

ACT Guiding Principles on Material Aid

This is a document that was approved by ACT International Executive Committee on 31 March 2000, and which might be revised in the near future.

1. Introduction

In emergencies when people have lost their homes and belongings, Material Aid such as food, medicines, blankets, quilts, clothing, and health kits, are essential items for survival. Material Aid may be purchased locally, or, if not readily available or too expensive, may by ACT implementing member or partner be requested from ACT Material Aid donor agencies. In the latter case, it may free up a budget line item amount for blankets / quilts etc., to use the cash coming in for the already covered needs for other essential emergency needs. At the same time it is important that Material Aid donations through lack of transparent and clear reporting cause problems for raising the necessary cash donations needed for the emergency operation (the value of Material Aid reported may result in an impression, wrongly, that an appeal is better funded than it in reality is).

In other cases, where implementing partners are prepared for emergency response and have stockpiled material resources for immediate distribution upon impact, the shipment of Material Aid , to replenish their warehouses for the next emergency, is an expedient, cost effective contribution.

2. Principles on Material Aid donations

- a) Material Aid (in-kind donations) will only be requested when the same items are not available on the local market, or, if they are, the ACT implementing member does not have the funds to purchase them or there are other special circumstances.
- b) Material Aid must be culturally appropriate, be based on the recipients expressed needs and benefit the recipients in need to the maximum extent possible, respecting their human rights and enhancing their dignity. If the quality of an item is unacceptable in the donor country, it is also unacceptable as a donation.
- c) Material Aid is for direct benefit of the recipients and are not to be sold, except in special circumstances of monetization or "swaps" benefiting the population.
- d) Material Aid offers will take into account the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE - ref. SPHERE Manual) and will be distributed in accordance with the Code of Conduct: Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programs (see ACT Manual).

3. Responsibilities: ACT Material Aid Donors and ACT Implementing Members

- a) As each program intervention (Material Aid and non-Material Aid) is interrelated, the **ACT implementing member** must whenever possible plan the distribution of Material Aid as an integrated part of the total program.
- b) Specific requests or requirements must by the **ACT implementing member** be clearly communicated to the donor.
- c) **ACT Material Aid donors** must apply transparent quality control processes, which help ensure that Material Aid sent will meet explicit needs while upholding the dignity of the recipients. In-kind items must be sent in consultation with the ACT implementing member who is to receive them. This implies that no Material Aid will be sent prior to consent by the recipient and that a donation should be made with full respect for the wishes and the authority of the recipient.
- d) The **ACT Material Aid donor** and the **ACT implementing member** must establish effective communications to:
 - Notify of a Material Aid pledge and its monetary value, incl. what criteria determination of the value is based upon. And forward the same information to ACT Coordinating Office.
 - Confirm that the items selected and the quality control of the items are acceptable to the **ACT implementing member**.
 - Estimated arrival time. No in-kind donations should be sent unannounced.
 - Customs clearance and other formalities. In-kind donations must always be accompanied by appropriate and all necessary documents and a sample of the goods, to avoid unnecessary unloading, controls or opening of the consignment.
 - Establish reporting requirements for the **ACT implementing member** on the final distribution of the Material Aid.
 - Any other practical issue that might occur during the ordering, transportation and handling of the goods until it is finally distributed.
- e) **The ACT Material Aid donor will pay all costs of any donated item, inclusive insurance, international and local transportation, handling, customs clearance and any unloading or reloading to the distribution point, unless other arrangements have been mutually agreed upon in advance.**
- f) The **ACT Material Aid donor** has the responsibility to see to that the ACT logo is on the parcels according to the ACT Communications Guidelines.

4. Material Aid Category Specifications

a) Clothing

ACT Material Aid donors must convey the quality of the items, e.g. "new" or "used and in good condition", and detail the receiving, inspection, sorting, handling process used to ensure the quality of each category. When ordering the **ACT implementing member** will specify "will only accept new clothing" or "will accept used clothing in good condition" etc. In addition if there are health requirements of the recipient country for disinfection etc.

b) Food and food products

Food and food products must be appropriate, of sufficient quality and safely transported, stored and distributed. **ACT Material Aid donors** of food commodities must see to that their suppliers carry out regular quality control and produce commodities which meet the donor official government standards or Codex Alimentarius Standards (e.g. with regards to packing, labeling, shelf life etc.). All food received in the country of distribution must have a minimum six months shelf life (except fresh produce and whole maize meal) and

must be distributed to the beneficiaries before the expiry date. Special attention should be given to milk products, and existing World Health Organization (WHO) regulations followed.

c) Drugs

Expiration dates on drug donations must allow ample time for appropriate distribution of the entire donation. **ACT Material Aid donors** must see to that their suppliers of drugs carry out regular quality control measures, which meet the donor country official standards for production of drugs, which conform with the Guidelines for Drug Donations issued by the WHO Department of Essential Drugs and Other Medicines, and as revised in 1999.

The **ACT implementing member** must determine as accurately as possible the health needs of the beneficiaries and establish priorities for ordering drugs for health programs and coordinate with local health authorities wherever possible.