Quality and Accountability into Practice

Communication With Communities Across The Project Cycle Management
Introduction

ACT Alliance’s identity is deeply rooted in dignity, justice, inclusiveness and accountability. Resource use and responsibility for decision-making must be mutually transparent and answerable to all stakeholders, especially the affected communities during disasters. Communities served by humanitarian projects are key stakeholders and must be consulted during project stages i.e. assessment, design, implementation & monitoring, closure; to ensure their ownership and increase the likelihood of the long-term sustainability of projects. Therefore, throughout the project, ACT Alliance/Members/Forums must continuously communicate with project participants and other stakeholders (government officials, communities, etc.) to share information about the project and to solicit their full participation and feedback.

This Communication with Communities (CwC) guidance aims to equip project implementers with the knowledge and skills to engage communities to become more participative and to foster project ownership.

CwC is anchored in the following key actions under the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS):

**CHS Key Action 4.1:** Information is provided to communities and people affected by crisis about the organization, the principles it adheres to, the expected behaviors of staff, its programmes and deliverables.

**CHS Key Action 7.3:** Learning and innovation are shared with internal and external stakeholders including communities and partners.

Thus, this document contains the basic information that ACT members implementing the humanitarian projects shall provide to communities and shall include information about:

- ACT Alliance
- Code of Conduct
- Complaints/Feedback mechanisms
- Protection from Sexual Exploitation & Abuse
- Project plans
- Sharing learnings from monitoring/evaluations

The following information can be shared with the communities (stakeholders) at different phases of project intervention as outlined.
**Phase 1. ASSESSMENT (A)**

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| **A1** During consultation meetings with target communities to identify needs, risks, vulnerabilities and capacities | **A1.1** Use a consistent description of ACT Alliance: “ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) is the largest coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and faith-based actors engaged in humanitarian, development and advocacy work, consisting of more than 135 members working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards.”


**A1.3** Make sure to keep abreast of the latest on ACT Alliance: [https://actalliance.org/about/](https://actalliance.org/about/)

**A1.4** Take advantage of our resources and courses: [https://fabo.org/dca/ACT_Induction_Course](https://fabo.org/dca/ACT_Induction_Course)

**A1.5** When carrying out a needs assessment at Community Level:

- Introduce team members and their roles;
- Explain the timeframe for the assessment;
- Invite representative(s) from the local communities to participate;
- Create a space for individuals or groups to speak openly;
- Hold separate discussions and interviews with different groups (men, women, local staff, etc.);
- Ask these groups for their opinions on needs and priorities. Inform them about any decisions taken.


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<th>WHAT</th>
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| • Make sure staff in charge of the assessment are familiar with the mandate and values of the organisation and ACT Alliance; and these are communicated to the right holders and stakeholders participating in the assessment.  
• Make sure staff Introduce the organisation and ACT Alliance. | • Make sure staff describe what happens during the needs assessment process at community level. 
• Inform communities what happens after the needs assessment process to balance their expectations. |
### Phase 2. DESIGN (B)

**WHEN**

| B1 | During the appeal development phase |

**WHAT**

- Ensure the factors that reflect the most appropriate ways to communicate: security, migrations, literacy, socio-cultural codes, etc;
- Explain the process on how the communities will participate during the project cycle;
- Allocate resources for capturing and dissemination of lesson-learned from the project;
- Allocate resources for running an effective feedback/complaints mechanism.

**HOW**

- The design of the appeal should reflect the information received during the assessments phase.
- For specific guidance on the ACT Alliance Humanitarian Mechanism, please refer to: [https://fabo.org/act/ACT_Alliance_Humanitarian_Mechanism](https://fabo.org/act/ACT_Alliance_Humanitarian_Mechanism)

### Phase 3. IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING (C)

**WHEN**

| C1 | Project kick-off meeting with staff |

**WHAT**

- Brief staff about the project interventions, targets, indicators, responsibilities, timeframe and budget.
- Make sure that staff have the necessary competencies and are informed about training and self-training opportunities.
- Orientation/refresher for staff about ACT Alliance
- ACT National Forum (if one exists in your country)

**HOW**

- C1.1. Please Refer to the Project/Appeal document
- C1.2. Share & introduce Fabo E-Learning Platform: [https://www.fabo.org](https://www.fabo.org)
- For guidance please refer to above section (A1.1)
- For guidance please refer to: [https://actalliance.org/about/forums/](https://actalliance.org/about/forums/)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Details</th>
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| **ACT Code of Conduct** | C1.3 ACT Code of Conduct:  
  - The ACT Code of Conduct is available at: [https://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-code-of-conduct/](https://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-code-of-conduct/)  
  - ACT online orientation on Code of Conduct is available at: [https://fabo.org/act/ACT - Code of Conduct and Expected Staff Behaviour](https://fabo.org/act/ACT - Code of Conduct and Expected Staff Behaviour) |
| **Complaints/Feedback Mechanism**  
  - Protection from Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEA) | C1.4 Complaints/Feedback Mechanism:  
  - The ACT Complaints Handling Policy is available at: [https://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-complaints-handling-policy/](https://actalliance.org/documents/act-alliance-complaints-handling-policy/)  
  - ACT's online orientation on Complaints is available at: [https://fabo.org/act/ACT - Complaints Welcome](https://fabo.org/act/ACT - Complaints Welcome)  
  - Watch the video ‘No Excuse for Abuse’ by InterAction: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=48MCG22FqrE&feature=emb_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=48MCG22FqrE&feature=emb_logo) |
| **Communication with Communities** | C1.5 The importance of Communicating with Communities is illustrated in video from CDAC Network available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0l9Y--OTWs8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0l9Y--OTWs8) |

**WHEN**

**C2. Staff management throughout project life**

**WHAT**

- Make sure that all staff adhere to policies that are relevant to them (including the staff code of conduct, complaints mechanism, PSEA) and understand the consequences of not adhering to them.

- Inform target groups, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, about your organisation, ACT Alliance, project plan and assistance entitlements (why, what, how, who, budget), awareness on Code of Conduct.

**HOW**

- C2.1 HR focal person maintains a tracking sheet of all project staff for signing code of conduct; receiving orientation/refresher on code of conduct, complaints mechanism & PSEA; receives any complaints during project period etc.

  For any further guidance/support consult ACT Alliance Secretariat's humanitarian officer/focal person.

- For guidance on introducing ACT please refer to above section (A1.1)
- Share the dates and location of key participating events with communities. For guidance on introducing project plans and assistance entitlements to communities please refer to above section (C1.1).
- For guidance on Code of Conduct awareness to communities please refer to above section (C1.3)
• Ask communities affected by crisis about their preferred means of receiving information about the project and contacting the organisation.

C3.1 Check which communication channels are available to the affected community (e.g. community center, phone, radio, television etc.) & how they prefer to receive information (e.g. community meeting, community representative group etc.). Assess the literacy level for providing information through information boards, leaflets etc.

• Ask communities affected by crisis (including persons with disabilities, women, children, people with no access to phone) how they feel most comfortable sharing feedback and complaints with the organisation.

C3.2 Feedback can be positive or negative whereas complaints mean reporting the things that went wrong to the organisation. Receiving complaints and responding to them is central to accountability, impact and learning.

Discuss any existing feedback/complaints mechanisms with the community. Then consult with community on their preferred channels for submitting feedback/complaints (e.g. complaint form, phone, in-person to staff/organization etc.).

• Consult communities and people affected by crisis (including persons with disabilities, women, children, people with no access to phone) about the characteristics of the complaints mechanism - submission of complaints - processing of complaints - potential obstacles including serious complaints related to PSEA.

C4. Setting-up of Feedback/Complaints Mechanism at community level

WHEN

WHAT

• Ensure that communities and people affected by the crisis can freely express their opinions about the project.
• Design a mechanism that is efficient and secure for the users, and able to fast track sensitive (PSEA) complaints.
• Facilitate a feedback and complaints mechanism that is efficient, appropriate and secure for the users, and able to fast track sensitive (PSEA) complaints.

HOW

For guidance on complaints mechanism please refer to above section (A1.7) & (C1.4)

C5. Community meetings/Focus Group Discussions
**WHAT**

Inform people affected by the crisis about how to use the feedback and complaints mechanism, its scope and what they can expect from it (response time, security, the need to refer certain complaints etc.).

**HOW**

**Note**: These messages assume that the complaints/feedback mechanism is in place to ensure the protection and confidentiality of users. Before disseminating these messages, make sure the system is robust and the people reporting abuse are properly protected, confidentiality maintained, and complaints responded timely.

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**C5.1 How communities can raise complaints/feedback?**

You (as communities and as individuals) have the right to complain. If you have any complaints/problems related to our project or behavior of our staff please visit us at (address) or contact (contact details).

**C5.2 What do we mean by Protection from Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (PSEA)? How communities can report violations?**

Humanitarian assistance is free and you (as communities) have a right to receive it. You do not need to give money or sexual favors to receive it. If you are asked by someone working in our organization to do something in return like any favors, touch you or demand any sexual actions from you then please report to (contact details). We will deal your complaints professionally and confidentially.

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• Share the project achievements so far, success factors, challenges (based on monitoring results); and upcoming activities plan.

**C5.3 What are the learnings from evaluations/monitoring?**

The main challenges for implementation of project until now are (list key challenges). We will address these challenges by taking these actions (list key actions to address challenges).

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**WHEN**

C6. Review of Feedback/Complaints Mechanism

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**WHAT**

• Identify the amount and type of feedback and complaints received to assess the use and effectiveness of the mechanism.

**HOW**

• For guidance on complaints mechanism please refer to above sections (A1.7) & (C1.4)
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<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>C7. Development of communication materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHAT</td>
<td>• Adapt communication to the context and the different populations groups targeted (security, migrations, literacy, socio-cultural codes, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOW</td>
<td>• For guidance please refer to above section (A1.6)</td>
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<th>WHEN</th>
<th>C8. Lessons Learning Event</th>
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<td>WHAT</td>
<td>• Conduct lessons learning exercise, make sure lessons and decisions about changes are shared with people affected by the crisis.</td>
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</table>
| HOW  | Hold lessons-learned meetings with your staff and communities to find out answers to:  
  • What is working well?  
  • What is not working well?  
  • What results are/should you aim to achieve and how?  
  • What do you need to do to improve impact?  
Make sure the key findings & decisions from the lessons-learned meetings are documented and actions are taken. Collect stories about project success and position community interactions. The lessons and decisions about changes are shared with the affected people. |
### Phase 4. CLOSURE (D)

#### WHEN

<table>
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<th>D1. Response to the Feedback/Complaints.</th>
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<td><strong>WHAT</strong></td>
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<td>· Make sure all feedback and complaints have been managed before the closure of the project.</td>
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#### WHEN

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<th>D2. Project Exit Meetings with Communities</th>
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<td><strong>WHAT</strong></td>
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<td>· Make sure that the communities are informed about the achievements and the termination of the project.</td>
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<td>· Identify and disseminate the main lessons learnt from this experience and any particular innovation.</td>
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For further guidance/support please contact ACT Alliance Secretariat at email: rizwan.iqbal@actalliance.org
A coalition more than 135 churches and church-related organisations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people.

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