

HUMANITARIAN POLICY

*Approved by ACT Governing Board
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1. BACKGROUND

In May 2019, the ACT Governing Board received feedback from the ACT secretariat, working with the Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group (HPPG)¹ and the *ad hoc* ACT Humanitarian Directors group, on the need to review and reform the ACT humanitarian mechanism. The board mandated the creation of a Technical Working Group (TWG)² to help develop a concept note that would define the strategic directions of the reform. The TWG was constituted in September 2019 and provided an update to the Governing Board in May 2020 and the Executive Committee in October 2020 on the progress of its work. Informed by the work of the TWG, the secretariat and the Emergency Preparedness and Humanitarian Response (EHR) Reference Group developed a revised ACT Humanitarian Policy for adoption by the Board in May 2021.

To ensure strong engagement by ACT national forums and members, a global survey/consultation was conducted in September 2020, followed by regional consultative meetings in March 2021. A Global Consultation Paper was developed by the TWG to aid the 2020 consultations, which has since been updated to a Full Briefing Paper that served as the primary basis of the revised Humanitarian Policy.

2. VISION FOR ACT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The work of the ACT Alliance on emergency preparedness and humanitarian response is founded on its strategy to enable an effective ecumenical response that saves lives and maintains dignity. ACT is committed to strengthening the resilience of affected communities and accountability to people and communities affected by crisis. Humanitarian needs define our priorities and the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence guide our actions. The three pillars of ACT's work are development, humanitarian, and advocacy work. In pursuit of its aim to have a holistic and integrated approach, ACT's work on emergency preparedness and humanitarian response will invest further in preparedness, disaster risk reduction and resilience, in addition to its work in life-saving emergency assistance. This will be supported by stronger humanitarian coordination and partnerships at all levels, and appropriate humanitarian advocacy with duty bearers and other positions of power.

The ACT humanitarian reform process is grounded on ACT's recognition of important developments in the world in general and the humanitarian sector in particular. The current context of humanitarian work is largely driven by intensifying levels of violent conflict and natural disasters resulting in ever-increasing numbers of refugees and IDPs. More than 100 million people across the world are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. The humanitarian sector needs to invest in more effective, efficient and cost-effective ways of delivering assistance in order to respond faster to crises, as well as conduct more comprehensive, cross-sectoral and impartial needs assessments that will contribute to long-term solutions. There is also a wide recognition of the need to install multi-year and flexible programming approaches to protracted crises, as we see more and more crises moving into this territory. The more recent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world, where ACT members and many other organisations have had to struggle to reach populations in need while facing multiple organisational risks, further highlight the need to revisit how the ACT Alliance works. Our ecumenical identity and the humanitarian imperative motivate us to find newer ways to reach the communities we serve, as upheld in the ACT Global Strategy 2019-2026, "Hope in Action: Putting People First".

¹ The HPPG is now known as the Emergency and Preparedness and Humanitarian Response (EHR) Reference Group

² The TWG was constituted in September 2019 composed of senior humanitarians from DCA, LWF, CA, DKH, KiA, NCA, FCA, World Renew, and ELCA; the process was supported by the ACT Secretariat and the EHR Reference Group.

3. POLICY NOTE

This policy replaces the ACT Humanitarian Policy, revised in 2017. It is a mandatory policy for ACT membership and will be treated as complementing other ACT Alliance mandatory policies including, *inter alia*, the following: ACT Code of Conduct, Protection Policy, Code of Good Practice, Quality and Accountability Framework, Complaints Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, Gender Justice Policy, ACT Forum Policy, Communications Policy, and Membership Engagement Model.

The following international standards and agreements will be observed in the implementation of the ACT humanitarian response: The Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the Sphere Standards, Principles of Partnership, the Grand Bargain, and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS).

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As mandated by the ACT Alliance Global Strategy 2019-2026 and its implementation plan, the following Guiding Principles will be observed in ACT humanitarian work:

- 4.1 Total ACT Response.** ACT Alliance's humanitarian work will seek to harness and communicate the combined strength of its members in delivering response at scale and considerable reach through the 'Total ACT Response' approach. Most ACT members respond through the ACT humanitarian mechanism, and in many cases, members also respond using their own resources or bilateral funding to non-ACT partners. Total ACT Response includes the work of all ACT members responding to the emergency in their different capacities and contexts (e.g. implementation, funding, advocacy and communications).
- 4.2 Quality and accountable response.** ACT Alliance will seek to consistently deliver quality and accountable humanitarian response. This will be guided by the Humanitarian Charter, the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), Sphere Standards and companion standards, including tools for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. To ensure timeliness and efficiency, ACT response will be strengthened by the establishment of appropriate digital platforms and management systems.
- 4.3 Working with faith actors.** ACT humanitarian work will be guided by our commitment to ecumenical diakonia, and actively highlight the important role of faith actors and religious leaders in humanitarian response and advocacy, without proselytizing.
- 4.4 Forum-driven alliance.** ACT humanitarian programme goals will be enabled by strengthening the role of ACT national forums in engaging local partners and communities in delivering humanitarian response.
- 4.5 Locally led response.** ACT Alliance will support survivor and community-led approaches to humanitarian response and support the shift in power in the humanitarian system toward local actors.
- 4.6 Joint programming.** ACT humanitarian programmes will seek to employ joint programming approaches among its members that demonstrate strong coordination and multi-sectoral impacts and are supported by a dynamic approach to funding and fundraising.
- 4.7 Capacity sharing.** ACT Alliance will invest in strengthening the humanitarian capacity of forums and national members through robust capacity and learning mechanisms, sharing of technology and expertise, and establishment of an effective surge mechanism.
- 4.8 Emergency preparedness and response planning.** ACT humanitarian response will be defined by ACT national forums based on their own contexts through up-to-date Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs), which is made mandatory for all forums as part of ACT humanitarian reform.
- 4.9 Humanitarian Advocacy.** ACT humanitarian advocacy will be primarily guided by the ACT Advocacy Strategy, the Grand Bargain commitments, and the crisis/country-specific advocacy of ACT forums and

communities.

4.10 Holistic programming. ACT Alliance will seek to employ holistic programming approaches in emergency response and exit and sustainability strategies by establishing links with other thematic priorities of the ACT Global Strategy, i.e. migration and displacement, climate justice, gender justice, and peace and human security. ACT Alliance humanitarian work will develop tools in humanitarian needs assessments and programme design to realise this vision.

5. ACT RESPONSE MODEL

5.1 ACT Scale-Up Model

The ACT Alliance response to an emergency will be guided by what will be known as the **ACT Scale-Up Model**. The ACT Scale-Up Model does not indicate a ranking of the severity of the crisis. It will serve as guidance for decisions by the ACT Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) to launch an ACT response based on the available response modalities, i.e. Rapid Response Fund (RRF) and ACT Appeal. It is recognized that ACT consortia will self-organize in many contexts, however the ESC may provide advice on the formation of consortia vis-a-vis the launching of an ACT Appeal.

The ACT Scale-Up Model will be guided by the following response criteria, adopted from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Scale-Up Protocol 1³.

- a. Scale: number of affected/potentially affected people; size of affected areas.
- b. Urgency: number of people displaced; crude mortality rates; minimal or no access to life-saving support; critical protection risks.
- c. Complexity: multi-layered emergency; presence of a multitude of actors; high risks of politicisation; lack of humanitarian access; high security risks to humanitarian actors.
- d. Capacity: low levels of local or international response capacities, including lack of required specialised or technical expertise; needs outweigh the capacity to respond; inadequate humanitarian leadership.
- e. Risk of failure to deliver effectively and at scale to affected populations: vis-à-vis assessed need and severity (violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; exacerbation of food insecurity; deterioration of civil unrest).

Rapid Response Fund (RRF) funding applications are required to meet at least two (2) of the Scale-Up criteria to be considered, while ACT Appeals are required to meet at least three (3) Scale-Up criteria.

The ACT Scale-Up Model also includes the following criteria, which will be used to assess all funding applications in addition to the IASC Scale-Up criteria:

- a. ACT member presence and capacity on the ground.
- b. Proven track record of requesting members to implement humanitarian programmes, including PMER.
- c. Demonstrated coordination of ACT national forum (where there is no ACT forum, demonstrated coordination among members in-country).
- d. Updated EPRP and Contingency Plan.
- e. Existing relationships with local faith actors, churches and other communities of faith.
- f. Funding viability.

³ IASC Scale-Up Protocol 1: <https://bit.ly/3gyOJFG>

- g. Media and donor interest.

The ACT Scenario Model (i.e., categorising emergencies as Local/National, Global, Complex and Protracted) is hereby superseded by the ACT Scale-Up Model.

5.2 ACT Emergency Steering Committee

This policy mandates the creation of an Emergency Steering Committee (ESC), which will make Go/No-go decisions to mobilise a coordinated ACT response in an emergency. The role of the ESC is to assess key information and decide to launch an ACT Appeal or not based on a request submitted by the ACT forum. The aim is for the ESC to be mobilized quickly and efficiently so it can make timely decisions on a proposed ACT response.

The ESC will be coordinated by the ACT secretariat as a roster per country that is activated and constituted in the event of a large-scale crisis and/or upon issuance of an ACT Alert indicating plans to respond. If a request is not endorsed by the ESC, it may advise on which mechanism (e.g. RRF, member response) is most appropriate to launch. All decisions and advice from the ESC will be coordinated and communicated by the ACT secretariat.

Composition of the ESC will ensure balanced representation and expertise of ACT members. It will be composed of a representative group from the ACT secretariat, ACT forum, implementing and funding members, and co-opted experts as needed. ESC membership will vary depending on the location and context of the crisis. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the ESC will be part of the Humanitarian Operations Manual. The ACT Head of Humanitarian Affairs will manage the appointment of members, activation, and execution of decisions made by the ESC.

6. ACT RESPONSE MECHANISM

The ACT Response Mechanism will be composed of three modalities: Rapid Response Fund, ACT Appeals, and ACT Consortia.

6.1 Rapid Response Fund (RRF)

The RRF is ACT's main mechanism for locally-led response in accordance with the localisation agenda of the Grand Bargain. The primary purpose of the ACT RRF is to provide financial resources to members of the ACT Alliance in the first days following an emergency, and where national members have the capacity to respond. The emergency could be of a rapid onset nature (e.g. earthquake or flood), slow onset emergency requiring early response or emergency relief (e.g. drought), or of a complex humanitarian character (e.g., refugee or internal displacement situation, resulting from breakdown of social, political and economic systems).

The need for RRFs will not decrease in the near future, with escalating humanitarian need, and growing ACT national member humanitarian capacity. With the ACT Appeal mechanism focusing on large-scale crises, the RRF will be significantly increased to support small-scale emergencies and medium-sized emergencies that do not meet the criteria for ACT Appeals. The annual Global RRF Appeal will be expanded to secure increased funding, with stronger fundraising support from the secretariat and members. The secretariat will strongly encourage funding members to contribute towards the global RRF pot to allow flexibility to allocate funds where needed most. The secretariat will assess the feasibility of earmarking RRF funds at the request of the funder/donor.

The following Strategic Directions for reforming the RRF are adopted as part of the ACT Humanitarian Policy:

Purpose of the RRF

1. The RRF retains its core purpose as ACT's main mechanism for locally-led response.
2. RRFs will primarily aim to provide life-saving response in small-scale emergencies⁴ and proposed responses that do not sufficiently meet the criteria for ACT Appeals.
3. RRFs will be implemented for a period of up to six months, with a possibility to apply for another round of funding for continued relief work, depending on the humanitarian needs and availability of funds.
4. RRFs may allocate up to 10% of total funding to preparedness and disaster risk reduction (DRR).
5. Responding members are strongly encouraged to use RRF funds as leverage to access other funding.

Eligibility

1. All national ACT members are eligible to apply.
2. Organisational and/or Forum Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs) will be mandatory to access the RRF.
3. Requesting members are required to apply the Core Humanitarian Standard and Sphere and companion standards in the design and implementation of RRFs. Enhanced accountability requirements may be introduced by the ACT secretariat proportional to the size of the RRF grant, including additional monitoring and capacity support.
4. The RRF will prioritise national members. In exceptional circumstances, international members can be eligible to apply by meeting one of the following exemption criteria:
 - a. No ACT national member is present in the country, and the RRF is accessed to jumpstart operations. The RRF pot will be replenished when additional funds are secured.
 - b. ACT national members affirm that they are not in a position to respond.
 - c. Funding is allocated to an international member with an additional objective to provide capacity support to an ACT national member or local partner.

ACT Alert

An ACT Alert shall be issued by the ACT forum within 24 hours of a sudden-onset emergency, and immediately disseminated by the ACT secretariat. For slow onset emergencies, timeframe for Alert issuance is based on any of the following factors: local needs assessments, government request for assistance, and secondary information from other humanitarian actors.

Submission Timeframe

RRF proposals will be submitted to the ACT secretariat within 48 hours of Alert issuance. The proposal will be developed by implementing members with endorsement from the ACT forum. Where there is no ACT forum, requesting members may submit directly to the ACT secretariat.

Grant Amount

An increased ceiling amount will accommodate emergency response that do not sufficiently meet the criteria for ACT Appeals. The maximum amount will be USD 150,000 per requesting member (not USD 150,000 per emergency). The approved amounts will depend on availability of funds and overall health of the global RRF

⁴ Small-scale emergency: a type of disaster only affecting local communities which require assistance beyond the affected community (UNDRR, 2017)

pot. The operational guidance will ensure that the pot is not depleted by one emergency; in such cases, an ACT Appeal is the more viable approach.

Decision-making

The Global Humanitarian Operations Manager will make decisions on RRF project applications upon endorsement by the ACT Regional Representative. Decisions will be made and communicated by the secretariat on approval, approval amount, and non-approval of RRF applications.

The Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) will not be activated for RRF applications. However, in the event that an Appeal is not endorsed by the ESC, it may advise the member/s to access the RRF instead.

Global RRF Appeal

The Global RRF (GRRF) Appeal will be issued at the beginning of each calendar year based on an analysis of available humanitarian needs overview and early warning guidance. The Appeal is issued by the Head of Humanitarian Affairs. The amount of the GRRF Appeal will be determined based on a projection of RRF applications received in a given year. In light of the vision of the ACT humanitarian reform, the total funding request of the GRRF will be increased. The ACT secretariat will work closely with members to support the fundraising for the GRRF Appeal.

6.2 ACT Appeals

Since the founding of the ACT Alliance in 2010, ACT Appeals have been the primary tool utilised by members to demonstrate a coordinated ecumenical response to emergencies. This includes the RRF, which is launched as an annual Global Appeal to support multiple emergencies in smaller amounts.

An analysis made by the ACT secretariat and Humanitarian Reform Technical Working Group (TWG) indicate a downward funding trend for ACT Appeals over the past 10 years. Several factors can be considered as influencing this trend, including general trends in global humanitarian funding as being channelled more towards UN agencies, and increasing challenges within traditional fundraising environments of ACT funding members. These factors have been further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and a paradigm shift in how the ACT Alliance mobilises appeals is warranted.

The following Strategic Directions for reforming the ACT Appeals mechanism are hereby adopted:

Purpose of ACT Appeals

1. ACT Appeals will be mobilised only for emergencies that meet the ACT Scale-up criteria. It is to be noted that ACT Appeals will continue to be mobilised for sudden-onset emergencies and protracted crises.
2. ACT Appeals will be launched with a view to reduce the number of appeals in a given year to ensure stronger collaboration of members in humanitarian response and fundraising.
3. The duration of ACT Appeals will be 12-24 months, depending on humanitarian needs and the operational context.
4. Appeals will be open for funding during their entire lifespan. Unspent balances will be transferred to the GRRF Appeal except when there is a subsequent appeal in the same country. These actions will be coordinated by the ACT secretariat with the concerned donors/funding members.
5. ACT Appeals will seek to strengthen local systems of response as part the localisation agenda. Members will consider activities to strengthen not just their organisational capacities but the

capacities of local partners and communities as well, following capacity sharing and partnership principles.

6. Use the EPRP process and operational guidelines to help enable preparation for appeals in peacetime before emergency strikes and ensure links of ACT appeals with forum EPRPs.
7. ACT Appeals will promote the localisation agenda by upholding the important role of local faith actors and local partner organisations in humanitarian response.

Eligibility

1. All ACT members in good standing are eligible to be part of an ACT Appeal.
2. The ACT national forum is the entity that submits ACT Appeals (funding accountability rests with each implementing member). Where there is no ACT forum, the member/s present will be the requesting entity.
3. Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs) will be mandatory to launch ACT Appeals.
4. Requesting members are required to apply the Core Humanitarian Standard and Sphere and companion standards in the design and implementation of Appeals.

ACT Alert

An ACT Alert shall be issued by the ACT forum within 24 hours of a sudden-onset emergency and disseminated by the ACT secretariat. For slow-onset emergencies and protracted crises, timeframe for Alert issuance is based on any of the following factors: local needs assessments, government request for assistance, and secondary information from other humanitarian actors.

Submission Timeframe

The ACT secretariat will convene the Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) upon issuance of the ACT Alert indicating plans to launch an Appeal. Within 7 days of ESC endorsement, the ACT Appeal will be submitted by the ACT forum to the secretariat. ACT secretariat will publish the Appeal within 48 hours of final submission.

Fundraising

- a. ACT Appeal fundraising will focus mainly on private donors, foundations, media, private sector, general public and, where possible, institutional donors.
- b. Funding members interested in supporting an Appeal participate from the early stages through ACT coordination platforms and/or the Emergency Steering Committee (ESC).
- c. Funding members with specific interest in certain countries will be listed as stakeholders in the EPRP of these countries.
- d. Funding members indicate the level of funding they intend to contribute based on what they have available and what they could raise.
- e. Members involved in ACT Appeals will aim to identify new avenues for ACT Alliance humanitarian financing.

Decision-making

- The ACT national forum makes the initial decision to propose an ACT appeal.
- The ACT secretariat plays a coordination and quality assurance role in developing an Appeal.
- The Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) decides whether to develop an Appeal or not. Go/no-go decisions by the ESC will be based on an analysis using the ACT Scale-Up criteria and available information from the ACT forum and other sources.

- The ACT Head of Humanitarian Affairs, supported by the Global Humanitarian Operations Manager, is responsible for the global coordination, approval, and publication of an Appeal.

6.3 ACT Consortia

In view of the broader objectives of the ACT Global Strategy and ACT humanitarian reform, this policy enables the creation of a new modality under the ACT humanitarian mechanism: the **Consortium Approach**. Consortium is defined as a partnership of equals among organisations to undertake a specific task without establishing a legal entity for the group. When international ACT members work in partnership with local implementing partners/other ACT members to implement a programme, this is one form of consortium.

The main added value of forming ACT consortia is an improvement in accessing institutional back-donor funding into a Total ACT Response for the following reasons:

- It would build on the funding modalities of ACT members receiving back-donor funding, which have already been approved by back-donors through partnership agreements.
- It presents an attractive opportunity to follow back-donor requirements through a viable “programmatic approach” with common objectives, integrated activities, reporting and shared data. As ACT Alliance, we should highlight here a joint approach of local and international members, and our capacity for working in regional approaches.
- The consortia approach could also be used to tap into long-term funding for early recovery and long-term development activities, beyond traditional one-year humanitarian projects.
- Ideally, there are additional operational benefits for responding through this approach, as consortia are able to increase sectoral scope, geographic outreach, scale and speed.
- With joint disaster response, preparedness and pulling of resources of several national and international ACT members, they would be in a better position to bid successfully in back donor calls.

A number of ACT forums have also indicated that they have been operating like a consortium when they raise appeals. Institutionalising these practices within the ACT humanitarian mechanism would only encourage stronger collaboration amongst members. Within forum EPRPs, the development of contingency plans for specific hazards already indicate that ACT forums have actually been getting ready to go in this direction of stronger collaboration. In addition, there is the modality of forming consortia amongst ACT international members and with other non-ACT organisations, specifically intended to access back donor funding that requires a portfolio of operational capacity in multiple countries and track record in large-scale emergency response.

Consortium Development

This policy recognises that several modalities of the ACT Consortia Approach will exist and will not be mutually exclusive – ranging from consortia of ACT members at national level, to a framework consortium agreement directly accessed by a member from a donor country. Opportunities for consortia building may arise at the donor country level, where some member headquarters are located, and/or at country level, within the context of an ongoing crisis. As such, guidelines for ACT Consortia will be developed to guide the work at global/headquarter level and national/forum level.

To move this direction forward, it is important that ACT Consortia development at global or country level is immediately coordinated with the ACT forum with support from the ACT secretariat. Any consortia formation shall not prevent the inclusion of ACT national members as implementing partners. In all such cases, the principle of involving ACT national/local members in a consortium shall always be applied unless there is a

clearly justifiable reason not to.

Strategic Directions

1. Recognise the consortium approach as an important option in ACT's humanitarian response mechanism toolbox.
2. Use consortium approaches to help ACT to position itself as an attractive channel to enable donors to invest in localisation.
3. Develop ACT operational good practice guidelines on consortia to facilitate members and forums to engage successfully in consortium approaches.
4. Recognise the role of ACT national forums in consortia formation and coordination, and ACT Consortia formed in the global/headquarter context will be coordinated with the ACT secretariat and ACT forum.
5. To ensure complementary programming, ACT Consortia projects will be designed considering the focus of ACT Appeals.
6. The ACT secretariat and the Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) may advise on the formation of ACT Consortia in view of ACT Appeals.
7. Use the EPRP process and operational guidelines to help enable preparation for consortia before an emergency strikes and ensure links of ACT Consortia with forum EPRPs. The EPRP will also define mechanisms for national and local members and partners to be involved in the design of ACT Consortia from the outset.
8. ACT Consortia will promote the localisation agenda by upholding the important role of local faith actors and local partner organisations in humanitarian response. Where possible, ACT Consortia will seek to strengthen local systems of response as part of the localisation agenda, following capacity sharing and partnership principles.
9. ACT Consortia will aim to identify new avenues for ACT Alliance humanitarian financing.

7. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING

An Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) at ACT forum level has an important role in strengthening ACT's capacity to respond effectively with improved coordination, timeliness and scale. All ACT forums shall develop EPRPs with regular reviews and updates. Without an updated Forum EPRP, no appeal can be issued, and a member without an EPRP cannot receive appeal funding. The same applies to the RRF. The templates for the EPRP at member and forum levels are digitised and available for all members.

Purpose of the EPRP

The goal of the EPRP is to increase the capacity of ACT forums and their implementing partners to plan a joint, coordinated, appropriate, timely response to emergencies. The EPRP process is a good platform for developing consortia models, based on realistic assessment of capacities and competences to contribute to consortia. During the Forum EPRP process, several results can be obtained:

- a clear understanding of ACT's emergency response mechanisms
- a strengthened EPRP
- clarity on ACT member and partner response capacities through contingency plans
- an assessment of the scope for consortia at forum level to attract donor funding
- identification of capacity needs and formulation of a capacity building plan

The following Strategic Directions for the EPRP are hereby adopted:

1. Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans will be a key part of the revised Humanitarian Response Mechanism.
2. All ACT forums shall use EPRP templates for preparedness planning.
3. The EPRP has been digitised and is available for all ACT members.
4. Adjustments to the EPRP templates and digital platform will be made after other elements in the ACT humanitarian reform are in place.
5. EPRPs will need to include an extra section for preparing for ACT Consortia
6. Information from EPRP will be copied into the new templates for Appeals and RRFs.
7. Member and Forum EPRPs are required for forums to issue an ACT Appeal. Members cannot receive funds from appeals without an up-to-date EPRP in place.
8. EPRPs will become mandatory to access the RRF. No member can access the RRF without an up-to-date EPRP.
9. The EPRP will be made a regular agenda item in ACT forum meetings.
10. For members who are not part of a Forum EPRP, guidelines will be developed for establishing presence in a country when crisis occurs.

8. HUMANITARIAN FINANCING

In addition to the funding mechanism that goes with ACT Appeals (including RRFs), the current ACT humanitarian mechanism includes a feature that supports the coordination and management costs of the ACT secretariat. This is the International Coordination Fee (ICF), which is pegged at 3% of the contributions to ACT Appeals.

The current ICF model is not able to sustain the actual costs of humanitarian coordination within the alliance, as it is dependent on the success of fundraising. Covering the actual coordination costs within an appeal is more financially desirable and more likely to generate the funding needed, as such the proposal is to accommodate the actual costs within the programme budget lines of appeals and RRFs.

The ICF will be replaced with a standard budget line for secretariat management and coordination within the budget of each appeal or RRF that reflects the true secretariat cost of running Appeals/RRFs. This will help enable ACT to match income with actual expenditure and help to strengthen secretariat support to members.

The following Strategic Directions for reforming the financing of humanitarian coordination are hereby adopted:

- 8.1 Cost Allocations instead of the ICF in ACT Appeals:** A set figure for secretariat coordination, PMER and technical support based on direct/indirect costs and clear parameters will be allocated for each appeal. Budget allocations for the secretariat will be proportional to the amount raised in the appeal.
- 8.2 Cost Allocations in the Global RRF Appeal:** Secretariat cost allocations will be aggregated as a separate line item in the Global RRF Appeal to cover staffing, PMER, and support to capacity strengthening of national members.
- 8.3 Cost Allocations for Consortia Coordination:** Costs for consortia coordination by the secretariat may be included in consortia projects. Such costs will be pre-negotiated with the ACT consortium based on donor parameters.
- 8.4 Solidarity Fund/Fee for the ACT Secretariat:** A voluntary line item will be included in ACT Appeals for

“secretariat support” as a solidarity fund/fee for the secretariat. This will help the secretariat’s overall financial viability and enable investment in underfunded areas of the ACT Strategy. Alliance members willing to support this fund could specifically earmark their funding to the designated budget line of the Appeal.

The humanitarian financing model will be reviewed by the ACT secretariat within one year of implementation, in light of plans to revise the broader ACT Secretariat Funding Model.

9. HUMANITARIAN ADVOCACY⁵

The strategic objective of ACT humanitarian advocacy is to enable an effective ecumenical response that saves lives and maintains dignity, strengthens the resilience of affected communities and accountability to people and communities affected by crisis. The current strategy period will focus on at least three commitments made in the World Humanitarian Summit/Grand Bargain where ACT Alliance has made significant investments and where member engagement is quite strong.

The following humanitarian advocacy objectives from the ACT Advocacy Strategy are hereby adopted:

- a. Put people at the centre of humanitarian response by amplifying the voices of people affected by crisis and enhancing their agency in the humanitarian system.
- b. Promote the role of faith-based actors as key to deliver humanitarian assistance that builds resilience and reduces risks and vulnerabilities at individual, household, and community levels.
- c. Support and promote cash and voucher assistance programming across the humanitarian sector.
- d. As part of the humanitarian reform agenda, ACT humanitarian advocacy will promote locally-led humanitarian response and a shift in power in the humanitarian system toward local actors.

In response to the mandate of the ACT Global Strategy, strong forum engagement in humanitarian advocacy will be sought in both crisis-specific advocacy and ACT’s global humanitarian advocacy agenda. To support this process, the Governing Board takes note of the ongoing development of a guidance for ACT advocacy statements and related procedures, led by the Advocacy and Policy Reference Group (APG) and supported by the EPHR Reference Group.

10. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS⁶

ACT commits itself to providing crisis-affected people with useful and clear information about ACT and its members’ work, and the level of support they can expect to receive during an intervention by ACT members, as well as the purpose and motive of members in providing this service. Accurate, timely, localised and understandable information about ACT and its work, particularly the humanitarian response it implements, including information related to the distribution of goods and services, the objectives and plans of the implementing organisation, the selection criteria, implementation process, codes of conduct and where/how to complain and/or raise a concern, are essential. Through the sharing of information and the participation of crisis-affected populations, ACT can work with communities to carry out a fair distribution, manage communities’ expectations, provide reassurance, and avoid misunderstanding. Increased efforts to help the population in the country/region affected understand why and how humanitarian assistance is being made

⁵ from ACT Advocacy Sub-Strategy 2020-2027.

⁶ from ACT Communications Policy, 2020.

available may alleviate negative attitudes towards humanitarian actors.

This policy goes hand-in-hand with the requirement of members to co-brand. Co-branding is an important means of notifying crisis-affected people of ACT's presence and efforts to support in the aftermath of a disaster. ACT members are required to co-brand their logo in a consistent and visible manner, so the people we seek to assist know who we are and who to hold accountable. The ACT branding policy and branding guide contain more information on co-branding. ACT's humanitarian mechanism document specifies the degree to which members must inform crisis-affected people of ACT's role in their recovery. The requirements of members will also be articulated in the appeal. Full information will be shared with communities in every instance, except where the safety of a staff or community member is at risk or where the programme may be compromised or threatened if some or all information is disclosed. This decision should be made by the forum, not a single member unilaterally. The ACT Public Information Disclosure Policy details the degree to which information should be accessible and disclosed, subject to limitations.

11. ACT HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS MANUAL

This policy mandates the development of the ACT Humanitarian Operations Manual within six months of approval. The Manual will include detailed guidance on the implementation of this policy, including but not limited to:

- a. Revised tools and templates for RRF and ACT Appeals, specifically aiming for a shorter and more efficient process and operating through an online platform.
- b. Operational Guidance for ACT Consortia, drawing from past experiences of members such as ACT Fast, consortia with other organizations, consortia within ACT forums, and due analysis of donor priorities and requirements. Consortia plans at global and forum level will be reflected in forum EPRPs as much as possible.
- c. Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) System, systematically capturing project information to meet donor and constituency reporting requirements and highlighting lessons and best practices.
- d. Security and Risk Management Guidelines, ensuring staff safety and well-being and mitigation of organizational risks, based on information from the ACT Security Group, members/partners on the ground and other independent sources.
- e. ACT Surge Mechanism, harnessing the complementary capacities of ACT members at global, regional and national level. Deployments will be managed by the ACT secretariat and coordinated between members with existing rosters and ACT forums with surge elements in their EPRP.
- f. Reporting Guidance for Total ACT Response. Recognizing that the work of the ACT Alliance is the work of all its members, a mechanism to report the diverse portfolios of ACT members outside the ACT humanitarian mechanism.

12. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

12.1 Policy Implementation

This policy will be in effect from 1st January 2022. In preparation for the global roll-out, the following timeline of activities will be observed:

1. Development of ACT Humanitarian Operations Manual by September 2021; to be reviewed by the ACT Executive Committee in October 2021.
2. Digitalisation of project templates and proposal submission process, September 2021.

3. Development of support systems for project management, including reporting and financial management systems, September 2021.
4. Pilot-testing of new tools and approaches, September-December 2021.
5. Development of Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) ToR and formation of roster, October 2021.
6. Secure resourcing of global rollout, including for communication and training, September 2021.
7. Full implementation across ACT forums and members, January 2022.

A detailed Rollout Plan will be developed by the ACT secretariat to guide policy implementation.

12.2 Policy Review

Considering the reform objective of this policy and the importance of continuing generation of lessons from pilot-testing and implementation, an update on implementation will be presented to the Governing Board in 2022. A review of this policy will be made by the Governing Board in 2023.