

ACT Alliance Maximum appeal implementation period Policy

January 2013

The governing board in its meeting in April 2013, requested that the ACT secretariat would come up with a policy guideline document on the maximum length of time an appeal can remain open. In other words, a cut-off point for an appeal, which could otherwise continue for years. The governing board was of the opinion that appeals should not be left open too long after their original suggested closure date. This request was prompted by the challenges faced by the secretariat and implementing members in the 2004 tsunami appeal. This appeal was open for four years.

The "old" ACT Appeal and Revision Guidelines stated the following:

Implementation Timetable

- *Indicate your estimated project timeline according to the proposed activities. Please note that the maximum period for a programme proposal is one year.*

Time period for Extensions

- *Time allowed for an extension should be a maximum of 6 months from the official closure date of the appeal. Possible exceptions to the rule may include post-crisis rehabilitation appeals for which, if an extension is requested for more than 6 months, the requests will be reviewed on a 'case by case' basis.*

The stipulation that the initial appeal should be for a period of 12 months is not included in new appeals mechanism guidelines. The extension period however, is included, as well as reasons for extension¹.

The above guidelines, if followed strictly, allowed for a "closing-down" of the first phases of the appeal (after a "manageable" period of 12 to 18 months), to allow full programmatic accountability before a follow-on appeal².

The above guidelines were in force before and during the 2004 tsunami. As the 2004 tsunami was a mega-emergency which generated substantial funding, it was decided to allow the appeal to be extended as necessary beyond the original closure date thinking it would be simpler and more effective than having several follow-on appeals. One of the reasons that turned the balance to this decision was that it could sometimes be problematic to transfer back-donor funding from one appeal to a follow-on appeal.

The four-year tsunami appeal which had not only implications on work-load for the co-ordinating office programme and finance staff at the time, but also impacted on many of the ACT implementing members involved in the programmes. Some found themselves overwhelmed with the amount of funding received and dealing with large programmes year after year without any interim cut-off points.

¹ ACT Alliance Response to an Emergency. Policy, guidelines and tools, and annexes. Approved by ACT Governing Board. May 2012. p. 98.

² Such a period would also, in most cases, enable focus on early recovery, rehabilitation and linking relief with development.

Following the closure of the tsunami appeal, it was decided that the above was an important lesson and that ACT Alliance should in future demand firm compliance with the guidelines with a leeway of a possible extension of maximum 6 months. It was also decided that in cases with several countries being involved in a mega emergency, there should be an appeal for each country, thus cutting down the number of revisions for one appeal. When revising the ACT appeal system it was still considered that it merited to maintain certain flexibility.

Against this background, the ACT secretariat is proposing that we amend the ACT Guidelines for Extensions & Revisions of Appeals³ to include the following two points covering implementation and extension periods:

Implementation Period:

- Indicate your estimated project timeline according to the proposed activities. Please note that the maximum period for a programme proposal is one year.

Time period for Extensions:

- Maximum time allowed for an extension will be 6 months from the official closure date of the appeal. In exceptional cases it may be possible to extend some months further (totalling a maximum of 2 years for the whole appeal.)

This would cover a situation when a programme has been unavoidably delayed and the requesting member needs just a couple of months to complete the programme. In such instances it would not be worthwhile issuing a new appeal.

When allowing extension Secretariat need to consider requesting members capacity to implement and manage funding and if needed propose support to members (for example from RST). A condition for extension is that reports are delivered on time.

And, just in case, it is also suggested that the ACT Appeal System – Policies and Procedures is also amended⁴. It should also indicate that when one emergency affects several countries, in general, an appeal should be issued for each country. This would cut down on the number of sometimes confusing revisions for each period of the programme due to requesting members not being able to finish their programmes and produce their follow-on proposals at the same time.

The experience so far from regional appeals is diverse. In some cases they have allowed the opportunity to deal with phenomena which is de facto regional and have allowed flexibility and purposeful usage of funds. In some other cases there has been notable coordination, reporting and closing difficulties.

- When a mega emergency affects several countries, then an appeal for each country should be issued. This will allow for a more co-ordinated appeal and help avoid an unnecessary number of revisions. For good reasons a regional appeal may be considered (political context, cross-border issues, fundraising opportunity).

³ ACT Alliance Response to an Emergency. Policy, guidelines and tools, and annexes. Approved by ACT Governing Board. May 2012. P. 98-100.

⁴ ACT Alliance Response to an Emergency. Policy, guidelines and tools, and annexes. Approved by ACT Governing Board. May 2012. P. 24-39. Amendment to the point "Appeal Planning", page 32-33.