actalliance

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)

WHEN	
A1 During consultation meetings with target communities to identify needs, risks, vulnerabilities and capacities	

WHAT	HOW
• 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 holderands and stakeholders participating in the assessment. • Make sure staff Introduce the organisation and ACT Alliance.	**A1** Use a constistent 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."* **A1.2** Make sure to use the appropriate ACT Alliance Logo: https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/act-logo-ORIGINAL.png **actalliance** **A1.3** Make sure to keep abrest of the latest on ACT Alliance: https://actalliance.org/about/ **A1.4** Take advantage of our resources and courses: https://fabo.org/dca/ACT_Induction_Course
• 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.	**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. (Reference: "Good Enough Guide Tool 3" page 34).

Phase 2. DESIGN (B)

WHEN	
B1 During the appeal development phase	

WHAT	HOW
• 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 effectve feedback/complaints mechanism.	• 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

Phase 3. IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING (C)

WHEN	
C1. Project kick-off meeting with staff	

WHAT	HOW
• Brief staff about the project interventions, targets, indicators, responsibilities, timeframe and budget.	**C1.1.** Please Refer to the Project/Appeal document
• Make sure that staff have the necessary competencies and are informed about training and self-training opportunities.	**C1.2.** Share & introduce Fabo E-Learning Platform: https://www.fabo.org
• Orientation/refresher for staff about ACT Alliance	For guidance please refer to above section (A1.1)
• ACT National Forum (if one exists in your country)	For guidance please refer to: https://actalliance.org/about/forums/

• 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/ • ACT online orientation on Code of Conduct is available at: 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/ • ACT's online orientation on Complaints is available at: 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
• Communication with Communities	**C1.5** The importance of Communicating with Communicates is illustrated in video from CDAC Network available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0l9Y--OTWs8

WHEN

C2. Staff management throughout project life

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

WHEN

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

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

WHEN

C5. Community meetings/Focus Group Discussions

WHAT	HOW
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.).	**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.
	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.
• 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).

WHEN

C6. Review of Feedback/Complaints Mechanism

WHAT	HOW
• Identify the amount and type of feedback and complaints received to assess the use and effectiveness of the mechanism.	• For guidance on complaints mechanism please refer to above sections (A1.7) & (C1.4)

WHEN
C7. Development of communication materials

WHAT	HOW
• Adapt communication to the context and the different populations groups targeted (security, migrations, literacy, socio-cultural codes, etc.)	• For guidance please refer to above section (A1.6)

WHEN
C8. Lessons Learning Event

WHAT	HOW
• Conduct lessons learning exercise, make sure lessons and decisions about changes are shared with people affected by the crisis.	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
D1. Response to the Feedback/Complaints.

WHAT	HOW
• Make sure all feedback and complaints have been managed before the closure of the project.	Refer to the feedback/complaints record and log sheet to ensure decisions are taken about all the complaints received.

WHEN
D2. Project Exit Meetings with Communities

WHAT	HOW
• Make sure that the communities are informed about the achievements and the termination of the project.	• Prepare a Question & Answer sheet to guide staff when with communities about end of project. • Conduct face-to-face project exit meetings with communities & report to them on project achievements and exit. • Hold focus groups/house-to-house visits to reach women and vulnerable groups who may be unable to attend formal meetings. • Use posters and leaflets, including formats appropriate for less literate people.
• Identify and disseminate the main lessons learnt from this experience and any particular innovation.	For guidance please refer to above section (C8.1)

For further guidance/support please contact ACT Alliance Secretariat at email: rizwan.iqbal@actalliance.org

10 years
135 members
120 countries
500+ crisis responses
100% diakonia

actalliance

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.

150 Route de Ferney, PO Box 2100,
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

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