



PUB 06

Together for Justice: Our Collective Action on Locally Led Humanitarian Response

COVER NOTE

The ACT structure responsible for the statement is the Emergency Preparedness and Humanitarian Response Reference Group.

We have consulted with ACT Alliance EU, the ACT Migration and Displacement Reference Group, the Quality and Accountability Reference Group and the Climate Justice Reference Group as well as General Assembly local host Yakkum. We held regional Focus Group discussions in 2023. We consulted members through a localisation survey in 2021.

The main issue covered by the statement is to commit ACT Alliance to shift power in its humanitarian appeal mechanism so that national ACT members assume leadership, supported by equitable partnerships with international members. We will thereby position ACT as a cutting-edge actor advocating for locally led response and leading by example in the humanitarian sector. This will help us to influence other humanitarian actors to also prioritise locally led response.

The statement and accompanying pledge will provide the necessary actions and steps to be taken to progress the priorities identified by members collectively.

Both operational change and advocacy will be necessary to generate the sectoral change needed. The statement and pledge centre on humanitarian response but are inextricably tied to people-centred development cooperation, locally led adaptation & anticipatory action and engagement with communities and local actors in our work with migrants and internally displaced people.

TOPIC

This statement focuses on ACT Alliance’s commitment to accelerate action to deliver and promote locally led humanitarian response. We are a network of church-based organisations rooted in justice and determined to address systems of exploitation. We will promote humanitarian response and sustainable development cooperation rooted in just distribution of power and resources. To do so, we will reform our mechanism and ways of working. By demonstrating best practice in our own operations, we will inspire other actors to follow suit. We commit to ensure that increasingly localised approaches prioritise respect for the human rights of all. Through this statement, we share our pledge of commitments, aiming to convert words into action to reform our collective work. We present this statement to equip members and incentivise ongoing dialogue on the complex issues related to removing unjust barriers facing local actors. We aim for complementarity and unity in our response as a network, avoiding “us vs them” approaches to the issues.

STATEMENT

Together for Justice: Our Collective Action on Locally Led Humanitarian Response

Terminology related to ‘localisation’ has been prominent in humanitarian response and sustainable development cooperation for some time. However, commitments to a justice-centred approach to locally led action are often blurred with efficiency arguments and a variety of definitions of what local means. International actors too often lack trust in the capacities and credibility of national and sub-national actors, revealing colonial attitudes as well as additional challenges.

We are a network of faith-based organizations rooted in justice, determined to address systems of exploitation. We must build on the contributions of our members in promoting humanitarian response and sustainable development cooperation rooted in just distribution of power and resources and enabling of diverse civil society. To do so, we must change our own mechanism and practice. Through this statement, we share our [pledge](#), aiming to convert words into action to reform our collective work. By ensuring that local members are at the centre of decision making within our humanitarian mechanism, we will position ourselves to inspire other actors to follow suit. In doing so, we commit to ensure that our approaches to locally led response prioritise respect for the human rights of all.

With a history of working in church and inter-faith partnerships, ACT members have extensive experience in advancing people-centred humanitarian aid, sustainable development cooperation and peacebuilding. Through different operational modalities, members are committed to supporting mutual aid and rooting their work in the leadership of communities.

The Alliance is nonetheless embedded in aid systems which retain most funding and power in international and transnational organisations. While many ACT members have pioneered progress towards equitable partnerships, fostering leadership of community and local actors, we have a long way to go to fully shift power, funding and decision making.

Rather than a standalone issue, progress towards locally led response requires engagement across climate action, human mobility, humanitarian response, and disaster risk management. All levels of civil society and government have important stakes in converting discourse into action.

As an alliance, we have reflected on the transformative shifts we would like to see, beginning with our own organisations and network. ACT wants to see listening, respect and humility at the centre of interactions with communities and local actors. Pursuing locally led response and equitable partnerships is a matter of justice, overturning post-colonial approaches.

Positive change must root response in genuine leadership at community level with complementary roles of local, national, and international actors. Such a transformation requires action to reform accountability and governance structures.

Civic space is key for local actors to take leadership. Putting community and local leadership at the heart of humanitarian and development action – particularly emphasising local faith actors - is central to ACT’s vision for justice across gender, climate, migration, tax, and debt.

With many church and inter-faith partnerships, the Alliance can make powerful contributions to address deeply embedded injustices.

Commitments and Recommendations

The General Assembly is an opportunity to turn words into action. We will not allow locally led response to be a ‘nice idea’ which sees slow progress.

We commit to making the necessary investments and uncomfortable changes and to put listening to local organisations at the core of our approach. We commit to using methodologies that enable locally owned and community-led response. At the General Assembly, we will launch our [pledge](#) of commitments as individual ACT members and as an Alliance. The [pledge](#) will detail:

1) Moving towards the leadership of national members in the ACT Alliance Appeal mechanism.

- We as ACT Alliance commit to review the ACT humanitarian mechanism to agree and formalise leadership of ACT’s national members within ACT Appeals where feasible.

2) Quality funding

- We as ACT Alliance commit to developing policies to increase the coverage of indirect cost recovery (ICR) to local and national organisations we partner with – inside or outside the ACT network. We commit to taking steps towards 10% coverage of partner overheads.
- We as ACT Alliance commit to adhere to the Grand Bargain commitment to increase direct funding for local actors wherever possible.

3) Investment in capacity-sharing

- We as ACT Alliance commit to encourage investment in sharing capacities between national and international members to deliver high quality humanitarian response and sustainable development cooperation, and to open funding opportunities for local actors. This includes accompaniment for national members leading within ACT

Alliance’s humanitarian mechanism. We will engage in open dialogue to ensure capacity-sharing is demand-led, contextually relevant, needs-based and fitting for partner structure and size. We will be careful not to change church actors or informal self-help groups into NGOs while supporting capacities to deliver quality response.

- To end the multiple partnership assessments local and national organisations must undertake, we will develop proportionate and standardised due diligence. Any partnership assessment will include identifying opportunities for capacity investment.
- We will align with initiatives being developed across the sector to avoid duplication. We will advocate to donors to accept harmonised proof of capacities, to expand the use of the credentials beyond ACT programmes.

4) Strengthen and expand the Rapid Response Fund

- The Fund is an important source of funding for national ACT members. We as ACT Alliance commit to expanding the Fund and scaling up its use for anticipatory action. The annual fund turnover should be at least US\$10 million by 2027.

5) Ensuring gender is at the heart of ACT Alliance locally led humanitarian action

- We as ACT Alliance commit to ensuring that investments from the ACT Humanitarian Mechanism and Rapid Response Fund have a strong gender lens.

A majority of the assembly has declared itself in agreement with the opinions expressed in this statement. While many ACT members agree with the public statement, there are members who have expressed differing perspectives on the content or tone. Their decision reflects the diverse viewpoints within our alliance, and we respect their choice to abstain or vote against. As always, we value the collective dialogue and encourage continued discussions on the matter at hand, recognizing the strength of our unity in diversity.