

ACT Alliance
HUMANITARIAN POLICY

Approved by ACT Executive Committee

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2014, ACT Alliance launched a review of its emergency response mechanism in order to better respond to disasters with improved coordination and timeliness in line with international standards and best practices. Throughout the consultative process, a number of key lessons were learned about what had worked well that could be strengthened, as well as what had not worked well that needed to change. This ACT Alliance Humanitarian Policy replaces the ACT Alliance Response to an Emergency Policy (2012), incorporating the recommendations from the review process. Accompanying guidelines and tools are provided for members in support of this policy which will be continually updated and improved based on learnings from their practical application.

The humanitarian footprint of the ACT alliance in emergencies is substantial. Most ACT members respond through the ACT funding coordination mechanism of the ACT Appeal. In some cases members also respond using bilateral funding outside of the appeal. In addition, some members respond to the emergency through their humanitarian advocacy or emergency communications work. The **“Total ACT Alliance Response”** includes the work of all ACT members responding to the emergency in their different capacities (implementation, funding, advocacy and communications), requiring commitment, coordination and collaboration from all.

2. VISION FOR ACT ALLIANCE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The vision for ACT Alliance in emergencies is to enable an effective ecumenical response that saves lives and maintains dignity. An effective, quality response is well prepared, timely, coordinated, locally owned and at an appropriate scale to meet need. We strengthen the resilience of affected communities and are accountable to the people affected by crisis. Humanitarian needs define our priorities and the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence guide our actions. Our coordinated advocacy work - at national, regional and global levels - amplifies local voices from affected populations to help address root causes of injustice and promote the fulfilment of human rights and dignity for all.

The strength of ACT Alliance is the multitude of different organisations that make up its membership – local, national and international actors with significant differences in capacity, name-recognition and local buy-in. It is in this spirit, and with this diversity, that the ACT Alliance endeavours to respond to emergencies around the world – local or global, large or small – with an ecumenical desire to respond to the needs of communities when they are at their most vulnerable.



ACT Alliance has the privileged position of being a network of local, national and international actors committed to partnerships amongst each other. This commitment enables international and global members of ACT to enhance the capacity of local and national actors, through resources, training and/or other support, allowing for first response in the beginning of a crisis or disaster to come directly from the community itself. As a global alliance, we can, and should, raise our voice and advocate for the rights of the crisis-affected populations with whom we engage; it is our responsibility to ensure local voices are heard by global decision-makers and duty bearers.

Human dignity, community empowerment and strengthening local capacity to respond are cornerstones of our local and national responses. It is the role of the ACT Alliance, in the context of its emergency response mechanism, to ensure that the tools and resources available lend towards reinforcing this ambition. For the ACT Alliance, emergency response is more than saving lives; it is also a genuine desire to invest in resilience and disaster risk reduction within communities so that populations at risk can prepare and protect themselves.

3. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING

Emergency preparedness and response planning at the ACT Forum level is seen as an integral element of strengthening ACT's capacity to respond more effectively with improved coordination and timeliness. All ACT forums are expected to develop an emergency preparedness and response plan (EPRP) and regularly review and update it, as needed.

When disaster strikes, ACT's immediate imperative is to save lives and to support those who are affected. Experience shows that the better ACT members and forums are prepared for a possible disruption of normal life, the faster and more effective a response becomes. Recognizing the importance of being prepared for emergencies and to react quickly in a coordinated way, the ACT Alliance has made emergency preparedness and response one of its strategic priorities, which is reflected in the ACT Strategic Plan (2015-2018). The objective of the ACT Forum Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) is the development of a common understanding of potential disasters in the area and how the ACT forum will respond to these disasters.

Specific guidelines and tools are available on the ACT Website for ACT Forums to support the process of developing an EPRP. A Working Group for EPRP will be established in 2017 to support the ACT Secretariat and the Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group (HPPG) in continuously improving the EPRP mechanism, in conjunction with the rollout of the revised ACT Humanitarian Mechanism.

4. ACT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE – SCENARIO MODEL

4.1 Overview of scenario model

The most significant recommendation from the review of ACT's previous emergency response mechanism was that there needed to be much greater recognition of the different types of emergency situations that ACT members seek to respond to, enabling a move away from the one-size-fits-all approach to a more contextualised model. The scenario model is expected to strengthen the process for providing appropriate emergency response using ACT's two response mechanisms: **ACT Appeal** and **Rapid Response Fund (RRF)**. An operational guidance document for the RRF, which is intended primarily for national members in pursuit of ACT's commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, is available as Annex A of this policy.

As depicted in figures 1, 2, and 3, below, the scenario model highlights distinct tools and roles for each category of emergency. It is also noted that each emergency has distinct characteristics, and while individual emergencies may fit into the same broad general category, a certain amount of flexibility will be required in application of associated guidelines. *It is the responsibility of the Global Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure consistency in*

application of the policy and guidelines, and to authorize exceptions in agreement with the Head of Strategy and Partnerships.

Four key categories of emergency have been identified in order to be able to guide the alliance’s Humanitarian Mechanisms. These are:

1. Local/national emergency
2. Large-scale/global emergency
3. Complex emergency
4. Protracted crisis

Figure 1: Categories of Emergencies in ACT Alliance Humanitarian Policy

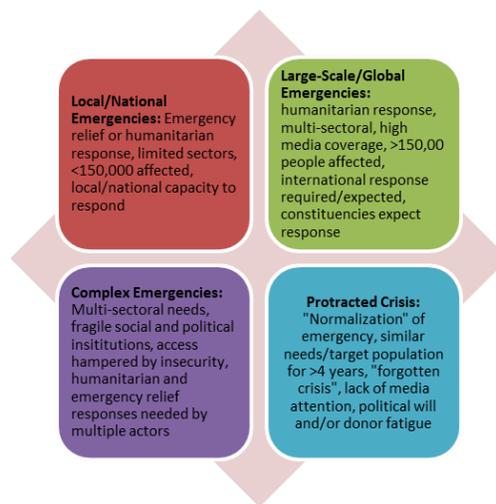


Figure 2: ACT Humanitarian Response Tools per Emergency Category

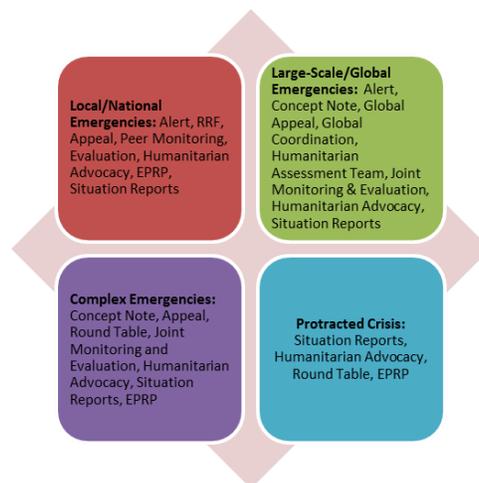


Figure 3: ACT Humanitarian Response Roles per Emergency Category



4.2 Category 1: Local/National Emergency

Criteria:

- Sudden onset emergency requiring emergency relief or humanitarian response;
- Slow onset emergency requiring early response or emergency relief assistance;
- Limited-sectoral response required; needs can be met by single-actor or combination of local/national actors;
- Little global media and donor attention;
- Underfunded emergencies even with government call for assistance;
- < 150,000 people affected;
- Local/national capacity to respond, but beyond the capacity of affected population's traditional coping mechanisms;
- ACT member(s) have presence in the disaster area, or ability to access;
- Can be country-wide, or within a specific region/community within a country (including in the context of a protracted crisis).

Time frame:

0 to 24 weeks

Tools:

- **Alert** (within 24 hours of a sudden onset emergency), issued by Forum, disseminated by Secretariat; for slow onset emergencies, timeframe for Alert issuance is based on any, or a combination, of the following factors: local needs assessments, government declaration, and secondary information from other humanitarian actors;
- **Rapid Response Fund Request** (within 48 hours of Alert issuance): Requested by implementing members, through the Forum. For Forums with EPRPs in place, 0-24 weeks, 150,000 USD maximum; for Forums without EPRP's, 0-12 weeks, 60,000 USD maximum;
- **Appeal** (if recovery exceeds RRF timeframe; RRF amount to be reimbursed): Appeal can be issued within 3 months of Alert issuance if emergency escalates and/or there are considerable funding pledges and/or member interest;
- **Peer Monitoring**: Required for RRF's that will convert to an Appeal, set up according to guidelines by Forum; for regular RRFs, the ACT Secretariat may conduct monitoring visits as necessary;
- **Evaluation**: RRF's exceeding 100,000 USD require Secretariat-led evaluation (can be conducted by funding member or Secretariat);
- **Security and Risk Assessments**: Required for RRFs in Category 3 countries and above based on the ACT Country Risk Rating;
- **Humanitarian Advocacy/Communications Messaging**: Required for all RRF's;
- **EPRP**: Revision may be required;
- **Situation Reports**: Issued by Forum/implementing members bi-monthly at minimum.

Roles and responsibilities:

ACT Secretariat:

- Issue yearly RRF Appeal to Membership, with yearly monitoring report to Governing Board;
- Maintain all relevant tools, including guidelines and formats; proactively promotes tools when emergencies occur;
- Prepare information to forum about the RRF tool, answer questions and guide; engage members in training on use of tools as needed;
- Grant RRF Requests that meet set criteria for humanitarian or emergency relief interventions;
- Ensure monitoring and evaluation tools in place; support to peer-monitoring upon request; disseminates peer monitoring and evaluation reports to funding members;
- Active liaison with local members and/or Forum to identify advocacy and communication messages;
- Manage and maintain the Appeal mechanism;
- Issue Appeals from regions for relevant national emergencies;

- Facilitate fundraising activities with members and relevant external donors, and support Forums to mobilize external resources as required.

Members:

- Gather information from field presence, mobilize personnel, carry out assessments, implement immediate relief, and ensure adherence to reporting/monitoring guidelines;
- Alert Forum of disasters; ensure regular Forum meetings to coordinate and mobilize other Forum members;
- Support each other in development of EPRP.

Forum:

- Ensure relevant tools are applied to response;
- Ensure adherence to reporting and monitoring requirements, including Situation Reports;
- Convene Forum meetings, appointment of focal points among implementing members for communication, advocacy, coordination;
- Facilitate humanitarian assessment by Forum members/implementing member;
- Respond according to capacity; identify and seek local support;
- Decides on lead member in forum (if needed);
- Support to local/national humanitarian advocacy;
- Ensure peer-monitoring.

4.3 Category 2: Large scale/global emergency

Criteria:

- Sudden onset emergency requiring humanitarian response;
- Slow onset emergency requiring early response or humanitarian assistance;
- Multi-sectoral response required; needs must be met by a combination of local and international actors;
- High media coverage globally;
- > 150 000 people affected;
- Local capacity to respond is overwhelmed, response capacity from national governments is compromised and international response is requested/expected;
- Can be national or regional;
- Global church constituencies expect an ecumenical response.

Time frame:

0 to 24 months

Tools:

- **Alert** (within 24 hours of a sudden onset emergency), issued by Forum, disseminated by Secretariat; for slow onset emergencies, timeframe for Alert issuance is based on any, or a combination, of the following factors: local needs assessments, government declaration, and secondary information from other humanitarian actors;
- **Concept Note** (maximum 3 pages, within 48 hours of Alert issuance): Issued by Forum, disseminated by Secretariat;
- **Rapid Response Fund Request** (within 48 hours of Alert issuance): Requested by implementing members, through the Forum, as an advance on a forthcoming appeal for immediate life-saving or humanitarian needs assessment activities. This would act as an immediate “start-up” fund, allowing for a maximum of 150,000 USD to be used in the first 6-8 weeks of a large-scale/global emergency. This amount will be reimbursed in the appeal;
- **Global Appeal** (within 7 days of Alert issuance): Issued by Forum to enable internal and external fundraising; consider lead-member model;
- **Global Coordination body initiated by ACT Secretariat** with forum/focal point in implementing member, new emergency protocol on communication, humanitarian advocacy, coordination for members wanting joint action;
- **Humanitarian Assessment Team**: Forum can request member staff to be deployed in joint assessment mission for humanitarian assessment and identification of quick impact humanitarian action under ACT Alliance banner;
- **Security and Risk Assessments**: Required for RRFs in Category 3 countries and above based on the ACT Country Risk Rating;
- **Joint Monitoring Visits and Evaluation**: Required for all Global Appeals; team to be comprised of Secretariat staff, funding members and external evaluator; at the request of members, this may include an evaluation of the total ACT response and not just the response identified in the Global Appeal;
- **Humanitarian Advocacy/Communications Strategy**: Required for all Global Appeals;
- **Situation Reports**: Issued by Forum/implementing members weekly for first 8 weeks, bi-monthly or monthly afterwards.

Roles and responsibilities:

ACT Secretariat:

- Develop a **Global Emergencies Protocol** or standby arrangements to guide ACT members in mobilizing emergency response and providing surge or capacity support to responding forums/members. The process will be guided by a review of the previous Rapid Support Team (RST) mechanism and other related initiatives by members.

- Support the Forum/Implementing members with development of messaging for humanitarian advocacy; carry forward, on behalf of the ACT Alliance, relevant humanitarian advocacy messages;
- Ensure the establishment of a Global Coordination body on behalf of the ACT Alliance for members wanting joint communication, advocacy and coordination;
- Ensure dissemination of Situation Reports as needed;
- Monitor and communicate the total ACT response;
- Manage, support and ensure dissemination of evaluations for Global Appeals;
- Facilitate fundraising activities with members and relevant external donors; disseminate Concept Note and Global Appeal to relevant funding platforms.

Members:

- Support from region or globally with personnel, including rapid assessment teams for humanitarian assessments and quick impact projects as part of the ACT Alliance;
- Co-brand as ACT in all emergency communication;
- Represent ACT in UN Cluster coordination meetings; avoid duplication by coordinating ACT member presence;
- Prepare in Forum the Alert, Concept Note and Global Appeal;
- Member-driven consortia and joint programmes;
- Facilitate and support evaluation and monitoring visits;
- Gather information from field presence, mobilize personnel, carry out assessments, implement immediate relief, and ensure adherence to reporting/monitoring guidelines; Active communication, coordination and reporting by all members contributing to the 'Total ACT Response';
- Ensure regular Forum meetings to coordinate and mobilize other Forum members.

Forum:

- Forum coordinator provide leadership and direction, appoints focal points to increase capacity in communication, humanitarian advocacy, coordination;
- Prepare Alert, Concept Note and Appeal with implementing members;
- Ensure EPRP plans are communicated and implemented; avoid duplication and competition amongst ACT members;
- Establish coordination with national response teams/other actors (as applicable);
- Facilitate rapid humanitarian assessment teams;
- Facilitate and support evaluation and monitoring visits;
- Ensure relevant tools are applied to response;
- Ensure adherence to reporting and monitoring requirements, including Situation Reports;

- Convene Forum meetings, appointment of focal points among implementing members for communication, advocacy, coordination.

4.4 Category 3: Complex Emergency

Criteria:

- Multi-sectoral needs as a result of a combination of factors; can be natural or human-induced disasters;
- Often regional, spills over into neighbouring countries;
- Significant breakdown of law and order;
- Fragile social and political institutions;
- Humanitarian access severely hampered by insecurity;
- Massive displacement of people;
- Requires humanitarian and emergency relief responses from multiple actors to meet needs (FBO's, Secular, national, international).

Time frame:

0 weeks to 48 months

Tools:

- **Concept Note** (maximum 3 pages, within 7 days): Issued by Forum, disseminated by Secretariat;
- **Appeal** (within 14 days of Concept Note issuance for 1 year implementation; 21 days for 2 years): Issued by Forum to enable internal and external fundraising; consortia models encouraged. Appeals will be judged against capacity for longer-term planning and implementation; yearly Alerts/Concept Notes will be discouraged unless significant change in situation. **Appeals will be issued up to a maximum of 4 years consecutively regardless of implementation timeframe;**
- **Joint Monitoring Visits and Evaluation:** Required for all Appeals exceeding 3 million USD/year; team to be comprised of funding members and Secretariat staff;
- **Security and Risk Assessments:** Required for RRFs in Category 3 countries and above based on the ACT Country Risk Rating;
- **Round Table:** To convene key members for all complex emergencies **on request of Appeal extension**. Can be called for by Forum, by key implementing members, or by Secretariat; context, conflict analysis, needs assessments and security management will be key topics;
- **Humanitarian Advocacy/Communications Strategy:** Required for all Appeals;
- **Situation Reports:** Issued by Forum/implementing members monthly;
- **EPRP: Updated upon renewal of Appeal.**

Roles and responsibilities:

ACT Secretariat:

- Facilitate fundraising activities with members and relevant external donors; disseminate Concept Note and Appeal to relevant funding platforms;
- Monitor total ACT response, ensuring complementarity between local and international ACT members;
- Facilitate Round Table discussions as needed;
- Encourage cooperation and exchange of information between members on needs, context and security management strategies;
- Manage, support and ensure dissemination of evaluations for Appeals;
- Ensure support to the development of humanitarian advocacy and communications messaging; carry forward, as needed, advocacy messages on behalf of the ACT Alliance.

Members:

- Gather information from field presence, mobilize personnel, carry out assessments, implement immediate relief, and ensure adherence to reporting/monitoring guidelines;
- Ensure regular Forum meetings to coordinate and mobilize other Forum members;
- Consider long-term implementation of projects;
- Member-driven consortia and joint programs;
- Support each other in development of EPRP;
- Strive towards development of member-resourced consortia;
- Active communication, coordination and reporting by all members contributing to the 'Total ACT Response';
- Facilitate and support evaluation and monitoring visits.

Forum:

- Ensure ongoing context and conflict analysis;
- Ensure regular reporting and understanding of security situation on behalf of all ACT members;
- Prepare Concept Note and Appeal with implementing members;
- Ensure relevant tools are applied to response;
- Ensure adherence to reporting and monitoring requirements, including Situation Reports;
- Convene Forum meetings, appointment of focal points among implementing members for communication, advocacy, coordination;
- Maintain and monitor EPRP.

4.5 Category 4: Protracted Crisis

Criteria:

- Complex emergency continuing into a protracted crisis;
- Characterized as complex, but requiring more than 4 years of engagement by the ACT Alliance;
- Emergency has become “normalized” with similar needs and target population for more than 4 years;
- Lack of media attention - a “forgotten crisis”;
- Lack of political will to engage politically, donor fatigue.

Time frame:

More than 4 years since ACT Alliance started responding upwards.

Tools:

- **No Alert, RRF, Concept Note or Appeals;**
- **Situation Reports:** Issued by the Forum on members’ ongoing programming to attract interest, develop humanitarian advocacy messaging and communications strategies;
- **Humanitarian Advocacy Strategy** to be developed by the Forum with support from Secretariat – with a focus on “Forgotten Crisis”;
- **Round Table** and bilateral funding between engaged members: Multi-year (not annual) planning and funding by members strongly encouraged, linking relief to recovery;
- **Security and Risk Assessments:** Required for RRFs in Category 3 countries and above based on the ACT Country Risk Rating;
- **EPRP:** Yearly review.
- **NB: ‘Spikes’** or sudden onset emergencies within protracted crisis can make use of Alert, RRF and/or Appeal tools under Category 1 or 2, sudden on-set emergency scenario.

Roles and responsibilities:

ACT Secretariat:

- Minimal role for the Secretariat on funding mechanism **unless a sudden on-set emergency develops;**
- Significant role on humanitarian advocacy and communication, with a focus on “forgotten crises”; ensure support to the development of humanitarian advocacy and communications messaging; carry forward, as needed, advocacy messages on behalf of the ACT Alliance;
- Encourage cooperation and exchange of information between members on needs, context and security management strategies;
- Facilitate Round Tables as needed;

Monitor total ACT response, ensuring complementarity between local and international ACT members for advocacy and communication purposes.

Members:

- Member-driven consortia and joint programs; focus on LRRD programming;
- Ensure regular Forum meetings to coordinate and mobilize other Forum members;
- Consider long-term implementation of projects;
- Support each other in development of EPRP.

Forum:

- Ensure ongoing context and conflict analysis;
- Ensure regular reporting and understanding of security situation on behalf of all ACT members;
- Ensure regular development and dissemination of Situation Reports;
- Convene regular Forum meetings;
- Maintain and monitor EPRP.

5. QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

High quality is essential for the ACT Alliance to achieve its vision, mission, aims and goals. ACT understands high quality as a learning and peer process, which allows its members to learn from each other and to make them accountable to each other and to the affected populations with whom they work.

The ACT Alliance is committed to demonstrating accountability in every aspect of its work. The ACT Quality and Accountability Framework (QAF) summarises standards of quality towards which the ACT governing bodies, ACT members and the ACT secretariat can be held to account by our stakeholders, and by each other. It states ACT's primary commitments and sets out an implementation plan and actions for improvement. It seeks to ensure that members have mechanisms of accountability to beneficiaries. This framework is publicly accessible to ACT primary stakeholders, so that ACT can demonstrate our ability to adhere to stated commitments and processes, and can be held accountable.

ACT Alliance's humanitarian response uses the framework of the Core Humanitarian Standard as the benchmark by which to ensure quality and accountability. The Core Humanitarian Standard sets out Nine Commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It also facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis: knowing what humanitarian organisations have committed to will enable them to hold those organisations to account.

The tools and guidelines accompanying this policy will utilise the framework of the Core Humanitarian Standard as the benchmark by which to ensure quality and accountability.



6. HUMANITARIAN ADVOCACY

The roles and responsibilities of ACT members and forums in humanitarian advocacy are described fully in The ACT Advocacy Policy and Procedures and in the ACT Advocacy Strategy.

Many ACT members view advocacy as a critical and complementary means of ensuring effective protection for communities in emergency contexts. Advocacy in emergency is a means to implement the humanitarian imperative and ACT’s mandate as found in its founding document.

ACT’s humanitarian action is guided by the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and grounded in the desire for the legitimate and effective implementation of international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law. The ACT Alliance and ACT members have endorsed the *Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* and adhere to the principles of the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief* which are key standards for all ACT humanitarian programs. Therefore, ACT does not tie the promise, delivery or distribution of assistance to the embracing or acceptance of a particular political or religious creed.

ACT Alliance believes that advocacy is crucial to any emergency response in order to amplify people’s voices, to ensure that responses are appropriate to people’s needs and rights and to ensure that they respect humanitarian principles. It may relate to, for instance, protection, access, promoting good practice of humanitarian and development work, prevention of escalation of violence, conflict transformation and promoting nation/society-building as part of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Different approaches are taken based on the different categories of emergencies as outlined in sections 4.2 to 4.5 above, and may cover a wide-range of advocacy methodologies, including public advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy and bilateral or multilateral lobbying efforts. In a situation of emergency, risk-benefit and context/power analyses are made at the time of making strategic choices in order to determine which humanitarian advocacy methodology will yield the greatest results.

7. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

A clear strategy for communicating in an emergency is an essential component of the ACT response, without which the ability to fundraise, bear witness to the experiences of people affected, advocate for humanitarian protection and resources for those in need and draw international attention to the crisis are impossible.

In the past, Alliance-wide emergency communications work has been characterised by lack of speed, lack of visibility materials, lack of communications people on the ground and resulting lack of media visibility for the ACT response, all of which negatively impacts on the Alliance’s ability to effectively fundraise and advocate for the plight of populations. In line with the re-evaluation of the ACT response to emergencies, the ACT Alliance Communications Strategy 2015-2018, seeks to improve the emergency communications response to more effectively support one another’s fundraising and donor relations, in addition to ACT Alliance humanitarian advocacy ambitions.

The secretariat will:

- Improve access to communications personnel on the ground, including integration of communication officers in ACT’s regional offices, speeding up delivery of materials to assist fundraising efforts;
- Develop a pool of expert voices alliance-wide as ACT media spokespeople;
- Facilitate encouragement of member collaboration in emergencies;
- Increase access to ACT branded material;
- Find media opportunities for ACT response work on the ground.

Members will:

- Actively take part in the online emergency communications resource sharing groups and contribute emergency communication materials;

- Integrate communications personnel and/or a communications function within ACT forums;
- Incorporate communications into Emergency Preparedness Response Plans;
- Actively promote 'ACT Alliance branded' media visibility for the ACT response.

Forums will:

- Develop humanitarian and advocacy messaging in collaboration with local members.

Advisory groups will:

- Develop advocacy messaging to bring national contexts into the broader global agendas.

Communications, Media and Brand Advisory Group will:

- Jointly moderate the ACT Communicators private Facebook Group to encourage continued member engagement and collaboration around emergencies.

Communities of practice will:

- Assist in the training of spokespeople across the alliance on key areas of the ACT emergency response;
- Disseminate knowledge about best practices and background information relating to specific humanitarian issues relevant to areas of work.

8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be implemented with immediate effect. There is recognition, however, that there will be a period of transition until the end of 2017 while the associated guidelines and tools are being developed/revised and when some elements of the response mechanism, such as appeals for protracted crises, are being managed under the previous policy. Full implementation of this policy will be from 01 January 2018 onwards, or upon completion of planned training activities at regional/national levels.

Annex A

OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR THE RAPID RESPONSE FUND (RRF)

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1. LINK TO ACT HUMANITARIAN POLICY

Four key categories of emergency are identified in the ACT Humanitarian Policy in order to be able to guide the alliance's humanitarian response mechanisms. These are:

1. Local/national emergency
2. Large-scale/global emergency
3. Complex emergency
4. Protracted crisis

The Rapid Response Fund (RRF) is generally used in the category of local/national emergencies (Category 1), determined based on the following criteria:

Criteria:

- Sudden on-set emergency requiring emergency relief or humanitarian response;
- Slow onset emergency requiring early response or emergency relief assistance;
- Limited-sectoral response required; needs can be met by single-actor or combination of local actors;
- Little global media and donor attention;
- Underfunded emergencies even with government call for assistance;
- < 150,000 people affected;
- Local/national capacity to respond, but beyond the capacity of affected population's traditional coping mechanisms;
- ACT member(s) have presence in the disaster area, or ability to access;
- Can be country-wide, or within a specific region/community within a country (including in the context of a protracted crisis).

Time frame:

0 to 24 weeks

Tools:

- **Alert** (within 24 hours of a sudden onset emergency), issued by Forum, disseminated by Secretariat; for slow onset emergencies, timeframe for Alert issuance is based on any, or a combination, of the following factors: local needs assessments, government declaration, and secondary information from other humanitarian actors;

- **Rapid Response Fund Request** (within 48 hours of Alert issuance): Requested by implementing members, through the Forum. For forums with EPRP's¹ in place, 0-24 weeks, 150,000 USD maximum; for forums without EPRP's, 0-12 weeks, 60,000 USD maximum;
- **Appeal** (if recovery exceeds RRF timeframe; RRF amount to be reimbursed): Appeal can be issued within 3 months of Alert issuance if emergency escalates and/or there are considerable funding pledges and/or member interest;
- **Peer Monitoring**: Required for RRF's that will convert to an Appeal, set up according to guidelines by Forum; for regular RRFs, the ACT Secretariat may conduct monitoring visits as necessary;
- **Evaluation**: RRF's exceeding 100,000 USD require Secretariat-led evaluation (can be conducted by funding member or Secretariat);
- **Security and Risk Assessments**: Required for RRFs in Category 3 countries and above based on the ACT Country Risk Rating;
- **Humanitarian Advocacy/Communications Messaging**: Required for all RRF's;
- **EPRP**: Revision may be required;
- **Situation Reports**: Issued by forum/implementing members every two months minimum.

2. PURPOSE OF RRF

The purpose of the RRF is to provide one-time financial resources to members of the ACT Alliance, in the first days following a local or national **emergency**, and where local or national members have the capacity to respond. The aim is to enable national and local actors, who are primarily the first responders, to conduct immediate emergency response programming focused on saving lives, over a three to six month timeframe. The response must adhere to humanitarian principles, the ACT Alliance Code of Conduct, and the Core Humanitarian Standard. 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).

3. CRITERIA FOR DISBURSEMENT OF RRF FUNDS

3.1 Eligibility for RRF funding:

- Local and National ACT Alliance Members, with capacity to respond only within the borders of their specific country are eligible for the RRF.
- Members who have the capacity to respond across international borders (such as neighbouring countries), or are considered global or international organisations are not eligible.

¹ Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan

- Eligibility for the RRF is also restricted to members who have signed the Membership Agreement and are in good standing (e.g., positive compliance with reporting requirements from previous ACT emergency response).
- Local partners of global or international members, who are not ACT members themselves, are not eligible.

3.2 Criteria for approval of funds:

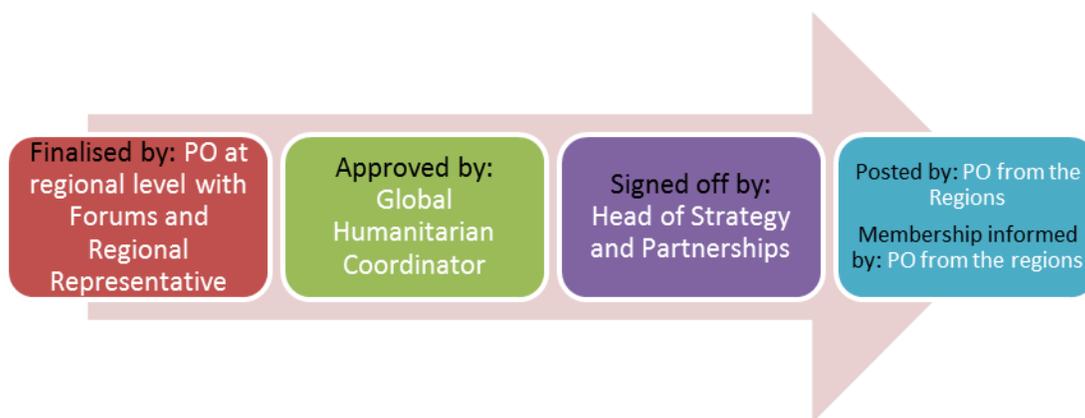
- The RRF must be channelled towards life-saving actions related to the emergency (e.g., food, nutrition, health, water/sanitation, clothing, shelter, household kits, psychosocial activities, and essential transport/logistics, staff and support costs; no more than 5% of the total budget will be allocated to indirect costs).
- The RRF request should be submitted within 48 hours of Alert Issuance, and a decision will be communicated within 24 hours of receipt by the ACT Secretariat. Timeframes as per the Humanitarian Mechanism will be strictly adhered to for RRF requests.
- RRFs will be used where a one-time transfer of RRF funds combined with locally available resources will be sufficient to meet the needs of that emergency.
- In cases where the RRF leads to an appeal (e.g., if the magnitude of the emergency is greater than originally thought), then the initial RRF funding will be treated as a funding advance. This means that once funds for the appeal are received, the ACT Secretariat replenishes the advance from Appeal funds until the full amount has been recovered.
- RRF funds may be used to cover the cost of replenishment of a member's in-country stocks which were used in the emergency response.
- Only one RRF per emergency will be issued. Accordingly, when there is more than one ACT Alliance member in the country, there should be consultation within the forum/among members prior to the RRF submission being sent to the ACT Secretariat.
- RRF requests for Category 3 countries and above should contain a security and risk assessment, outlining how risks will be mitigated. The ACT Security Coordinator will be consulted on RRF decisions for high-risk countries/locations.
- The RRF request should be sent by the forum or endorsed by all ACT members in a country where no forum exists.
- RRF requests must be made in accordance with other ACT Alliance policies and guidelines.

3.3 Amount:

- EPRP's are central to the RRFs - for Forums with EPRP's in place, maximum project timeframe is 0-24 weeks and USD 150,000 maximum.
- For Forums without EPRP's, timeframe is 0-12 weeks and USD 60,000 maximum.
- Any unspent balance from the RRF implementation must be returned to the ACT secretariat.

4. DECISION MAKING

Funds available to the ACT Secretariat to administer the RRF are limited. Utmost care, coordination and consultation will be checked by the ACT Secretariat with forums/members requesting the RRF to ensure the wisest utilization of these funds. Decision for disbursement of funds is the responsibility of the Global Humanitarian Coordinator in conjunction with the Head of Strategy and Partnerships.



5. RRF REPLENISHMENT

The Rapid Response Fund is a global fund of the ACT Alliance administered by the ACT secretariat. Funds for the RRF are replenished by ACT Alliance members and non-members on the basis of an annual appeal. The ACT Secretariat encourages, and welcomes, contributions from interested members towards a specific emergency and specific RRF (in addition to members' annual contributions to the global RRF fund), in order to maintain sufficient funds in the global RRF fund.

6. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Reporting Requirements for Requesting Members:

- At the end of the first month following the emergency, the forum/requesting member(s) will submit a situation report (sitrep) to the ACT secretariat, using the ACT sitrep format. Forum/members are expected to accompany the sitrep with photos and human interest stories.
- A final report (narrative and financial) will be prepared by the requesting member(s) and submitted to the ACT secretariat within 60 days of completion of RRF activities, following the ACT appeal and RRF reporting guidelines and ACT appeal and RRF financial report format. Support and guidance for these requirements will be provided by the ACT Secretariat.

- Expenditure will be reported against the original budget headings. The USD equivalent MUST be shown alongside with local currency reporting as was in the budget.
- An audit report is required by the ACT Secretariat if one member receives 50,000 USD or more for an RRF. The audit report must be submitted within 90 days of completion of RRF activities.
- If a member receives less than 50,000 USD, an audit report does not need to be submitted to the ACT Secretariat. However, the member must include the RRF funds in the annual audit of the member organization. Income and expenditure incurred on the RRF should be clearly distinguished and identifiable from the annual audit report. While ACT will not be requesting these audit reports on a regular basis, the member must be able to produce the annual audit report upon request by the ACT Secretariat.
- In cases where the RRF leads to an appeal (e.g. if the magnitude of the emergency is greater than originally foreseen by the ACT forum/members), the RRF will be understood to be an advance and will be reimbursed to the global RRF fund from the appeal funds.

6.2 Reporting Requirements for the ACT Secretariat:

- The ACT Secretariat will prepare and disseminate a summary report (narrative and financial) to the alliance on the use of RRF funds for the period January to December of a given year.
- The ACT Secretariat annual audit report will include the RRF.
- The above reports will be disseminated to all members within six months of the completion of the year.
- In the case that funds were contributed by a member towards a specific RRF project, final financial and narrative reports (including audited financial statements where applicable) that are received from the requesting member(s), will be shared with the ACT funding member.