

## Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability & Learning (MEAL)

### Purpose of MEAL

Effective monitoring that includes the collection and analysis of performance data is meant to increase the opportunity for making evidence-based project decisions and strengthen ACT project evaluations. By continuously tracking specific indicators, changes over time can be measured and placed into context, to be used for real time and future decisions. Evaluations allow for the measurement of project goals, enabling a stronger understanding of the accomplishments or shortfalls of project efforts.

Together, monitoring and evaluation can help organisations draw out relevant information from past and ongoing activities and use these as the basis for making project adjustments and future planning. Accountability practices ensure that standards of quality are maintained by ACT members and that ACT can be held accountable by its stakeholders and by its members. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation support accountability by recording project results and creating the opportunity for those results to be shared transparently with stakeholders and internally. Learning from project results and the experience of ACT members and stakeholders is a tool for supporting better performance, quality, and accountability over time. By reflecting on and sharing insights regarding project management and governance practices, ACT can better leverage the wealth of knowledge held by members of its network in order to more successfully reach its goals.

### Definitions

- Monitoring is a systematic and continuous process of collecting, analysing, and documenting information that enables regular reporting on the progress of project implementation over time.
- Evaluation is a one-time (as opposed to ongoing) objective assessment of an on-going or completed project and its design, implementation, and/or results. Information and learning from evaluation are used to inform future projects and organisational learning. Evaluations may be internal ACT Alliance peer evaluations or external evaluations conducted by external evaluators or evaluation teams.
- Accountability is the acknowledgement, communication, and assumption of responsibility for actions, decisions, and policies including administration, governance, implementation and consequences of the implementation of all activities the member is involved in. This includes Accountability to Affected People (AAP), which is the process of using power responsibly and being answerable to the people and communities who are impacted by the ACT Alliance's humanitarian programming.
- Learning is the intentional sharing and acquisition of knowledge or skills by ACT Alliance, its secretariat, members and/or their stakeholders. The process of learning should lead to change which occurs as a result of newfound experience or knowledge.

For greater detail on the ACT MEAL definitions and approach, please see the Humanitarian M&E Mandatory Guidance.

### ACT Alliance Humanitarian M&E Mandatory Guidance

The current version of the Humanitarian M&E Mandatory Guidelines should be referenced and applied for all ACT Alliance humanitarian projects.

## Roles & Responsibilities

- **ACT Member:** Lead ACT Alliance MEAL activities during a humanitarian response. Ensure that ACT Alliance humanitarian MEAL resources are applied and adhered for all humanitarian programming. Ensure that a monitoring plan has been agreed with the humanitarian programme officer within two weeks.
- **ACT Forum:** Coordinate MEAL activities amongst the Members during a humanitarian response.
- **ACT Secretariat:** Provide global MEAL technical support to Members and engage in global humanitarian community MEAL fora to ensure that good MEAL practices are understood and applied during humanitarian operations.
- **ACT Governance:** Ensure that MEAL obligations can be met through the provision of comprehensive resource support to the ACT Alliance membership.

## Learning Review

A humanitarian Learning Review is a mandatory internal performance review and learning exercise aimed at identifying ACT Alliance operational successes and areas for operational improvements that can be applied to the current operations or future operations in other humanitarian contexts. A learning review usually takes place around the time of a project conclusion and preferably one month before or after a project closure. A learning review brings together key staff and partners who have been involved in the ACT Alliance humanitarian operation. Recommendations for improved humanitarian responses are the key outcome from the exercise. Where an evaluation has taken place, the learning review should take place following the finalisation of the evaluation. The learning review will be facilitated by the humanitarian programme officer.

## 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". Evaluations of humanitarian appeals in ACT Alliance can be internal or external. See section 4 of the Humanitarian M&E Mandatory Guidelines.

## References and Templates

Humanitarian M&E Mandatory Guidelines