

actalliance

**Humanitarian Monitoring &
Evaluation**

Mandatory Guidelines

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I. Introduction

The ACT Alliance Humanitarian M&E Policy is published in alignment with the revised [ACT Humanitarian Policy](#) and the [ACT Quality and Accountability Framework 2021](#). The Humanitarian M&E Policy sets out the commitments of ACT Alliance Secretariat staff in relation to M&E in humanitarian programmes. In our humanitarian work we seek to uphold ACT’s mission to contribute to the fulfilment of the Global Strategy 2019 - 2026 [Hope in Action – Putting People First](#) through implementation of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and Sphere. This policy document is intended for use by ACT Alliance staff and ACT Alliance member staff that implement projects in ACT appeals, RRFs and/or consortia.

II. Purpose

- To support and improve humanitarian performance within ACT’s Humanitarian Mechanism which includes Appeals, Rapid Response Fund, and/or consortia and inform future actions by identifying and institutionalising learning from humanitarian programmes.
- To be accountable to our key stakeholders (especially ACT funding and requesting members and communities affected by disasters) by working with members to assess and record the impact and effectiveness of ACT humanitarian programmes.

III. Monitoring

In ACT Alliance, monitoring is defined as “*a systematic and continuous process of collecting, analyzing, and documenting information that enables regular reporting on the progress of project implementation over time*”¹ Monitoring involves activities designed to “*identify the strengths and weaknesses of a project, it involves data collection and analysis of indicators throughout implementation and tracking critical assumptions identified during project design and planning*”²

¹ ACT Alliance. Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (PME) HANDBOOK. May 2012. Page 10. Available on https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ACT-PME-Handbook_English.pdf

² *ibid*

ACT Alliance Humanitarian Monitoring Requirements

- In line with the revised ACT Humanitarian Policy, cost allocations should be included for monitoring by Humanitarian Programme Officers (HPOs) and members for all responses funded through an ACT appeal or Rapid Response Fund. For members this should be in the appeal/RRF budget and HPOs should have an annual budget funded from SMC (Secretariat Management and Monitoring Costs).
- A Terms of Reference document (ToR) must be prepared and shared with HOH/GHOM and requesting members by HPOs prior to a monitoring visit. The ToR should include at a minimum the objectives of the visit, the travel plan (activities, itinerary), dates, participants, the information that will be gathered, the budget, and approvals required.
- ToRs for all on-site and remote monitoring visits must include a security risk assessment that includes all stakeholders. The relevant HPO is responsible for ensuring this takes place in coordination with the ACT Security Coordinator and requesting members and their partners.
- Monitoring activities must be timely (remote and in-person). A **monitoring and evaluation plan** must be established by HPOs within 2 weeks of approval of funding for all appeals and RRF projects, during the inception meeting, (with a duration of more than three months) and where appropriate ACT consortia, to guarantee necessary follow-up, data gathering and reporting. This plan should be aligned with the requesting member(s)' M&E Plan(s); and, where possible, a joint M&E Plan should be established.
- As part of the monitoring and evaluation plan HPOs will work with local and national members to provide guidance on ACT secretariat's monitoring practice, tools, and approaches.
- The ACT Humanitarian Mechanism has three distinct funding instruments: 1. The Rapid Response Fund (RRF), 2. Appeals and 3. Consortia. Each funding instrument has different management procedures. M&E plans should be established in line with the specific requirements of each instrument.
- Projects funded under an RRF can generally be implemented for up to six months maximum. When an in-person monitoring visit by secretariat humanitarian staff is not possible within this timeframe, **remote monitoring should take place on at least two occasions** as planned and agreed with requesting members in the monitoring and evaluation plan.
- For an RRF of up to three months duration at least one remote monitoring activity must be undertaken by the relevant HPO.
- For all appeals (generally corresponding with Level 3 crises under the [IASC Humanitarian system-wide scale up](#)) Secretariat Humanitarian staff should undertake **a monitoring visit every six months** in person where feasible and/or combined with formal remote monitoring as established in the monitoring and evaluation plan.
- To ensure a systematic approach to monitoring HPOs must use the ACT Humanitarian monitoring template (see Annexes). A **monitoring report** must be submitted to HOH/GHOM and requesting members within **two weeks following a monitoring visit**/remote monitoring.
- HPOs must debrief with all relevant members at the end of the monitoring visit. and will follow up on discussed recommendations following consultation with GHOM/HoH the monitoring trip report should be shared with members within one week following the visit and follow up actions should be agreed.
- Monitoring and associated costs in the framework of Consortia should be pre-negotiated with the ACT consortium based on donor parameters.

Types of monitoring

Listed below are the types of monitoring that can be undertaken by ACT Secretariat Humanitarian staff

On-site monitoring

- Appeals and RRFs are implemented by members and their partners. ACT secretariat humanitarian staff support members by collecting information on project progress through monitoring activities. Appeals should include at least one monitoring visit by the relevant HPO every six months. The timing of visits is agreed with requesting members during the inception meeting as part of the monitoring and evaluation plan aligning it with the members' own monitoring plans. On site monitoring can include financial monitoring involving ACT Secretariat finance staff. ACT Humanitarian staff are also required to review budgetary and finance information as part of their on-site visits. When field visits are not possible for security or other reasons, remote monitoring should be included in the plan.

Joint monitoring

- Joint monitoring visits are encouraged where appropriate – such visits can include interested funding members for certain appeals based on size and complexity with costs included in the budget as required. At the inception meeting, requesting members can decide whether they want to have a joint monitoring.

Financial monitoring

- Financial monitoring relates to monitoring undertaken by ACT Secretariat finance staff. The provision of regular and up-to-date financial reporting allows a review of project progress and decision making related to the use of resources. Financial monitoring involving finance staff will be scheduled as part of the monitoring and evaluation plan established by HPOs in collaboration with ACT finance staff and requesting members. Major Appeals (budget US\$5 million +) should generally include at least one finance monitoring on-site visit within the duration of the appeal. All appeals and RRFs have audit requirements which are outlined in the Appeal documents and the Humanitarian Operations manual.

Remote monitoring

- Along with on-site field visits, remote monitoring allows core monitoring activities to be undertaken across the ACT Appeal and RRF portfolio. Some of the reasons remote monitoring may be appropriate include:
 - poor or deteriorating security situation,
 - risk to health and safety,
 - logistical challenges,
 - threat of, or consequences of, severe weather or natural disaster,
 - shortage of funding, e.g., for regularly accessing very remote locations.
 - Project modifications and no-cost extensions
 - Short timeframe of implementation eg. three-month RRF

Where access is problematic, third-party monitoring should also be considered.

ACT Alliance Humanitarian monitoring commitments

- ACT Alliance is committed to putting people first which means to respond in a timely manner from an emergency response approach to the most pressing humanitarian needs without discrimination. To fulfil that promise, data disaggregation by sex, age and disability must be at the centre of our monitoring and evaluation system. This includes the setting up of sensitive data protection mechanisms to avoid harm in the data gathering, analysis and disseminating processes. When collecting data on disability, it is highly recommended to use the [Washington Group Questions](#).
- Good quality monitoring, whether remote or on-site, should consider the participation of primary stakeholders. Discussions should be promoted in an inclusive manner to assess the impact of the project on the participants (children, women, elderly, people with disability, LGBTIQ+, etc.) and guarantee the principle of “do not harm”. It is good practice to include this approach from the proposal development stage.
- ACT humanitarian staff must not only gather information from primary stakeholders about what the project has delivered in terms of the objectives and the technical quality of assistance, but they should also follow up on how the project is being delivered (using the nine commitments of the CHS) – for example, whether the member is ensuring that the project is inclusive, gender sensitive and conflict sensitive, and has a Complaints and Feedback Mechanism that includes sensitive complaints (safeguarding and misuse of funds). Partner capacity to implement should also be monitored.
- ACT Alliance and members’ staff involved in M&E activities should actively ensure the minimization of bias, ensuring the accuracy, reliability and accountability of all monitoring and evaluation processes and data management systems. Bias occurs when the accuracy and precision of a measurement is threatened by the experience, perceptions, and/or assumptions of the researcher, or by the tools and methods used for measurement and analysis.

IV. Evaluation

ACT Alliance is committed to learning from its experience and to the systematic analysis and assessment of its humanitarian appeals to improve performance. Evaluation is a key component of our broader approach to considering the impact of our interventions and should consider and inform the design and delivery of our programmes, and the articulation of our internal policies and management processes.

ACT adheres to the OECD/DAC definition of evaluations: *An evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed development intervention, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors*.³ Evaluations of humanitarian appeals in ACT Alliance can be internal or external.

³ OECD Quality Standards for Development Evaluations, OECD DAC, 2010. Later, “coherence” was added by OECD/DAC as a 6th evaluation criterion, assessing the compatibility of an intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.

(<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>)

Evaluation principles

- **Transparency:** findings from evaluations must be made available to stakeholders. The terms of reference, findings and recommendations of all external evaluations will be placed in the public domain and will be shared directly with members.
- **Independence:** An evaluation, whether internal or external, will be as objective as possible and comments/ recommendations should be taken in the spirit of improvement
- **Objectivity:** The evaluation must be based on verifiable facts. The presentation of facts should be clearly and recognizably distinguished from opinions.
- **Usability:** Information and learning from evaluations are used to inform future projects and organizational learning.
- **Do no harm:** The evaluation must not cause harm to individuals or entities.
- **Nexus approach:** All interventions should be evaluated considering the linking of relief, rehabilitation and development.

Criteria to determine evaluation type:

ACT Alliance secretariat will use the following criteria to identify the minimum requirements of Appeals for evaluation:

a) The size and scope of the Appeal/ RRF

- All Appeals with a budget of US\$5 million or more must include costs for an external evaluation in the budget.
- All Appeals with a budget of US\$2 million or more and less than US\$5 million, must include evaluation costs in the budget. The evaluation can be internal or external.
- At least one appeal with a budget under US\$2 million will be subject to an evaluation with funds earmarked for this purpose from within the humanitarian team annual budget. Selection of the appeal to be evaluated will be made by the HoH/GHOM
- At least two RRFs should be evaluated annually with funds earmarked for this purpose in the GRRF Appeal. Selection of RRFs to be evaluated will be made by the HoH/GHOM.

b) Funding/donor requirements

- Where funding members or donors have specific evaluation requirements these should be included in the funding agreement - ACT Secretariat will ensure such requirements are fulfilled.

How do we evaluate Humanitarian Appeals/RRFs in ACT Alliance?

All appeals/RRFs must be designed using a results framework. Evaluations may be performed at different stages of an appeal/RRF to address different needs and types of information. ACT Alliance uses three different main types of evaluation for Humanitarian appeals:

- Internal evaluation of ACT appeals/ RRF's (can be conducted either during the life of the appeal or at the end of the programme) and should be part of the M&E plan.

- Real time evaluation (RTE) of the Appeals/ RRF's: 2 – 6 months from the appeal launch date (may be either internal or external as considered appropriate) and are an integral part of the M&E plan
- External Evaluation can be conducted either during the life of the appeal (normally towards the end) or at the end of the appeal.

Final project evaluations must be completed within three months of the end of the implementation period.

In addition, other types of evaluations such as thematic evaluations (that assess specific aspects, themes, and processes of ACT Alliance's technical work) and focused impact evaluations (with special emphasis on the positive and negative long-term effects) can be commissioned internally or externally, based on the overall project/programme's needs. Such evaluations must be signed off by HoH/GHOM.

What information do we value in ACT Alliance evaluations?

Accountability to affected populations is a core priority and evaluations commissioned by ACT Alliance should ensure this priority is reflected in the evaluation design. Evaluations of all types should always assess the extent to which an appeal/RRF has contributed to delivering on ACT Alliance's Accountability Framework, in particular in relation to CHS commitments 3 (Sharing information), commitment 4 (Participation) and commitment 5 (Handling Complaints).

At a minimum all ACT humanitarian evaluations must include:

- The DAC Criteria for evaluating Development Assistance covering:
 - Relevance, the extent to which a project was suitable to the priorities and policies of the people affected.
 - Coherence, the compatibility of an intervention with other interventions in the country, sector or institution.
 - Effectiveness, the extent to which the project has achieved its objectives.
 - Efficiency, the success of the project in achieving the desired results with the least costly results' mobilisation
 - Impact, the positive and negative long-term changes produced in peoples' lives and systems, whether they were intended or not.
 - Sustainability, assessing whether the benefits and results of the project are likely to continue after the funding.

In addition, it is recommended that evaluations should also consider the Disaster and Emergency Committee (DEC) accountability framework criteria covering

- Use of resources, objective achievement in line with agreed humanitarian standards, principles and behaviours and learning from our experience – taking learning from one crisis response to another.

Terms of Reference for all evaluations must be agreed with requesting members and ACT Secretariat (HoH/GHOM). The evaluator(s) will be selected in a transparent and accountable process in line with ACT procurement procedures and funding member or external donor requirements (if any). The final report with findings and recommendations should be delivered

in a timely manner. As a minimum, a debrief with requesting member(s)' and ACT secretariat staff should take place within one month of delivery of the final report.

V. Other considerations

How is Gender justice an integral part of ACT secretariats' humanitarian monitoring and evaluation activities?

ACT Alliance commits to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for attaining gender equality, and to the process of assessing the implication of gender of any planned action, in all areas and at all levels, according to ACT Alliance Gender Justice Policy. Gender analysis should be integrated into every phase of our work including, all needs and sectoral assessments, data collection, performance measurement and situational analysis, throughout the projects' life cycle. A gender analysis is recommended at the design phase and at the end of every annual cycle of multiannual projects.

All appeals and RRF proposals should at a minimum be gender sensitive, where this is not the case HPOs working with the members at the design phase should include indicators and processes that will make the overall programme more gender responsive, requiring at minimum: sex data disaggregation at collection and analysis stages, methods to collect gender-inclusive data, acknowledgement of gender concerns in situational analysis, report sections on gender responsiveness and gender-related performance of the project, gender inclusive feedback and complaints mechanisms, a mechanism to share knowledge related to gender equality.

How is locally led response considered in ACT secretariats' humanitarian monitoring and evaluation activities?

ACT Alliance acknowledging the need to shift power in M&E activities, are committed to:

- Use monitoring and evaluation methods and approaches grounded in local context
- Ensure that local ways of thinking and perceptions of quality are taken into consideration,
- Value existing evidence and knowledge at local level
- Prioritise local expertise when resourcing M&E systems
- Highlight the need for timely information sharing and accountability towards the local affected population