

## ACT Alliance Appeal Mechanism Review

### Terms of Reference

#### **1. Background**

Action by Churches Together (ACT Alliance) is a coalition of churches and church-related organisations working together to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people regardless of their religion, politics, gender, race or nationality in keeping with the highest international codes and standards. ACT Alliance is faith-motivated, rights-based, impact-focused, committed to working ecumenically and inter-religiously, with the communities we seek to serve and accompany at the centre of our work. In promoting a just, inclusive and sustainable world, ACT Alliance implements effective humanitarian, development and advocacy work at national, regional, and global levels by saving lives, providing emergency assistance and supporting sustainability, enhancing the rights of those whose rights are not realised. ACT's humanitarian work is guided by the ACT humanitarian policy and operationalized through the Humanitarian Operations Manual.

Appeals are ACT's primary mechanism through which members of the Alliance demonstrate a coordinated ecumenical response to emergencies at scale. Appeals are intended to support timely, principled, accountable, and quality humanitarian action while also reflecting ACT's identity as a forum-centred alliance. The appeal mechanism has evolved over time, it is activated across different regions, crisis types, funding environments, and operational capacities.

A rapidly changing humanitarian funding landscape and a renewed 2024 ACT General assembly commitment on accountability and locally led response mean that it is important to review the ACT Appeal mechanism. Is the mechanism meeting its objectives and purpose, how can it be strengthened to better support timely, coordinated, high quality, accountable and locally led humanitarian response at scale?

Alongside planned reflections at CEO level within ACT on the appeal mechanism and prior to the development of a new multiannual Global Strategy, ACT Alliance seeks to commission an independent review of the appeal mechanism. The review should generate practical, evidence-based findings and recommendations to inform strategic decisions, operational improvements and possible revisions to ACT policies, tools, procedures, and ways of working.

#### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of the review is to assess the ACT Appeal Mechanism within ACT's humanitarian architecture, as well as its alignment with policy commitments. The review should cover the full appeal cycle and consider the roles and experiences of requesting and funding members, ACT Forums, regional structures and the ACT Secretariat.

The review is expected to draw on appeals implemented during the period 2022-2025, ensuring attention to regional diversity, crisis type, appeal size, funding level and members' profile. It should also consider the relationship between the Appeal Mechanism and other humanitarian financing or coordination channels, including bilateral funding, back-donor requirements, and the Rapid Response Fund. The review is expected to generate evidence-based findings, practical reform options, and prioritised recommendations for strengthening the mechanism at both strategic and operational levels.

The Review Report will be presented at the planned ACT CEO meeting on the appeal mechanism in Q4 2026.

### **3. Objectives**

The review will aim to:

1. Assess the relevance and strategic added value of the ACT Appeal Mechanism within the current humanitarian and funding environment and clarifying its role within ACT's wider humanitarian architecture and the Global Strategy.
2. Assess alignment of the mechanism with ACT's core values and humanitarian policy, purpose, and humanitarian commitments, reviewing the current design, ACT's identity as a forum-centred alliance, localisation commitments and accountability to affected people.
3. Review stakeholder engagement, analysing how different stakeholders engage with the mechanism, and identify potential opportunities to enhance impact. Analyse funding, resource mobilisation, and financing dynamics, examining trends, engagement, requirements and flexibility, including how these factors affect member-led response, localisation, accountability and power dynamics.
4. Assess the effectiveness, efficiency, quality and usability of the appeal mechanism and associated tools, reviewing their appropriateness and support of timely, quality, accountable and inclusive humanitarian response.

### **4. Methodology**

The selected consultancy is expected to develop a detailed methodology in the inception report. The methodology should be participatory, evidence-based, and proportionate to the scope of the assignment.

At minimum, the methodology should include:

- Document review of relevant ACT policies, appeal guidance, appeal documents, budgets, reports, evaluations, monitoring reports, templates, governance documents, and relevant external standards.
- Analysis of appeal data for the review period, including number of appeals, regional distribution, duration, budget size, funding levels, revisions, reporting compliance, and evaluations (data to be provided by ACT Secretariat).
- Key informant interviews, with a diverse range of stakeholders (20-30), including requesting members, funding members, ACT Forum representatives, regional representatives, Secretariat staff, governance representatives and selected external stakeholders where relevant.
- Focus group discussions or consultation workshops (online), with ACT members to test emerging findings and gather collective reflections.
- Online survey, to gather broader feedback from ACT members, stakeholders and humanitarian practitioners.
- Validation and sensemaking, with ACT stakeholders to discuss emerging findings and test the practicality of recommendations before finalising the report.

The methodology should ensure regional balance, inclusion of both funding and requesting members and attention to national member perspectives.

### **5. Expected deliverables**

The reviewer will be expected to produce the following deliverables:

1. Inception report, including refined review questions, methodology, sampling strategy, stakeholder list, workplan, data collection tools, analytical framework, and limitations.

2. Data collection tools, interview guides, survey questionnaire, focus group guides and document review matrix.
3. Emerging findings presentation and validation session, including a concise presentation of preliminary findings and a facilitated discussion with ACT stakeholders to test the analysis and inform the final recommendations.
4. Draft review report for feedback, including evidence-based findings and practical recommendations.
5. Final review report of approximately 30–40 pages, excluding annexes, and should include prioritised recommendations by timeframe, responsible actor, level of effort and whether they require policy, governance, operational, financial, or tool-related changes.
6. Final presentation, summarising key findings, conclusions, and recommendations for ACT leadership and relevant stakeholders.

## **6. Reviewer profile**

The assignment requires an experienced consultant or team of consultants with the

following qualifications:

- At least 10 years of experience in humanitarian action, humanitarian coordination, evaluation, organisational review, or humanitarian financing, of which 5 at strategic/leadership roles.
- Demonstrated experience reviewing humanitarian mechanisms, pooled funds, appeal systems, emergency response frameworks or network-based humanitarian coordination systems.
- Strong understanding of humanitarian standards, including CHS, accountability to affected people, localisation, participation, safeguarding, and inclusion.
- Experience working with faith-based, membership-based or network organisations.
- Strong mixed-methods research and evaluation skills, including qualitative interviewing, survey design, document review, and financial/portfolio analysis.
- Ability to analyse governance, decision-making, power dynamics, funding flows, and operational systems.
- Excellent analytical writing skills in English. Working knowledge of Spanish or French is appreciated.
- Ability to produce practical, strategic, and usable recommendations for both leadership and practitioners.
- Ability to work independently, sensitively, and diplomatically with diverse stakeholders.

## **7. Management and governance of the assignment**

The review will be managed by ACT Secretariat's Humanitarian team with support from a reference group.

The reference group will:

- Provide feedback on the inception report and methodology.
- Support stakeholder identification.
- Provide consolidated feedback on the draft report.
- Support dissemination and follow-up of recommendations.

The reviewer will remain responsible for the independence of findings and recommendations.

## 8. Timeline

The assignment is expected to be undertaken from July to September 2026 (indicatively 35 working days). Indicative timeline:

- Contracting and initial briefing: Week 1
- Document review and inception report: Week 2
- Data collection: Weeks 3-4
- Survey and portfolio analysis: Weeks 4-5
- Preliminary analysis and emerging findings: Weeks 6-7
- Validation workshop: Week 8
- Draft report: Week 9
- Feedback period: Weeks 10-11
- Final report and presentation: Week 12

The final timeline will be agreed during contracting.

## 9. Proposal requirements

Proposals should be submitted by email to [recruitment@actalliance.org](mailto:recruitment@actalliance.org) no later than Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup> at 13:00 CET.

Questions or requests for clarification may be submitted to [ioakeim.vravas@actalliance.org](mailto:ioakeim.vravas@actalliance.org) until 26th of June 2026.

Interested candidates should submit:

- A technical proposal outlining understanding of the assignment, proposed methodology, workplan, and approach to stakeholder engagement.
- A financial proposal, including daily rate and estimated number of days.
- CV (s) of the proposed reviewer or team members.
- One example of similar reviews, evaluations, or organisational analyses.
- Contact details for two references.

## 10. Selection process and criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Understanding of the assignment and quality of proposed approach.
- Relevant experience in humanitarian reviews, appeal mechanisms, funding systems, or network-based humanitarian coordination.
- Methodological strength, including ability to combine qualitative, quantitative, financial, and documentary evidence.
- Understanding of humanitarian quality, accountability, localisation, and memberled coordination.
- Quality of previous written work.
- Availability and ability to deliver within the required timeframe.
- Cost-effectiveness of the submitted proposal.

Proposals will be assessed against the above criteria. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an interview to further discuss their offer.