

Guidance Note: Alert

Purpose

The alert is intended to notify ACT Secretariat to an emerging crisis. This guidance note provides information on key considerations when considering and submitting an alert. The alert provides basic information to inform decision making within the ACT Alliance regarding possible response options and it also forms the 'immediate assessment' of the situation and needs in the affected areas. An alert should be completed as soon as it becomes obvious there is a humanitarian emergency. As part of its quality assurance role ACT Secretariat will review the content and determine if it appropriate to post the alert.

Responsibilities

Forum Coordinator

- Coordinate with the forum members and review the Forum EPRP to scan in country member's capacity to respond
- Contact the Humanitarian Program Coordinator to discuss their plans and the support needed.
- Prepare alert with information from members interested to respond based on the agreements in the EPRP

Requesting Member Assessment before issuing the alert. Review organisational EPRP and complete a short scan of.

- Consider if it is appropriate to draft an alert and coordinate with the Forum Coordinator Alert triggers actions towards a response.
- Draft the alert and submit to the Humanitarian Program Coordinator for review and circulation, with a copy to the ACT Regional Representative for information.

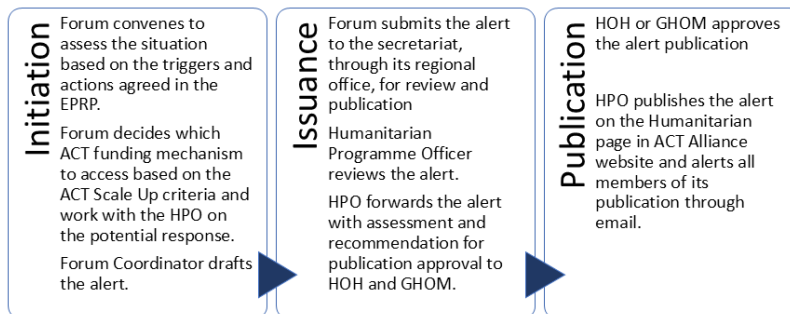
ACT Regional Representative

- Provides general guidance on the forum or member's that may be relevant in the conduct of the humanitarian response.

Humanitarian Program Coordinator

- Research and stay abreast with facts and figures on an emergency before receiving an alert
- Initially liaise with the Requesting Member and Forum Coordinator to prepare the alert, ensuring alert complies with ACT policy.
- Carry out quality control by proofreading the alert, ensuring that information is sufficient and correct, and in the right format.
- Forwards the alert to the Head of Humanitarian Affairs for approval for publication.
- Post on the website and send an email blast to members (refer to this [Guidance](#) on publication and email dissemination).
- Answer, in close liaison with Requesting Members and Forum Coordinator, queries and requests received by the Secretariat related to the issued alert.

This guideline is read in conjunction with the [Alert template](#).



Issuing the alert

The Forum, or in the absence of a forum an ACT coordination mechanism, should refer to the agreed triggers and protocols Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) when issuing the alert. It is important that the issuance has been agreed by the forum members.

In the case of sudden onset emergencies, such as weather disasters, conflicts, or other unforeseen crises, the Forum should issue an alert within 24 hours of the event. This ensures a prompt response and coordination among humanitarian actors. Once the alert is prepared, it must be immediately forwarded to the ACT Secretariat for assessment and further action. A published alert indicates a possible response and informs all members enabling a swift mobilization of resources and support.

The information in the alert should be short and concise. Where information to address a question identified below is not available, simply state that the information is not currently available. Members and Forum is not expected to have all the information detailed below in the early stages of an emergency.

For slow onset emergencies, such as droughts, food insecurity, or protracted crises, the process for issuing an alert is more gradual and based on specific assessments. The alert is typically triggered by a combination of local needs assessments, requests for assistance from the affected government, or an official declaration of a state of emergency. In addition to these, secondary information from other humanitarian actors, such as NGOs, UN agencies, and local authorities, can also inform the decision to issue an alert. This ensures that the response is aligned with the evolving situation on the ground, addressing immediate needs while anticipating future challenges.

By tailoring the alert issuance process to the nature of the emergency, the ACT Forum and Secretariat can ensure timely and appropriate responses to both sudden and slow onset crises.

ACT Alert to Decision Timeframe

When an ACT Alert is issued by the submitting ACT Forum or the requesting member(s), it may signal the intention to launch an official ACT Appeal, as outlined in the ACT Scale-Up Model. This model serves to guide coordinated, large-scale humanitarian responses in the face of significant crises or disasters. The inclusion of an intention to raise an Appeal is critical, as it indicates the potential need for widespread mobilization of financial and operational resources.

In cases where the requesting Forum or member(s) anticipate the need to respond through an ACT Appeal, the Emergency Steering Committee (ESC) is required to act promptly. Within 48 hours from

the time the Alert is issued, the ESC must convene a meeting to review the situation, assess the scale of the emergency, and make a formal decision on whether an Appeal will be launched. This quick decision-making process ensures that the response is timely, well-coordinated, and proportional to the needs on the ground, allowing resources to be mobilized effectively and efficiently.

However, if the Alert only envisions a response through the Rapid Response Fund (RRF), the ESC is not required to meet. The RRF is designed to address immediate, smaller-scale emergency needs and allows for a more streamlined response, without the need for a full-scale appeal process. In such cases, the decision-making process is simpler and can proceed without the involvement of the ESC, ensuring that assistance is provided rapidly where it's most needed.

By establishing clear timeframes and processes for decision-making, the ACT Alliance ensures that the appropriate mechanisms are activated in response to emergencies, whether through an ACT Appeal for large-scale crises or the RRF for more localized needs. This approach helps guarantee a swift, organized, and impactful humanitarian response

Section 1: Nature of the emergency

Outline the nature of the emergency includes identifying the type of crisis, such as a disaster (earthquake, flood, or drought), conflict, or health epidemic. Please specify contributing factors, such as climate change, political instability, or infrastructure collapse, alongside critical dates like the event's onset, escalation, or official declarations.

Section 2: Impact and scale of the emergency

The Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRP) support the development of the Alert where risk analysis has already identified which crises pose critical loss and damages. Organisations and forum EPRP should already be able to identify the crisis they would provide humanitarian assistance and the geographical locations and vulnerable groups that would be most affected.

Scale of the Emergency: Based on the forum's initial assessment, outline if it appears to be a [small, medium, or large]-scale emergency. This classification considers the extent of the impact on infrastructure, livelihoods, displacement, and overall humanitarian needs.

Geographical Areas and Characteristics: Outline information on the affected areas [specific regions or districts], characterized by [geographic features such as coastal, rural, or urban environments]. Outline if these areas are densely and sparsely populated and if people often face common challenges such as flooding, droughts, or conflict, making them particularly vulnerable to the current emergency.

Numbers and Characteristics of Affected People: Outline an estimated number of people affected by this crisis. If possible, disaggregated by gender, age, and ethnicity as a percentage, based on pre-crisis information which can be done through the EPRP process. Outline if some of the people already faced pre-existing vulnerabilities due to poverty, limited access to healthcare, or discrimination.

Impact on People: Explain if the crisis has led to the destruction of homes, displacing people, impact on the loss of household assets and livelihoods disrupted due to the destruction of farms, markets, or businesses as an example. As available, outline the impacted people's main source of income, which may make recovery challenging.

Short- and Long-Term Consequences: Outline how in the short term, if people face immediate threats to their safety, health, and access to basic needs like shelter and food. And anticipating the impact of the disaster in the long term, outline potential consequences on livelihoods, education, and social structures that may deteriorate, further entrenching poverty and vulnerability. Pay specific attention to protection risks, particularly for women and children, which may rise, with heightened concerns over exploitation and abuse during disasters.

Section 3: Local and national capacity

How Are People Coping? When filling out this section, describe how affected communities are managing the impact of the disaster. This could include both positive and negative coping strategies. Positive strategies may include sharing resources, community solidarity, or relocation to safer areas. Negative coping strategies could involve taking on debt, selling off vital assets (such as livestock or land), or reducing food consumption. Consider if there are reports of distress migration, unsafe sheltering conditions, or any increase in gender-based violence due to the crisis. Be specific about how different groups are coping, particularly vulnerable populations such as women, children, the elderly, or persons with disabilities.

What is the Plan and Current Response of Local and Central Government? We recognise that in most emergency response, the government is the primary duty bearer to provide support to the people affected. When describing the government's response, provide a clear overview of the actions taken at both local and national levels. Indicate whether the government has implemented its contingency plans and whether these are sufficient to meet the needs on the ground. You should state if there is an existing national emergency response plan and whether it is being activated effectively. Include details about government-organized evacuations, distribution of food and non-food items, temporary shelter setups, or medical services being provided. Mention any public announcements, mobilization of resources, or coordination with international actors. If government efforts are delayed or inadequate, explain why (e.g., lack of resources, logistical challenges, political factors).

What Local Structures/Resources Are Available to Deal with the Disaster? In this section, identify local structures such as community organizations, faith-based groups, and informal networks that are responding to the disaster. Mention the roles of local government bodies, disaster response committees, volunteer groups, or traditional leaders who may be coordinating aid distribution or sheltering efforts. Additionally, provide details on any local resources that are being utilized, such as schools being converted to temporary shelters, local health centers providing emergency medical care, or businesses offering goods and services. If there are gaps in these resources or if they are overwhelmed, specify that as well.

What is the Plan and Response of National and International Organizations, Including the UN? Provide details on how national and international organizations are responding to the disaster. Include key NGOs, local Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, and international agencies,

especially the UN. Mention specific programs or actions these organizations are undertaking, such as setting up displacement person camps, delivering food aid, providing medical assistance, or offering psychosocial support. If there are joint efforts or coordination among different organizations, note that as well. Describe any ongoing or planned assessments, relief efforts, or long-term recovery strategies. If certain organizations have pledged financial or logistical support but have yet to act, provide details on this timeline.

Is There a Country Coordination Mechanism or a Cluster System, Including Working Groups, and Has This Been Activated? In this section, indicate whether formal coordination mechanisms have been activated in response to the disaster. If the cluster system is in place, specify which clusters (e.g., shelter, health, food security) are operational, and provide an overview of their activities. If other coordination mechanisms exist, such as government-led response platforms or sectoral working groups, detail how these are functioning. If possible, outline who is leading the coordination efforts (e.g., government agencies, UN) and how various actors are participating. Also, mention whether coordination meetings are being held, whether information sharing is effective, and if there are any challenges in the coordination process (e.g., overlapping efforts, gaps in service delivery).

Section 4: Key needs and gaps

What are the major needs and gaps that are foreseen geographically and in sectors based on Sphere standards in addressing the needs of the affected population?

In this section, provide a detailed overview of the major needs across different sectors, such as shelter, food security, water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH), health, education, and protection, in line with Sphere standards. Sphere standards represent minimum humanitarian standards for responding to basic human needs, so consider using these as a benchmark. Identify specific geographic areas that are most affected and where the largest gaps exist. For example, rural areas may need urgent food distribution, while urban areas may be experiencing overcrowded shelters and insufficient sanitation.

Refer to official government assessments and response plans where possible, including data from ministries, disaster management agencies, or national task forces. If UN OCHA reports are available, summarize key findings related to the needs and gaps identified in their assessments. Include any early warning systems or vulnerability data (e.g., flood-prone areas, drought-affected regions). Make sure to highlight where gaps exist due to logistical, financial, or political reasons, and describe any anticipated difficulties in meeting the minimum Sphere standards in certain sectors or areas.

How have these needs and gaps been addressed and by whom?

In this section, explain what actions have already been taken to address the identified needs and gaps. List which actors are involved in responding to the emergency, including local authorities, government ministries, NGOs, international agencies, and local community groups. Be as specific as possible regarding who is leading the response in each sector—such as the Ministry of Health managing medical interventions, or a local NGO distributing food aid.

Indicate how the response is addressing key needs based on the government's assessment, other organisations, and your own quick assessment like shelter, food, medical care, and protection, and provide examples of any ongoing activities, such as the construction of temporary shelters, food

distributions, or mobile clinics. Additionally, assess the effectiveness of the response to date, pointing out areas where needs are being met adequately and where there are challenges. If some gaps remain unaddressed, describe the reasons (e.g., logistical difficulties, resource shortages, or limited access to certain areas due to insecurity).

What are the existing gaps in information, and when might these be addressed?

Here, identify any gaps in information that are hindering the full assessment of the situation or the response effort. This could include missing data on the exact number of displaced people, incomplete information about damage to infrastructure, or limited reports from remote or inaccessible areas.

Describe what assessments are still pending, such as detailed surveys by government bodies, UN agencies, or NGOs. Indicate when these assessments are expected to be completed and whether additional data will be gathered via field visits, satellite imagery, or coordination with local authorities. If there are any challenges in gathering information (such as security issues, poor infrastructure, or communication difficulties), outline these challenges and suggest how they might be resolved. You should also consider the reliability and accuracy of existing data and mention any discrepancies or contradictions between sources. If the situation is evolving rapidly, note that information gaps may change and that regular updates will be required.

Section 5: Forum capacity and members intention to respond

Using information from the organisational and forum EPRP, complete the table with information on expertise and experience of members in specific geographic areas. This information helps provide context into existing expertise of the member.

Section 6: Potential response

It is expected that the EPRP will be your reference in outlining your potential response to support the affected population. This information should link to the early needs identified earlier in the document and reference EPRP capacity. This section should show forum members response complementarity and coordination, it also includes additional capacity the members may need, such as staff, stocks, funding, to scale up and initial plans to support.