

Minutes – Board Meeting 23 and 25 September 2025

23 September 2025

Present

- Lola Gostelow (Chair),
- Coleen Heemskerk (Act of Church Sweden),
- Carly Sheehan (Vice-Chair, Oxfam),
- Catherine Skehan (Action Against hunger AU),
- Anna Muinonen (Finn Church Aid),
- Michael Moriarty (Treasurer, Plan International),
- Rehema Kajungu (MNC Chair, TPO Uganda),
- Palwashay Arbab (Community World Service) (with apologies for 1 hr absence on 23rd)
- Brian Becket (British Red Cross, with apologies for missing first half of meeting on 23rd)

Apologies for partial absence

- Michael Barnett (independent, joined only on 25th)
- Yegana Guliyeva (Independent, joined only on 23rd)

Absences

- Ghida Anani (ABAAD - Resource Centre for Gender Equality), on 25th
- Gloria Soma (joined late on 23rd; joined late and left early on 25th)

SEC in attendance

- Tanya Wood (CHS Alliance ED),
- Jonathan Beloe (CHS Alliance DED), and
- Frederic Claus (CHS Alliance Operations Manager),

Welcome

The Chair gave the floor to all members to provide highlights, updates on work in-progress and challenges. Members shared about the changes and transition that budget cuts require in their own organization. Members informed about requests from other organizations about CHS support, including working with management on culture change, and interactions with members who see increasingly how CHS assist them to make progress in the delivery of their mandate and broader understanding of the benefits of advancing and mainstreaming PSEAH.

Item 1: Procedural Overview

The meeting was quorate and convened according to the Statutes. Apologies were noted. There were no declarations of interest.

1. No proposed additional items to the agenda. **Approved**
2. Minutes of the June meeting – no comment. **Approved**
3. The Chair reminded members to update the SEC about progress and actions.
4. Reminded members about key Governance dates – refer to doc

Item 2: ED report

A lot is happening in the CHS space from working with partners, to changes in the team, verification, memberships and PSEAH as well as challenges created by early 2025 budget decisions. Re-stress the importance to keep the momentum and push forward the strategy, statutes and Verification Scheme to chart the way forward.

The value of the CHS as a driver for efficiency and effectiveness is key. There is a need to do a deeper dive on due diligence and passporting, hopefully at the December Board meeting.

The chair asked questions about the training and possible loss of momentum if we are not rolling out quickly. DED informed about discussions on training work with Help Age to consider developing a more applied training and the need to have a plan to meet the current training needs of organisations.

Questions continue over the approach to supporting organisations with complaint mechanisms and having UN agencies join the Alliance. The ED recognised these but acknowledged progress was constrained by current resources.

Within the larger AAP Policy space, CHSA is working with the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution COP, but the Alliance needs to keep focused on this and galvanizing momentum within the AAP COP.

One board member asked about how the team is managing with more limited resources, affecting morale as well as the challenge of prioritizing workload. The ED reported that there is good morale within the team, but the team is getting stretched, and many are doing the same work on reduced pay; which is not sustainable.

The chair acknowledged the challenges and thanked the SEC.

Item 3 : Verification

CHSA Verification colleagues joined the meeting.

The Chair introduced that the Verification Scheme update is a huge piece of work and praised the work and thorough design.

The current Verification Scheme has been applied by some 190 organisations. The update to the Verification Tools was completed during Spring. The Verification Community of Practice is still strong and active. The update of the Verification Scheme has included a comprehensive consultation process, including with several board members as well as HQAI. Feedback highlighted the need for ensuring verification affordability value for money, appropriateness to different types of organizations, simplicity and clarity. There were also some concerns around such change in challenging times.

The Verification paper presented to the Board includes six recommendations. The Chair clarified that this meeting is seeking agreement that these recommendations can be presented to the General Assembly.

Board members raised several questions, including on how the independent validation is done. The Head of Quality Assurance explained that the consultation paper provided some information, but that the methodology would be developed in detail over the coming months and then piloted for fine tuning.

Recommendation (page 5) –

- Endorse the development of IV-SA (independently Validated Self-Assessment) – **Approved**

- Adopt a Conformity Assessment Body (CAB)-led implementation model for IV-SA – **Approved** with comment from a Board member that in case it would not be possible to identify a CAB to provide the service, then option 2 (independent auditors) would be considered
- Pause the repositioning of Independent Verification (IV) – **Approved**
- Harmonize all verification options to a three-year cycle – **Approved**.
- Do not rename Self-Assessment – **Approved**
- Develop a clear communication plan - **Approved**

All the above will frame the proposition going to the GA next month. The Chair thanked the Verification team for their excellent work, especially considering the reduced resources,

Brian joined.

Item 4 – **Strategy / Resourcing the Strategy** -

The Chair introduced what was initially envisaged as a light touch review but which evolved into a significant undertaking.

DED reminded the board that they are endorsing this revised strategy to present to the GA next month. He outlined the strategy development process, that the draft was shared with members and then taken to a sub- group of Board Members for fine tuning.

Board members made several suggestions:

- To strengthen the prominence of verification in the strategy
- Caution in using “safe”, as *safe* is outside of our control
- Quality should be made stronger.

DED welcomed the comments and will address them in a final draft before going to the GA.

A board member expressed their concerns that the deteriorating world situation suggests that the humanitarian sector has “failed the people”. This is profoundly worrying, yet the strategy does not reflect this reality. It could be read as too consensual.

The Chair reflected that this draft is a result of 7-8 months of a process and reflects a dual reality between what is achievable and situations over which we have less control.

The discussion concluded with the majority of Board members endorsing the strategy – pending adjustments to some of the wording – to be forwarded to the GA.

DED stressed the importance that Board members also support the strategy in terms of resource mobilization and connecting with relevant partners. He presented a one page on funding trends and options and asked Board members to consider how collectively they could support the strategy.

The Chair asked if materials/content will be shared and what type of specific support would be required. DED confirmed that once the strategy is finalized certain components would have short papers, similar to the country cooperatives, that would provide more detail and support resource mobilization efforts.

One board member proposed that a discussion of priorities and necessary multi-year support should take place and suggested that this be taken to FRAC. Time didn't permit a full discussion on this and the DED suggested that this conversation could be listed for FRAC and potentially a future board meeting.

5. FRAC

The Treasurer presented the situation:

1. Funding Pipeline (2025–2026)

- Overall funding outlook improved compared to June.

2. Updated Budget 2025

- Funding gap reduced
- Break-even possible with further confirmed funding.
- Review of reserves policy planned for November 2025

3. Management Accounts (as of July 2025)

- 58% of overall budget spent (on track).
- Most teams' spending aligned with forecasts.
- FX losses noted but manageable.

4. Cash Flow Forecast

- Cash position stable and under control.
- Forecasts reliable for 3–4 months, beyond that depend on assumptions.

5. Membership Fees (2025)

- 83% collected so far (slightly behind 2024, but strong given the context).
- Third reminders being sent; elections may trigger further payments.

6. Risk Matrix (Sept 2025)

- The top risk remains **donor funding volatility**.
- Mitigation measures in place, with scenario planning and alternative funding sources under development.

7. Audit Proposal

- Move from full to **limited scope audit** will be proposed to General Assembly.
- Rationale: cost savings, reduced HR capacity, clean audit history.
- Limited audit still ensures necessary checks; donors' requirements to be verified.
- FRAC supported the proposal, with triggers to revert to full audit if needed.

8. Governance & FRAC Membership

- The treasurer chaired his final FRAC meeting (stepping down after four years of service).
- Proposal to recruit additional independent/non-board members for diversity and capacity.

The SEC Ops Manager presented the changes to the Finance Policy endorsed by FRAC. A question was raised about how the SOD (Segregation Of Duty) will work in practice. The SEC Ops Manager explained that the reduced workforce doesn't permit separation of roles between creating a transaction and approving it in cases of staff absence and suggested including a third party, designated by the ED among Humanitarian Hub partners to support our processes.

The board approved the revised policy and for it to be shared with SEC staff.

Day Two: 25 September

6. Membership

6.1 Due diligence on organisations wishing to join CHSA

ED presented a lessons learnt paper driven by a recent case, which triggered reflections about the thresholds used and the approach with applicants.

A rich discussion followed on taking a risk-based approach to reviewing new member applications, any red lines for membership, clearer criteria for suspending/cancelling membership and publicity regarding verified and non-verified members.

It was generally agreed that the main drive is to support new members fulfil their CHS commitments. Mechanisms then need to be developed to review situations and processes for deciding about actions to be taken.

Further consideration is needed whereby a member scores a 0 in self-assessment and what the consequences should be. ED wrapped up that the updated Verification Scheme needs to help clarify what is being recognized by each verification process and more work is needed with the MNC on reviewing risks. The Chair suggested that discussions may be advanced through a small committee ahead of the Dec meeting.

6 b) Approving new members

MNC Chair RK, introduced the applications of 14 members, with 12 national NGOs, MNC has reviewed and endorsed for the board approval. RK provided information, including reservation about one application with respect to a reference received and if another one should be sought. This was clarified afterwards and 14 were presented for approval.

ALL membership applications were approved.

7. Governance

7a – Agenda

ED introduced the preparation for the upcoming General Assembly on the 14th October, with thanks to the Board members who had agreed to lead certain sessions.

7b – Updated Statutes

The Chair presented the discussion on the statutes. The ED outlined that most of the changes were discussed and endorsed in June. However, the definition of “diversity” to align with CHS definition was a new addition.

No objections were raised, and the change was endorsed by the Board for the Statutes to go forward to endorsement by the GA.

7c – Approval of nominees.

The Chair opened the discussion about board nominees. The SEC chased candidates who hadn't provided full information.

A robust discussion followed about how the candidates met the requirements of the skill sets. In the end all nominees were approved with the recognition that for future elections, TORs need to be developed for specific roles; Persons with lived experience; Treasurer; and HR expertise.

The result is 4 nominees of persons with lived experience, 1 treasurer and 7 for the HR role were put forward to the GA for elections.

Action – develop TORs for Treasurer, HR and Person with lived experience.

8. Country Engagement

Bono Sokph (Sec) Joined the meeting

BS presented a concept of CHS country cooperatives. Next steps include announcing the CHS Country cooperatives to the members, followed by a launch event.

The Chair opened the floor for questions and discussions. There was praise for the project, seeking to strengthen the collective dimension of the work of the Alliance. Board members saw real value in fostering cross-learning, and the project could attract engagement by a wider diversity of organisations that might then be interested to join the CHSA (specific mention was made of the private sector and academia).

One member stressed that a country-by-country approach should be followed, considering institutional and cultural differences which may exist and possible resistance to bringing non-traditional humanitarian actors into certain contexts. One member queried the resources required and whether the SEC would be able to take this initiative forward. One of the challenges would be to demonstrate the added value of the holistic approach of CHS.

BS confirmed that the country cooperatives operate independently, without putting additional burden onto the SEC. He emphasized that the idea is to build on local enthusiasm and what already exists in each location to avoid duplication.

One member suggested that for buy-in and momentum, the project be "advertised" as an opportunity for capacity building (not "training" per se but cross learning) on quality and accountability, including PSEAH-related issues.

9. Wrap up and close

The Chair thanked everyone and especially the outgoing Treasurer for his highly valued support to the Alliance on numerous matters, not just financial. All the Board expressed their gratitude to him and wished him well.

Board Meeting concluded on time.

CSheehan

[CSheehan \(3 déc. 2025 12:15:16 GMT+11\)](#)

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Frederic Claus

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