

ACT ALLIANCE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

*This is a revision of the April 2013 version of the policy.
Approved by the Governing Board during the August 2020 meeting*

1. Introduction

As one of the largest faith-based global alliances engaged in humanitarian relief, sustainable development and advocacy work, ACT's commitment to communicate the work of the alliance and global matters of injustice is paramount.

To serve the alliance's goals and ambitions the Secretariat must produce regular, consistent and informed communication. By keeping internal and external audiences well informed of our successes, lessons learned, concerns and expectations, ACT increases its credibility and visibility in the eyes of those audiences. In every communication, ACT aims to present its operations and values, and strengthen its position as an independent and professional alliance. ACT commits to base communication on journalistic values of timeliness, accuracy and high quality, and communicates in ways that respect the dignity, uniqueness, human rights and intrinsic worth of every woman, man, girl and boy. ACT does not portray people as helpless victims but recognises their immense capacity for resilience and action with strong community, cultural, and human resources. ACT responds to human suffering irrespective of race, gender, belief, nationality, ethnicity or political persuasion. Its communication is independent of any particular government's policy and is not a tool for groups, companies and other organisations' self-interest, including those of ACT members.

ACT communicates to, for and about a wide range of other stakeholders: members and their partners, donors, supporters and communities with whom ACT members work and aim to assist. A key aspect of this policy is about robust and transparent communication to the local communities we serve. The ACT Secretariat relies on its members and forums to be sources and mediums of information sharing in communities: to clarify the support and engagement that ACT provides, the quality and accountability values we stand for, both in times of emergency and in the course of long-term development, as well as the advocacy goals and objectives of the alliance at the local, national, regional and global levels. This specific and valued audience requires communications tailored to the context and the media and communications avenues available in the communities affected. Core to all communications is the obligation of members to co-brand, as articulated in the ACT branding policy.

2. Scope

This policy establishes the principles for communications issued by the ACT Secretariat or people on its behalf, such as by freelance and member writers, photographers, bloggers, and social media users commissioned by ACT, for internal or external audiences, and gives guidelines on decisions that influence communications. It will help achieve the organisation's strategic vision and objectives and ensure a consistent and coherent approach to both internal and external communications. Note that it should be read in conjunction with [ACT's Quality and Accountability Framework](#), the advocacy policy and procedures, and the current communications strategy.

The ACT Secretariat relies on its members and forums to be sources of information. The Secretariat acts as a facilitator and coordinator of initiatives taken by communicators in the alliance, who are, additionally, sources of communications input. This policy does not cover communicators in member organisations. ACT members are encouraged to have similar policies that meet the legal requirements of their own countries or regions and stakeholders.

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- Information means any content in paper, electronic version or other medium, concerning a matter relating to ACT Alliance.
- Communications are the systems and processes used to communicate information via various media.
- ACT means the alliance of ACT members and/or the ACT Secretariat.
- Member or ACT member refers to any ACT Alliance member organisation.
- Forum means an ACT national, sub-regional, or regional Forum.

4. Purpose of communications

The policy aims to provide a guideline for the Secretariat communications toward achieving particular results, those being to:

1. describe ACT's mission, beliefs, objectives and activities in line with the ACT Alliance Global Strategy, using the following key messages in all ACT communications:
 - a. ACT is united to support the struggle of people living in poverty and injustice
 - b. ACT is committed to promote a localisation sustainable agenda
 - c. ACT is a people-centered alliance
 - d. ACT is a strong believer in the humanitarian development nexus and promotes solutions linking long-term development, advocacy and humanitarian relief
 - e. ACT is an alliance of faith-based members, committed to working with people of all faiths and none¹
2. publicise the successes, significant change and lessons learned in the course of its humanitarian, development and advocacy work
3. publicise ACT's work, and build its reputation as a thought leader and expert agency, in the fields of climate justice, gender justice, migration and displacement, peace and human security, and emergency preparedness and humanitarian response
4. publicise ACT's work in quality and accountability, being transparent about successes and areas for improvement, sharing learnings and best practices
5. raise awareness of reported and under-reported humanitarian emergencies, long-term development projects and advocacy work
6. carry out broad advocacy campaigns concerning, for example, country-specific or issue-based advocacy e.g. climate change relief and response, thereby creating possibilities for persuading decision-makers to address the root causes of injustice, fulfil human rights and promote the well-being of all
7. support members in their communications efforts to raise funds from donor governments, church constituencies, the general public, foundations, the private sector and other funding agencies

¹ ACT Communications Strategy 2013-14, approved by ACT Governing Board May 2012

8. enhance the ability of the Secretariat to fundraise in order to support its activities and to support ACT governance efforts to fundraise externally. The unique selling points related to external fundraising are: Unparalleled diversity of global membership
 - A faith-based alliance committed to working with people of all faiths and none
 - Grassroots to grassroots potential combined with global coverage
 - Unique forum structure
 - Commitment to professionalism and international standards
 - Voice with reach and legitimacy within and across countries and regions
 - Global player, operating at considerable scale that can influence global debates²
9. explain to local communities with whom we work the principles and activities of ACT members in order to be accountable to them, and to gain local support and ownership
10. react professionally to criticism in an environment of growing public scrutiny
11. work to build a stronger name and brand in order to enhance the relevance of the members
12. encourage ACT members to co-brand, including both the logo and information about the alliance, in their communications.

5. Target audiences

ACT has identified four groups to which it wishes to convey its communications messages³

- **ACT members' staff and volunteers, church leaders and other key stakeholders:** The staff and volunteers of ACT's member organisations, over 30,000 people, who need information that is accurate, inspiring and deepens the commitment of all to the shared work of ACT. They in turn potentially become the greatest advocates of ACT's work to a huge range of people worldwide.
- **Local communities:** A vital audience, primarily the responsibility of members, which communicate with local communities in ways that are appropriate to their context.
- **Government, civil society, private sector, academia and the faith community:** Donor country and UN decision-makers, government development departments and institutional donors; foundations, the World Economic Forum, and other potential donors and partners; Universities and academic institutions focused on ACT's thematic areas of work; ACT peers in the humanitarian, development and advocacy sectors; concerned people with an interest in global justice both faith-based and within the general public.
- **Sections of the general public:** People in countries where ACT has members, with the specific aim of supporting those members' fundraising, raising their credibility as professional humanitarian or development organisations, and backing their policy or advocacy work. People with an interest in international issues and development and young people with a pro-justice agenda who use social media and other digital strategies.

6. Ethics and standards

ACT adheres to a fact-based and truthful approach in all its communications that represent human suffering and demonstrate how public and private donations are spent. As such, ACT and its members must generate public interest within the framework of reporting that is sensitive to the needs of the people we seek to assist and that respects their dignity. Aid agencies must rightly expect close scrutiny from media that will want to see factual and honest reporting on how we do our work, and spend our money.

² ACT USP for external fundraising, presented to ACT Governing Board May 2012

³ ACT Communications Strategy, approved by Governing Board May 2012

ACT and many of its members are signatories to the *Code of Conduct* for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, point 10 of which says: “In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects”. The Code of Conduct goes on to state: “Respect for the disaster victim as an equal partner in action should never be lost. In our public information we shall portray an objective image of the disaster situation where the capacities and aspirations of disaster victims are highlighted, and not just their vulnerabilities and fears. “While we cooperate with the media in order to enhance public response, we will not allow external or internal demands for publicity to take precedence over the principle of maximising overall relief assistance...We will avoid competing with other disaster response agencies for media coverage in situations where such coverage may be to the detriment to the service provided to the beneficiaries or to the security of our staff or the beneficiaries.”

ACT’s images are to be used to create attention about its activities. It treats photo subjects with respect and avoids photographing people in humiliating situations. If at all possible, photographers must seek the agreement of people being photographed and inform them that the photo may be used widely (see section 14 Visual Images). Signed model releases should be obtained whenever practicable, ideally translated into the language spoken by the people being photographed. All photographs of children MUST have parental or guardian consent, as per the ACT child safeguarding policy.

Photos presented by ACT are available for all members, except when restrictions are mentioned. Cropping the faces of people in photos, using people’s photos as ‘wallpaper’ i.e. out of context or uncaptioned, and printing words over pictures of people’s faces are unacceptable. This will be expounded in the photography section, below.

In addition, ACT complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union and other data protection laws that govern the gathering, storage and use of personal information about people.

7. Principles of communications

ACT communications will be clear, concise, use plain language, and use established journalistic criteria so as to be understood to as broad an audience as possible. Only by using direct language, unfettered by jargon, abstract nouns and other language which can cloud understanding, can audiences obtain the greatest understanding of ACT and its work. Material must be credible and authoritative, balanced, informed and newsworthy. The angle of reports, articles and press releases should be articulated clearly. ACT writers, photographers, bloggers and social media users must always be mindful of the intended audience.

All communications should convey ACT messages (see above and in communications strategy), vision and priorities either explicitly or implicitly in a way which is easily and immediately understandable. ACT must always be clear about what it stands for.

ACT communications should work within defined reporting criteria that allow it to prioritise and articulate clearly the issues and subjects to which ACT communicators will devote time. This is particularly important during emergencies when information must be presented quickly and in line with the criteria for reporting emergencies. The Secretariat should work to ensure a smooth and regular flow of development, emergencies and advocacy content outside peak emergency periods. When communicating locally, ACT members should,

with the participation of local members, identify the relevant tools and media with participation of local communities to ensure it is understandable and can reach the most vulnerable.

ACT communications staff is mandated to improve the ‘visibility’ of ACT in the media and before key influential audiences. ACT’s relationship with the media must be seen as reciprocal: media seek news of interest to their audiences and ACT can be a strong source of such information. But at the same time, if ACT is to seek media attention, it needs to produce information that suits the news media agenda and is truthful, whether a compelling story about a person or a community or a hard, fact-based story.

To work with the media, ACT communications must be based on first-hand observation and research, be quick, substantiated, easily understandable, and answer standard journalistic questions. Furthermore, it must be provided in a format which is readily edited, multiplied and quickly distributed as well as in technically good quality. At its best, it will focus on events which display clear and visual dramatic elements, emphasise some aspect of emotional value, and focus on identification with “experts” from the media’s target audience or persons of same cultural background (country, race, religion, language, etc.). That said, communicators without journalism training must not be discouraged by rigorous reporting standards. In some circumstances, articles that fail to meet journalistic standards will be considered and re-written by trained journalists/communicators in member organisations or the Secretariat.

National and regional media are important means by which members gain publicity in their country. The ACT Secretariat is unable to write for these media but will help member organisations with background information, quotes, photos and contacts in order that they will gain local media traction. Where possible, members should seek to include an ACT reference in national and local media work. ACT believes that in order to be a credible, consistent voice, it must put forward the General Secretary, or designate, as the main spokesperson for public comment. In emergencies, an expert on the spot who can explain the context or quotes from eyewitnesses may be more appealing to the media.

The ACT Secretariat will seek to support media work at key events (COP, CSW, GPPRR, etc.)⁴, publicising advocacy activities, providing audiovisual material, quotes, soliciting interviews, etc., to help build ACT and members’ visibility and highlighting ACT’s expertise and key messages related to the event.

8. ACT Alliance visibility and co-branding

ACT was created in part to meet the need for a common identity in the emergency, development and advocacy work of members in the ecumenical family. ACT is mandated to improve the visibility of the alliance for the benefit of member organisations. By promoting association with the name ACT, member organisations will gain greater recognition. However, in order to present a unified image, ACT communicators should, in certain situations, such as alliance-wide advocacy statements and press releases, name ACT in preference to members in ACT press releases, and omit the names of members’ partners, in an effort to avoid a plethora of names and acronyms in articles that potentially drown out the name ACT Alliance. In reporting humanitarian situations, the name of the implementing member should, in most instances, be noted alongside that of ACT.

Furthermore, this communications policy is based on the assumption that every ACT member agrees to cede some of its visibility from time to time and promote ACT in its communication and visibility work. It also

⁴ COP is the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, the global climate change conference; CSW is the Commission on the Status of Women, GPPRR is the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction

recognises that ACT is a coming together of a great number of entities each of which have well-established names and logos. Their work, as well as their fundraising, are closely linked to their respective names.

ACT seeks to build its profile as an alliance, so that audiences associate ACT's visual identity with its key message, identity and position. Through its identity as a global alliance, ACT seeks to help members become more influential, credible and attain greater profile than working alone. Key to building recognition of the ACT brand is respect for the branding policy. Co-branding must be the starting point for all communications. Use of name and logo is clearly stated in ACT's branding policy and guidelines (available on website: <https://actalliance.org/documents/act-branding-policy-and-guidelines/>). ACT communications should follow that policy.

Furthermore, this communications policy is based on the assumption that every ACT member agrees with and adheres to the membership agreement and to work collaboratively as an alliance to advance the ACT Alliance global mission. ACT By-laws state that members must co-brand with the name ACT Alliance according to the branding policy and recognise that the General Secretary of the alliance is the prime spokesperson for the alliance.

9. Editorial responsibility

The ACT Secretariat Director of Communications has editorial accountability for all ACT productions, such as website content, press releases, brochures, leaflets and reports. The Secretariat communications unit works in close cooperation with management and programme officers and, where applicable, staff of member organisations. In the event of a disagreement between members or between members and ACT, all channels of mediation should be explored. The General Secretary has final say in disputed matters.

10. Language

The official languages of the alliance are English, French and Spanish, with the logo being in English/French, Spanish and Portuguese. All mandatory policy documents are produced in English, French and Spanish. British English is the Secretariat's working language and all content is produced in that language. When information is directed to groups with working languages such as Spanish, French and Portuguese, ACT commits to producing materials as and when finances and staff time allow. Members are encouraged to offer publications and information to the communities with whom we work in local languages and dialects whenever possible. Members are further encouraged to assist in translation of ACT material that is of particular concern to them and their audiences.

11. Spokesperson

The General Secretary of the alliance will have primary responsibility for speaking on behalf of the alliance and will be the prime spokesperson for ACT⁵. Additionally, select experts from within the alliance as well as members of staff in the field can speak on behalf of ACT if prior approval from the Secretariat has been given. The General Secretary can delegate spokesperson responsibility on given issues or emergencies. Any statement on behalf of ACT is to be approved by the General Secretary or his/her deputy. Notwithstanding this, members of ACT Secretariat staff, ACT forums, or member organisations may issue their opinions on topical development, advocacy and humanitarian matters. If their opinion is likely to differ from that of ACT,

⁵ ACT Alliance founding document, approved by the Joint Executive Committee, February 2009

a disclaimer should be noted that the views are not necessarily those of ACT. The ACT social media policy contains information on how individual ACT Secretariat staff should identify themselves online.

12. Sign-off process

The General Secretary has the final sign-off on statements and positions adopted by ACT Alliance. The sign-off process will follow the relevant ACT procedures as outlined in the ACT advocacy policy and related procedures (<https://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-advocacy-policy-and-procedures/>). ACT members should co-brand themselves in press releases and refer any statements that might differ from the position of other forum members or alliance position to the Secretariat for comment and/or approval. Any person party to the sign-off process will comment and respond as soon as possible so as not to compromise the timeliness of the communication.

13. Social media and the internet

ACT has two primary social media platforms – Twitter and Facebook – to which it regularly uploads links to website articles, member articles and links to interesting articles and reports. The ACT social media policy provides the rules and guidelines for use of social media on behalf of ACT. It can be downloaded from <https://actalliance.org/documents/act-social-media-policy/>.

ACT does not encourage its forums to set up their own websites. Nevertheless, forums which do so must adhere to the branding policy, carry a disclaimer that the information may not necessarily represent ACT policy and that site content cannot be monitored by the ACT Secretariat. Furthermore, sites must be linked to the official ACT website. The Secretariat is unable to provide financial support to such sites.

14. Visual images *(The below content, particularly on written permission, is derived from the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance photo policy)*

In taking photos and using them, ACT is committed to respecting the dignity of the people and communities represented, as extrapolated in the Red Cross Code of Conduct. ACT will ensure that the Child Safeguarding Policy, ACT Code of Conduct, and ACT Social Media Policy are adhered to in its photographic practices.

Although ACT recognises that photos must be true to reality without needlessly showing despair or suffering, ACT encourages members to submit hopeful images. ACT is looking for images that show members' work, ACT member staff and local communities in action, and images that include ACT's logo. ACT does not sell or otherwise receive material gain from its photos, videos or stories. ACT and its members must credit photos: ACT/member name/photographer.

Informed and implied consent

Photographers or journalists working on behalf of ACT must, wherever possible, obtain informed consent from photo subjects, i.e. they should identify themselves and attempt to ensure the subject(s) have a general understanding of the purpose of the photography before the photo shoot. The photographer should do their best to secure a signed media release form from subjects ideally before, but potentially after, the images are gathered (see 'Written Permission' below). The Secretariat has a form available for members' use and translation into local languages.

ACT understands that it is impossible to insist on informed consent in every instance. The subject should understand that his or her story and/or photo may be known and seen by others far outside the community

or event through publications and the internet. Informed consent builds trust and understanding, and avoids doing harm, damaging reputations, invading personal privacy and incurring libel and copyright problems. The person must say they consent and be mentally capable of consenting.

In some circumstances, it is not possible to obtain informed consent. If the photographer indicates he or she is about to take a photo and the subject does not object, they have given implied consent to being photographed. For photos that are taken spontaneously or unexpectedly, such as of people escaping emergencies or of people taken from a distance, the imperative to obtain informed consent can be disregarded if it cannot reasonably be obtained but should maintain basic principles of dignity.

In certain other cases, informed consent is not required: photos of ACT governance, advisory groups or members of staff, public figures in public, crowds in public, or participants in public campaigns or programmes. These fall under the “legitimate interest” clause of GDPR.

Written permission

ACT aims to obtain written permission or verbal permission from people unable to read or write when extensive reporting is made whenever possible. This is even more important when:

1. the person’s face or name is visually identifiable in the photo, AND
2. ACT intends to publicly identify the person’s personal sensitive situation in a story or photo caption, AND
3. the person in the photo is a child, a traumatised or stigmatised person or a person living with HIV, and/or will be identified in relation to sensitive health behaviour (e.g. was/is trafficked as a sex worker, use of alcohol or illegal drugs, sexual orientation, etc.) and/or was/is involved in criminal behaviour either as perpetrator or survivor (e.g. sexual or physical abuse).

These conditions apply to both children (i.e. under 18) and adults. A child should not be identified in public information, although their name should be included with any written permissions. In cases where an adult is visually recognisable and will be identified with personal sensitive information, a release form should be signed by the individual. All photographs of children must be taken in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy.

Records of permission must be kept with the images where at all possible, to be in compliance with GDPR. All photographs should indicate if permission was granted for their being taken or not.

Use of photographs from other sources

Where ACT is provided photographs from its members or their partners, ACT will follow any restrictions placed on that photograph including restrictions on use, correct use of credits, and ability to share among other members and the public. The responsibility for reaching informed consent and setting restrictions on photo use rests with the copyright holder.

Copyright on photographs

Freelance photographers keep ownership and copyright of photos, not ACT. ACT staff cannot sell photos taken on assignment for ACT; intellectual property created by an ACT employee is the property of ACT. Any copyright on work done by staff in the course of their official duties shall be vested in ACT, unless otherwise agreed. Contracts with external photographers can ensure that the owner of the photos becomes the

organisation. Alternatively, photographers can licence images to ACT for a period of time or a certain use, or an unrestricted perpetuity licence, if both parties agree. Occasionally, ACT can demand exclusive licensing as part of its contract, or provide more flexible arrangements for photographers to publish or sell the images elsewhere or after a certain period of time.

All ACT-commissioned photos can be freely used by members in campaigns, media initiatives and publications, provided the intent is non-commercial and ACT is properly acknowledged. The photographer, having the copyright of the photo, has the commercial right to the photos. If, however, the work was produced under a 'work for hire' contract, the photographer transfers copyright to the agency that paid him/her.

ACT must ensure it is legally permitted to publish images it uploads to its website, Facebook profile, Mediabank and elsewhere, particularly those received from member organisations. ACT must ensure it has the right to distribute images to other members who might then share the image with other external stakeholders including national NGO networks and the press.

ACT should encourage members to include ACT Alliance as part of their licensing contracts with employees or external photographers, or introduce a photo policy for the alliance and/or amend the ACT membership agreement to say that members have a responsibility to only share legal and licensed photos with the ACT Secretariat. ACT must maintain records in the Mediabank of what terms apply to which photos, e.g. if a photographer grants ACT full rights to a set of images but not the media, then neither ACT nor its members have the right to distribute those images to the media.

Sharing visual images

All photos accessible in ACT galleries and in stories on the ACT website are available for all members. Photos can be used by other organisations for humanitarian purposes and be distributed to news agencies for free distribution. Photos should always carry a credit. Non-ACT organisations supporting ACT appeals may use ACT photos and audiovisual material, provided the material is credited to ACT, the ACT member and the photographer, that the caption is worded correctly and that the image is used in the spirit with which it was intended. The image can only be used in relation to fundraising or publicity for the ACT appeal in question, or for other reasons, at the discretion of the Secretariat.

15. Copyright

All information and material posted on the ACT Alliance website are subject to ACT Alliance copyright and other individuals or entities linked to ACT Alliance. ACT Alliance takes no responsibility for the content or information contained on other linked internet sites, nor does it exert any editorial or other control over those other sites. No representation is made or warranty given, express or implied, as to the completeness or accuracy of information made available by ACT Alliance. The requestor shall apply discretion when using the information made available by ACT Alliance. ACT Alliance will not be liable for any direct or indirect loss arising from the use of the information. All commissioned work should have intellectual property assigned to ACT, which is not obliged to credit an author.

16. ACT's commitment to local communities

The people with whom ACT members work most closely are the people we aim to assist in local communities. As part of its commitment to being a people-centred alliance, and to the Localisation Agenda, ACT seeks to

raise up the voices of these communities, recognising their role as transformative actors in their own lives and situations.

Additionally, these communities constitute an audience in their own right that requires dedicated communications. Communities must be well informed about service delivery, information about who is providing the service, the motive and purpose of the operation and information about how to communicate with ACT member organisations.

The ACT Membership Agreement, the ACT Code of Good Practice commit ACT members to ensure that ACT stakeholders have access to timely, relevant and clear information about the organisation and its activities. They additionally promote access to information about project budgets, funding sources, how communities can give feedback or complain, and how they can participate in the development and humanitarian work of ACT members. In signing up to ACT policies, members are obliged to follow them. Further, the ACT Secretariat is certified under the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) which requires these methodologies in communication with communities being served by ACT and its members.

ACT members are encouraged to make this information available in languages and media accessible to the people with whom they work. Members are further encouraged to ensure their local and national partners have similar mechanisms for information sharing in place at the project and programme level.

It is preferable that the authors of articles and reports about the people we aim to assist be members of those communities themselves and write pertaining to their own experience. This is also an opportunity for them to report to us on how we can improve our work. ACT communications commits especially to promoting the voices of staff, leaders and other community members from southern member organisations and local communities, with their informed consent, on issues that directly affect those people. This is in preference to others speaking as experts, unless local voices of authority are unavailable.

Due to the unique emergency response funding mechanisms managed through the ACT Secretariat, the Secretariat has a particular duty of ensuring communication to those crisis-affected populations. The following describes the process to which members using ACT appeals must adhere. The information is applicable to members providing development and advocacy assistance to communities but is particularly of importance to members taking part in ACT appeals.

In accord with its certification under the Core Humanitarian Standard, 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 emergency appeals 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 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.

Information

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.

Through the lead ACT agency, crisis-affected communities will be alerted directly, or the information will be available through the lead agency or community leaders, of the following information:

- Details of ACT, including contact details, its members operating in this emergency, their partners, staff roles and responsibilities
- ACT Quality and Accountability Framework, including Code of Good Practice and Code of Conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power
- The ACT complaints policy
- The ACT appeal related to this emergency, budget, donors, evaluations and progress reports
- Goals of the distribution and time frame for distribution
- The plan for distribution, unit costs of goods, good suppliers
- Criteria for making decisions on when and where information will be disclosed
- Selection criteria of crisis-affected persons, eligibility, entitlement provisions and rights
- How and where people can complain about distribution of goods or other aspects of the ACT appeal
- How community contribution has helped set distribution targets, e.g. if rice has to be distributed, the people should determine what type of rice they should be provided.

Monitoring

Regular monitoring visits by ACT members and (when required) independent evaluators will check to ensure information is distributed, that the local communities understand the information and affirm the level of support. Interviews with leaders, community members and most vulnerable will be the primary means of ensuring distributions were fair, timely and sufficient. Instruction on how to monitor is provided in the ACT Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook⁶.

Information channels

Pre-existing country reports will provide ACT with baseline data about information channels that are most widely used, and which are the most reliable and trusted sources of information. These could include radio and television stations, newspapers, mass text messaging, internet sites, social media sites, and the use of posters, flyers, notice boards and other visual printed material, loudhailers and speakers, in addition to

⁶ ACT Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook, approved by Governing Board May 2012

meetings with community leaders, local authorities, and vulnerable groups. Needs assessments, carried out immediately following an emergency, will include the information channels that are most widely used, secure, efficient and trusted. A large percentage of the population should have access to the main means of communication used in the education campaign. Special attention must be given to the information channels used by vulnerable groups. ACT encourages staff of member organisations to build their capacity to communicate to crisis-affected communities.

Staff identification

Staff of implementing ACT organisations will have co-branded name badges and identity cards, introduce themselves as being from the member organisation and from ACT, and wear co-branded clothing, if available.