 60% of our Alliance—to use the accepted CHS verification to unlock funding without jumping through different, often contradictory, donor hoops.

Scaling the Solution

In 2026, the Alliance will undertake a dedicated scoping project to further position CHS verification within the complex global due diligence landscape. We will identify the remaining barriers to formal recognition and develop targeted advocacy to ensure that every organisation committed to the CHS is recognised for its integrity, allowing more time and resources to be spent where they matter most: with the communities we serve.



My hope for the future is to see more CHS Verification options integrated into more due-diligence passporting mechanisms, so that more international funding can go directly to actors best placed to respond to needs."

Lola Gostelow,
Independent – Chair of Board

LOOKING FORWARD

At the end of 2025 we launched our new strategy: [Collective Solutions for Accountable Aid](#). This strategy responds to the current challenges in the sector, charting the way forward for the Alliance from 2026 to 2030 with the goal of a *global movement working together to make aid more accountable, more effective, and safer*.



“I see CHS Alliance as a key driver influencing the future of aid architecture by amplifying the voices of crisis affected communities.”

Anna Karoliina Muinonen,
Finn Church Aid – Board Member



“My hope is that we fulfil the potential of being part of an alliance by working more effectively together to achieve lasting improvements in how we deliver with quality and accountability.”

Brian Beckett,
British Red Cross
– Board Member

This bold new strategy seeks to truly put people at the centre, with a dual focus on enhancing organisations’ capacity to improve the quality, accountability and safety of assistance and harnessing the influence of our global movement to create a more accountable, a safer, and more locally led aid system. The CHS Alliance will advance this strategy through four areas of focus:

Continuous Improvement - Organisations can access guidance, tools, and support to verify how they are meeting the CHS commitments and make needed improvements.

Courageous Collaboration - Through a growing network, organisations assist each other through peer learning opportunities and the sharing of resources, innovations, and expertise. This strengthens accountability, safeguarding, and partnerships across the network.

Collective Action - CHS Alliance develops and promotes collective solutions for a more accountable, effective, and a safer aid system. Organisations align ways of working that reduce duplication and overcome barriers to locally led assistance.

Informed Influence - CHS Alliance will amplify the voices of people affected by crises, use evidence from data, and harness the influence of our global movement to advocate for safer, more accountable, and locally led aid.



GOVERNANCE

General Assembly 2025

A General Assembly was held on October 14, 2025, with 148 participants (reaching quorum). The meeting and subsequent voting resulted in

- New Board elections
- Audit – change of audit and auditor
- Revised Statutes
- Approval of the new Strategy.

Board Members

Board Member	Mar 18	Mar 20	Jun 17	Jun 19	Sep 23	Sep 25	Dec 2	Dec 4
Lola Gostelow- Chair- Independant	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Michael Wickham Moriarty- Treasurer- Plan International	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Carly Sheehan- Vice Chair- Oxfam International	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Coleen Heemskerck- Act Church of Sweden	P	P	P	AP	P	P	P	P
Catherine Skehan- ACF	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Anna (Karoliina) Muinonen- Finnish Church Aid	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Michael Barnett- Independant	AP	P	AP	AP	AP	P	P	AP
Brian Beckett- British Red Cross	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Rehema Kajungu- TPO Uganda	P	PR	P	P	P	P	AP	AP
Palwashay Arbab- CWSA	P	PR	P	P	P	P	AP	P
Gloria Soma- Independant	PR	AP	PR	A	PR	AP	A	A
Ghida Anani- ABBAD	A	P	AP	AP	A	A	AP	AP
Yegana Guliyeva- Independant	P	PR	AP	AP	P	AP	P	P
Nancy Ette- Incoming Treasurer- Independant							P	P
Marie-Claire Pannier- HR Focal Point- DRC							P	P
Nour Jarrouj- Independant							P	P
Susan Otieno- Action Aid Kenya	A	AP						

P = Present AP = Apologies A = Absent PR = Partial attendance ○ No BoD Member

CHS ALLIANCE MEMBER'S COMPLAINT MECHANISM



CHS Alliance staff, Board and members are committed to operating in line with the CHS Commitments. Reports of wrongdoing are treated with the utmost seriousness to ensure accountability for any actions that breach our values or working standards.

The CHS Alliance maintains two formal complaint mechanisms, one for complaints related to members, and another for concerns involving staff, Board members, volunteers, or other personnel formally associated with the Secretariat's work.

In November 2025, the CHS Alliance updated its Standard Operating Procedures for the Members' Complaints Policy and developed Terms of Reference for a dedicated safeguarding function within the Board.

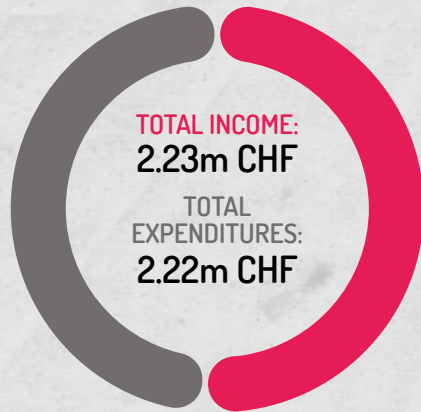
CHS Alliance complaint mechanism is designed for the Alliance to work with the complainant and the member organisation to assess the complaints handling process and make recommendations for how the organisation should make improvements. This **means that complaints must have already been filed and addressed through the CHS Alliance member organisation, in line with their respective complaint policy.**

2025 Overview of Complaints				
Year	Total	Out of Scope	Processed	In Progress
2025	20	12	8	0

A review of these cases identified several key issues, including the lack of safe and appropriate reporting channels due to fear of adverse consequences; failures to properly investigate, address, and refer complaints, often with no feedback or review; insufficient victim- and survivor-centred approaches, reflected in the attitudes of staff handling complaints; and delays or inaction, with concerns not being welcomed, followed up, or addressed in a timely and appropriate manner.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY



Signed Audit Report available upon request.

Donors: DANIDA, Dutch Relief Alliance, Irish Aid, H2H, FCDO, Netherlands Government, alongside membership fees and service provision fees.



As the new Treasurer, I have the personal ambition to be actively involved to oversee good financial, resource, and risk management of the alliance and of course, I hope that sufficient funding and support will be secured to ensure that the CHS endures and flourishes where it is most needed."

Nancy Etté,
Independent - Treasurer



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