

ACT PHILIPPINES FORUM

actalliance

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

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1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty is pervasive and the gap between the rich and poor continues to widen in the Philippines even as it is now a middle income country. It is also ranked 3rd most disaster prone globally with an average of USD 1.65 Billion in losses incurred due to disasters annually.

ACT Philippines Forum is a platform for ACT Alliance member organisations that support development, advocacy and humanitarian activities in the Philippines.

At present there are three (3) Full Forum Members namely Christian Aid (CA), Lutheran World Relief (LWR), National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), with three (3) Associate Members namely Church of Sweden (CoS), Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), and Community World Service Asia (CWSA).

The ACT Philippines Forum brings together organisations:

- with common interests defined broadly by their commitment to the mission, vision, and values of the ACT Alliance in humanitarian, development and advocacy work.
- bound by a commitment to empower communities, build their resilience to cope and overcome risks
- with a focus and ways of working together, as appropriate, according to the specific context, partners and communities they serve.

In the Philippines, regular meetings for coordination of programmes and activities have been conducted by the ACT members since 2009. On July 31, 2013, the core members formalized the ACT Philippines Forum through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Mandate:

To strengthen the coordination and cooperation among ACT Alliance members and to develop clear parameters by which the members could work together as an alliance along emergency response, including emergency preparedness, as well as developmental and advocacy work. In particular, the Forum serves as a venue for information and resource sharing, consolidation for relating to external stakeholders and for fundraising and peer support for meeting mutually shared standards for humanitarian, development and advocacy work.

Adherence with the ACT Alliance Mission & Vision and Policies:

All members will respect being part of the ACT Alliance, all it stands for and all of its members and incorporate and reflect ACT policies and guidelines in their operations. Members will also provide input into the development of ACT Alliance policies and procedures.

Use of ACT Philippines Forum Name:

Members agree to use the designation "ACT Philippines Forum", on Forum activities and/or common press releases, papers and other similar resource materials and collaterals as the visible expression of activities carried out collectively by the forum.¹ In such events, communication and visibility guidelines

¹ This will apply until a common brand and communication platform are adopted by ACT Alliance.

of the ACT Alliance, including its name and logo will be used publicly along with the individual logo or mark of the member organisations.

Local Initiative:

The ACT Philippines Forum interventions should be built on local initiative, knowledge and resources of disaster-affected, poor and marginalised communities, and of organisations and churches closest to those communities, to enable and ensure the most appropriate and effective emergency, development assistance and advocacy.

Partnership and Participation:

The ACT Philippines Forum observes the principle of participatory and collegial gathering of peers with a common shared commitment to coordinate and collaborate. All ACT Alliance members present in the country shall be invited and enjoined to actively participate in collective initiatives to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the ACT Alliance response in supporting communities affected by poverty and disasters.

All ACT member agencies will equally contribute to, and will be included in, major discussions and activities, with due consideration given to the differences in capacities and resources of each member. All ACT Philippines Forum members stand as equal partners in the Forum. The Forum will address imbalances in power dynamics sensitively, such as those created by control of funding, or the like.

Relation to global governance structures:

The ACT Philippines Forum, as it evolves, shall play a positive role in the process of nominations to the ACT Alliance governing board. In the spirit of the Forum's collaborative approach, the members will be encouraged to collectively endorse the nomination of a Full Forum Member to the Executive Committee.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM:

The main objective for the ACT Philippines Forum is to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the ecumenical humanitarian and development response, to persons and communities affected by poverty, discrimination, abuse and disasters, through improved preparedness, implementation and coordination by ACT Alliance members at national level, through children and gender-sensitive approaches and in line with obligations to international humanitarian standards and human rights. ACT members in the Philippines will consolidate to create a bigger voice for our advocacies hand in hand with partners and communities.

3. MEMBERSHIP IN THE FORUM

- All ACT Alliance members in the Philippines shall be invited to join the Forum and participate in its activities. These include national and regional churches, ecumenical agencies, organizations and country offices of ACT Alliance members.
- All ACT Philippines Forum members will respect the principles of partnership and avoid any action that may undermine initiatives of local partner organisations.

- All ACT Philippines Forum members must be active in supporting coordination and information-sharing, strengthening the ACT Philippines Forum, bringing up relevant development and humanitarian issues for discussion, giving advice in the planning and implementation of joint or independent activities, emergency appeals, capacity building etc.
- A **Full Forum Member** is an ACT Alliance member present in the country with a Country Program and physical office in the country. A Full Forum Member has full voting rights within the Forum; and shall be consulted on all matters pertinent to the Forum's joint representation and initiatives such as, but not limited to: participation or non-participation in ACT appeals, releases of ACT Philippines Forum press statements, position, policy and advocacy papers.
- Where an ACT Alliance member organization does not have a country office but has presence through a Country Program, they may be able to participate in ACT Philippines Forum meetings and joint activities, and shall be deemed as an **Associate Member** with observer status.
- The Forum can extend **Temporary Membership** to ACT Alliance members who plan to come to the Philippines for a limited period related to a specific emergency or development response. However, such ACT members shall be expected to inform ACT Philippines Forum of their intentions to join the Forum and take a full part in the Forum. ACT Philippines Forum will support such ACT members through information exchange. In no way should temporary ACT members undermine planned or on-going activities and projects carried out by Full Forum members.
- For all ACT Alliance members in the country planning to request funding and participate in an ACT appeal, including the Rapid Response Fund, the requesting organisation is mandated to coordinate with the Forum and be an active member as determined by the ACT Philippines Forum.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

FORUM MEMBERS SHALL:

- Conduct joint emergency and development project/programme assessments, where possible and appropriate. They shall follow the Protocols and Standards for joint activities as stipulated in the Emergency and Preparedness Response Plan (EPRP).
- Issue joint emergency alerts where possible and necessary.
- Draft and submit appeals, appeal updates and reports to the ACT Secretariat within agreed timeframes and deadlines, and as part of a consolidated ACT appeal process, in accordance with ACT Alliance policies and guidelines.
- Initiate joint development projects and plans depending on the development of a joint ACT Philippines strategy
- Promote knowledge and information sharing among all members of ACT Alliance
- Participate in activities collectively defined by the Forum and ACT Alliance
- Attend all regular and special meetings of the Forum
- Study, collectively respond and issue position paper/s on ACT Alliance policy documents
- Inform, share information and coordinate with the other members of the forum on potential and actual emergency responses and rights-based poverty reduction situations.
- Jointly provide accurate and credible information for the ACT Alliance globally: reflecting the humanitarian emergency and sustainable development response of the members for external

dissemination with due consideration for sensitive areas; and prepare internal communications to support advocacy efforts by the Alliance.

- Jointly provide accurate and credible information for external communication and documentation with due respect and consideration on sensitive issues for all ACT Philippines Forum members, observers and participants.
- Designate the head of organisation as representative to attend ACT Philippines Forum meetings, and designate an alternate in his/her absence.
- Develop proposals for joint action – e.g., needs assessments, gender analysis, implementation, monitoring, training, skills development and capacity building.
- Participate in joint advocacy as ACT Alliance. The Forum shall not engage in advocacy work unless agreed upon by all its members. However, intended and ongoing advocacy campaigns undertaken by individual member organisations shall be shared at key ACT Philippines Forum meetings.
- Assist each other to improve performance in emergency response and mitigation/preparedness, as well as rights-based empowerment for sustainable development through lessons learnt, exchange of experiences/information and joint training initiatives.
- Uphold the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, the Code of Conduct on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse of Power and Corruption, the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (SPHERE Standards), HAP, and other ACT Alliance policies and guidelines, both in the implementation and monitoring of their emergency work.
- Encourage donors to channel funds through the ACT Philippines Forum's joint appeals and/or development initiatives.
- Inform other members of funding opportunities, and share information of intentions to apply for institutional funding – especially if there are opportunities for collaboration. Also information on progress of applications shall be shared among the Forum members.
- Host ACT Philippines Forum meetings on a rotation basis.
- Promote the ACT Philippines Forum and the ACT Alliance within the country.

FOR THE CONVENOR OF THE FORUM

- Being a small Forum, the Convenor will be rotated among the Full Forum members with two (2) years tenure. After the inception tenure of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines as Convenor, the post shall be rotated in alphabetical order among active members.
- Upon consultation with Forum members, draw up an agenda/programme of work for the ACT Philippines Forum, to be agreed by all Forum members.
- Coordinate communication with the ACT Secretariat on behalf of the Forum on issues of common interest to the Forum.
- Represent and promote ACT Alliance in any national fora with external audiences, including the United Nations system, government representatives, and inter-agency humanitarian response mechanisms. As appropriate, the Forum can designate its representative to specialized fora to ensure the tapping of relevant expertise within and effective representation of the Forum.
- Ensure that all information from ACT Secretariat is circulated to all ACT Philippines Forum members.

- Coordinate joint communication efforts (internal and external).
- Coordinate any ACT Appeal, ACT Alliance or ACT Philippines Forum evaluation or review.
- Organise ACT Philippines Forum meetings, invite members, drafting agenda and minutes to share with members with the aid of another Forum
- Ensure that all ACT Philippines Forum members are invited to all forum meetings.
- Coordinate, with Forum members, visits of external agencies and members.
- Facilitate joint monitoring and peer reviews when possible and appropriate.
- As applicable, facilitate the mission and work of Rapid Support Team (RST) in the country.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE FORUM

The ACT Philippines Forum will be legitimised through a formal MoU which shall contain the following key elements:

- To emphasize “coordination” rather than a “line management” function towards its members;
- To be flexible, and adaptable to the Philippines’ specific context;
- To avoid creating an extra bureaucratic layer that might risk undermining the effectiveness of its individual members’ emergency response or sustainable development, rights-based empowerment advocacy projects; and
- To be funded/supported from within as far as possible or assisted through a staff secondment or other external resources, including deployment of RST.

Meetings:

The ACT Philippines Forum convener will take responsibility to clearly define needs for calling and chairing meetings, and encourage rotation of responsibility for calling and chairing the meetings by the members to increase ownership and participation and the overall empowerment of members and the Forum itself.

Minutes: The ACT Philippines Forum convener who is responsible for calling and chairing the meetings will request another Forum member to take responsibility of minutes to provide a good record of valuable conversation and action plans made by the members of the forum. The same member will also take responsibility to share the minutes with the ACT Secretariat to strengthen and deepen the ACT Alliance understanding of local dynamics and capacities.

Meeting frequency: The ACT Philippines Forum will have its annual meeting within the 1st quarter of the year and three (3) regular meetings. There might be periods where frequent meetings will be required, particularly in the planning phase, where mapping, analysing and developing preparedness plans may take place, or during the initial emergency implementation period of an ACT Appeal or other joint project.

Strategic plan:

The Forum will be guided by a strategic plan aligned with the ACT Alliance Global Strategy.

6. PRINCIPLES AND WAYS OF WORKING

The ACT Philippines Forum will work based on the following principles:

- **Sharing a rich diversity of views and experiences**, providing a unique multi-member (and multi-agency) national or regional perspective on an emergency/disaster, development or rights based advocacy context.
- Increased **transparency and openness** amongst peers and the development of **good working relationships** through **mutual support and solidarity**.
- **Increased quality in the joint design and submission of ACT appeals** through sharing experience, information, knowledge and priorities in order to identify how best to respond to a given situation in the country or region.
- **Avoidance of duplication and improved targeting** through joint or coordinated needs assessment and planning, implementation, evaluation, and overall learning.
- **Joint and, therefore, increased coverage and reach** in emergencies, as well as development and advocacy work through joint appeals and programmes that assist a greater number of disaster affected and vulnerable people in different geographical locations.
- Increased ability to **respond effectively in different sectors or specialised areas of work** through sharing complementary areas of expertise.
- Strengthening the **appropriateness of responses** through working with ACT Alliance members with a high level of local knowledge, established presence and relationships with disaster affected and poor and marginalised communities.
- Sharing and **developing of skills and areas of competence** in disaster preparedness and management which increases quality and professional standards in emergency work, such as in proposal and report writing, needs assessments, emergency management training, and use of SPHERE guidelines and HAP.
- Sharing and **developing of skills and areas of competence** in development work which increases the quality, standards and impact of the work which should include, but not be limited to Promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming including the prioritisation and the promotion of gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender in all aspects of its work ² as well as right based empowerment and advocacy, climate change, organisational development etc.
- Where relevant and possible increased **profile and visibility** through a shared ACT Alliance identity that reflects this broader joint coverage and capacity.
- Increased **credibility with other stakeholders**, be it governments, donors, UN or other NGOs, through ACT Alliance members participation in relevant working groups such as the INGO Forum, Humanitarian Country Team meetings and relevant working groups .
- Increased ability to identify and take part in local **advocacy, lobbying and media opportunities** (e.g., urgent joint alerts, joint advocacy campaigns, updates and other communications) that do not undermine humanitarian space or universal human rights and sustainable development principles, with ACT Alliance members as well as with other humanitarian, development and advocacy actors.
- **Sharing of operational resources** such as office facilities and financial and administrative staff, relief stocks, joint procurement, transport, raising funds.
- Increased opportunities for **capacity development** and sharing of human and knowledge resources and learning in common and complementary areas of interest and expertise.

² In accordance with the principles contained in the "Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action", Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2006, and its "Framework for Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action". ACT Alliance established a gender policy/guidelines.

- **Joint mapping** of capacities and vulnerabilities in potential disaster threats and poverty reduction scenarios.
- **Collaborative peer monitoring and review.**
- To ensure that **competition on fundraising does not become a hindrance** for good cooperation, discussions about fundraising efforts, potential calls for proposals should take place in an open and transparent manner, that enables the equitable and just distribution of resources based on grass-roots needs and local capacities as well as those of the implementers and the donors partners. Promoting efficient and effective consortiums whenever possible.
- Commitment to this Forum should not prevent ACT Philippines Forum members to establish and maintain membership and active participation in other forums, networks, coalitions and similar formations to enrich and promote individual members' programs and advocacies.
- ACT Philippines Forum members, depending on the undertaking and opportunities present, may also opt to form consortia with only some and not all forum members.

7. VALIDITY AND REVIEW

The MOU among the ACT Philippines Forum members will be shared with ACT Secretariat for information. The MOU will be valid until it is terminated by the Forum members in consultation with the ACT Secretariat, with at least three (3) months written notification.

The content of the MOU will be reviewed every year, to see that it is still relevant to the ACT Alliance members. The ACT Philippines Forum may revise the MOU as it deems necessary.

This MOU is signed on this day of June 16, 2017.

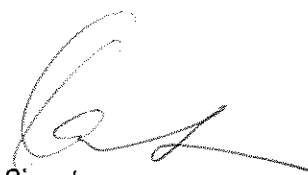


Signature:

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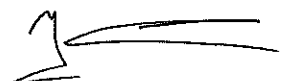


Signature:

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