

# ACT Alliance

## Recertification Audit – Summary Report 2021/12/16

### 1. General information

#### 1.1 Organisation

Type	Mandates	Verified	
<input type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Membership/Network <input type="checkbox"/> Direct Assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Federated <input type="checkbox"/> With partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/> Development <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	
<b>Head office location</b>	ACT Alliance is legally registered in Geneva, Switzerland and has a decentralised secretariat (Amman, Bangkok, Nairobi, San Salvador).		
<b>Total number of country programmes</b>	135 members and 3 observers in 120 countries, 52 national, 4 regional, 5 sub-regional and 1 global forum	<b>Total number of staff</b>	26

#### 1.2 Audit team

<b>Lead auditor</b>	Nik Rilkoﬀ
<b>Second auditor</b>	Andrew Bradley
<b>Third auditor</b>	
<b>Observer</b>	Claire Goudsmit
<b>Expert</b>	
<b>Witness / other</b>	

#### 1.3 Scope of the audit

<b>CHS Verification Scheme</b>	Certification
<b>Audit cycle</b>	Second
<b>Phase of the audit</b>	Recertification
<b>Extraordinary or other type of audit</b>	n/a

#### 1.4 Sampling\*

Randomly sampled country programme sites	Included in final sample	Replaced by	Rationale for sampling and selection of sites	Onsite or remote
Horn of Africa (Locusts)	N	The next on the list, Iraq	Not included in the sample because of the low funding success of the Appeal (1%) indicates low or no activities implemented.	
Iraq Appeal 201	Y -1		Included in the sample because the geographic focus of the Appeal contributes to the diversity of the sample. Relatively significant budget, Appeal 53% funded and humanitarian response is operational.	Remote, interviews and document review
Central America	Y -2		Included in the sample because the geographic focus of the Appeal	Remote, interview and

			contributes to the diversity of the sample. Relatively significant budget and Appeal 92.45% funded and humanitarian response is operational.	document review
Philippines Appeal 202	Y -3		Included in the sample because the geographic focus of the Appeal contributes to the diversity of the sample. Relatively significant budget although Appeal 35% funded and humanitarian response is operational.	Remote, interviews and document review
Iraq Appeal 211	N	The next on the list, Global Pandemic	Same ACT Alliance members as Appeal 201 selected above.	
Global Pandemic, funding by country	Y 4&5		Included in the sample because allowed for wider geographic focus, contributing to the diversity of the sample. Countries chosen from the 17 in the Appeal are Tanzania and Somalia.	Remote, document review

**Any other sampling performed for this audit:** No

**Sampling risk:**

Given the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions, the Recertification Audit (RA, 2021) was planned and was conducted entirely remotely, using online communication technologies. Recommendations from the previous audit were to include a sample of regional Secretariat staff in this audit.

Sampling of member staff and community members for interviews was random, as far as possible, selecting from lists provided by the ACT members although sampling bias is possible in that auditors could not verify how the list was identified.

*\*It is important to note that the audit findings are based on a sample of an organisation's country programmes, its documentation and observation. Findings are analysed to determine an organisation's systematic approach and application of all aspects of the CHS across different contexts and ways of working.*

## 2. Activities undertaken by the audit team

### 2.1 Locations Assessed

Locations	Dates	Onsite or remote
Secretariat offices	2021/06/01-18, 2021/09/09, 12, 16, 18, 23	remote
Iraq Appeal	2021/08/10-12, 24-31 2021/09/1-5	remote
Philippines Appeal	2021/08/16, 20	remote
Central America Appeal	2021/09/16	remote

### 2.2 Interviews

Position / level of interviewees	Number of interviewees		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
<b>Secretariat Offices</b>			
Management	1	2	remote
Staff	9	7	remote
<b>Member Office(s)</b>			

Management		2	remote
Staff	2	6	remote
Partner staff	3	8	remote
Others			
<b>Total number of interviewees</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>25</b>	

## 2.3 Consultations with communities

Type of group and location	Number of participants		Onsite or remote
	Female	Male	
Individual community members and incentive workers in GBV/protection and WASH programmes. These persons interact with ACT Alliance members and/or local partners.	4	12	remote
<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	

## 2.4 Opening meeting

<b>Date</b>	2021/05/27
<b>Location</b>	remote
<b>Number of participants</b>	13
<b>Any substantive issues arising</b>	None

## 2.5 Closing meeting

<b>Date</b>	2021/09/29
<b>Location</b>	remote
<b>Number of participants</b>	16
<b>Any substantive issues arising</b>	None

## 3. Background information on the organisation

### 3.1 General information

ACT Alliance - Action by Churches Together was created in January 2010, bringing together the World Council of Churches' ACT International (a humanitarian alliance since 1995) and ACT Development (a development alliance created in 2007). The goal of ACT Alliance is to establish a coordinated platform for ecumenical diakonia, expressing a joint vision to assist people in need and work for a better world.

ACT Alliance's purpose is 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 international codes and standards. The current ACT Alliance Global Strategy *Hope in Action – Putting People First 2019-2026* sets the direction for the Alliance in response to the global social, economic and political environment.

Drawn from 120 countries, the ACT Alliance currently has 135 members and 3 observers, including a range of churches and church-related organisations providing humanitarian assistance and implementing development and advocacy programmes at local, national and global levels.

The ACT Alliance Secretariat is a registered Association in Switzerland with offices in Nairobi, San Salvador, Bangkok and Amman. It also has staff based in Toronto and New York. ACT Alliance Secretariat holds independent legal presence in Thailand and Jordan and staff working elsewhere are hosted by member organisations through Memoranda of Understanding.

Financial flows through the ACT Alliance Secretariat have primarily been through Appeals supporting humanitarian assistance (USD11,385,578 in 2020), with 3% of Appeal funds as well as membership fees, voluntary contributions and external donor project income funding the programmatic and operational work of the Secretariat (USD4,744,484 in 2020).

ACT Alliance Secretariat is currently undergoing significant changes at the funding, operational, finance and human resource system levels.

The organisation's current funding model creates financial uncertainty for organisational budgeting, with approximately 30% of the Secretariat's income based on Appeal and voluntary contribution projections at the beginning of each financial year, although approximately 75% of the Secretariat's operational and programmatic budget outside of the Appeals relates to staff and fixed costs. Declining Appeal and voluntary contribution funding threatens both the Secretariat as well as ACT Alliance's humanitarian responses. Revision of the ACT Alliance Secretariat funding model started in June 2019, to secure stable and predictable funding for core costs. A Sustainable Funding Working Group's proposed project-based funding model was endorsed by the Governing Board (GB) in May 2021 and will be shared with the membership before final presentation to the GB in 2022.

Reform of the ACT Alliance's Humanitarian Mechanism was also initiated in 2019, driven by members' intentions to support the localisation agenda. The reformed mechanism includes four pillars: the Rapid Response Fund (RRF), the Appeal process, member consortia and ACT Forums. The Forum structure is based on Forum MOUs, emergency preparedness and response plans (EPRPs) and annual reporting processes, in support of effective humanitarian assistance. The reform also includes an updated EPRP data management platform and revised Operational Guidelines and monitoring system to be rolled out in January 2022.

Following the 2020 financial audit, a new finance system is being rolled out since July 2021 to improve financial management, controls and analysis. Human resource regulations governing recruitment, contracting and entitlements, staff development and wellbeing are also under review and being updated, with input from the Staff Representative Group (SRG).

### **3.2 Governance and management structure**

In December 2020, the ACT Alliance electronic General Assembly (the highest decision-making body) approved changes in the statutes to lengthen the time between physical assemblies from four to six years, introducing an interim electronic assembly every three years. It also approved the inclusion of two seats in the GB assigned to youth, making 22 representatives on the elected GB. Representation on ACT Alliance governing bodies, including the GB, Executive Committee and Membership and Nominations Committee (MNC) is predicated on members' engagement and capacity and regional balance.

The GB meets at least once a year and is supported by a smaller Executive Board of up to 7 members. The Secretariat's Core Management Team (CMT) is comprised of the General Secretary and the Directors of Programmes, Operations, and Communications.

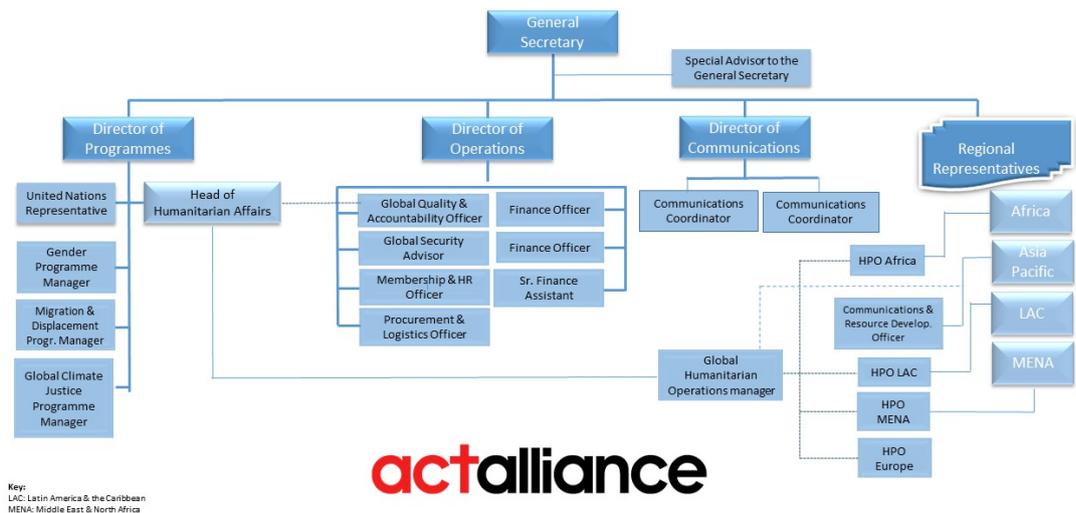
Emergency Preparedness and Humanitarian Response is one of five portfolios under the Director of Programmes, the others being Climate Justice, Gender Justice, Peace and Human Security and Migration and Displacement. The Director of Operations leads Quality & Accountability (Q&A), including acting as the focal point for the Complaints Handling Committee (CHC) which is a sub-group of the Q&A Reference Group. They also lead Finance and Administration (including human resource - HR) functions, Membership management and IT systems and platforms. The two directors jointly coordinate resource mobilisation and donor

relationships. Implementation of Q&A practice in the ACT Alliance Secretariat, as well as providing support to ACT Forums and members, is the remit of the Global Q&A Officer.

The Director of Communications manages both internal and external communications across Emergency Preparedness and Humanitarian Response, all other programmes, and operations.

Members belong to regional Forums, with their annual forum fee funding Forum-level activities, training and interactions. Annual forum reports are mandatory. From 2022, each Forum will be required to consider both capacities and contingencies in an EPRP prior to being eligible for humanitarian funding. A new digital project management platform established by the Secretariat, is provided as a tool to support EPRPs. Also being piloted in 2022, decision-making for humanitarian responses will rest with an Emergency Response Steering Committee. This independent group will both support Forums with membership compliance and advise on whether a response should be funded through the RRF or an Appeal.

### ACT Alliance Secretariat Core Organigram



Changes to the organigram since the 2020 Maintenance Audit (MA) include rationalisation of operational support, through the creation of hybrid roles, such as the Procurement and Logistics Officer as well as the HR and Governance Officer, and the creation of a new Global Humanitarian Operations Manager role. A planned Compliance Officer recruitment was cancelled due to funding constraints during the Covid-19 2021 pandemic. Additionally, other roles have been revisited and some responsibilities have been redistributed. Overall, there remain unfunded critical positions, and this puts a burden on the staff who are currently managing multiple roles.

### 3.3 Internal quality assurance mechanisms and risk management

**Quality assurance at the ACT Alliance Secretariat level:** Reference groups support the ACT Alliance Secretariat in the thematic and programmatic implementation of the global strategy. They also operationally support the development of implementation plans and policies, training materials, and promotion of accountability and standards. The Q&A Reference Group advises and supports the Secretariat with realising the Q&A component of the ACT Alliance global strategy and coordinates with other reference groups on thematic areas of overlap. The GB receives regular reports from the Reference Group on the Q&A workplan, drawing in members’ experience and expertise to address Secretariat-level weaknesses systematically and in a way that will best support members.

**Quality assurance at the ACT Alliance Appeal level:** Internal controls include joint monitoring on large and complex appeals (pre-COVID), donor compliance checks and audits on all appeals

over USD\$50,000. Risk-based monitoring of member programmes occurs in the case of a complaint or if a potential issue is identified by Humanitarian Programme Officers (HPOs).

**Quality assurance at the ACT Alliance membership level:** ACT Alliance Secretariat's governance and management bodies are committed to quality and accountability in the work of members and are engaged with the CHS certification process. Member Boards are expected to take responsibility for compliance with mandatory membership requirements, and the GB and Membership and Nominations Committee will ultimately hold each to account and determine consequences for those who do not undertake measures to improve.

**Risk management at the ACT Alliance Secretariat level:** Risk identification is required at all levels of the ACT Alliance Secretariat, including programmatic areas, based on context and practices related to the ACT Alliance as a whole, its members and/or the Secretariat. Mitigation actions and strategies are outlined for every risk and responsibility for risk mitigation and management is assigned to different owners.

### 3.4 Work with partner organisations

As agreed between the ACT Alliance Secretariat and HQAI, the audit process considers members of the ACT Alliance as 'partners', as described in the CHS. This understanding acknowledges that the ACT Alliance Secretariat does not have control over the autonomous members of the ACT Alliance, rather, it has influence. The Secretariat's compliance with the CHS is found at two levels: internal processes policies and systems relating to the functioning of the Secretariat itself; and the support, guidance, encouragement, and mandatory requirements for members, because the realisation of the quality and accountability requirements at the community level depends on the extent to which ACT Alliance members implement those requirements.

Many ACT Alliance members adhere to the CHS as part of their independent organisational commitments: 15 ACT Alliance members are also CHS Alliance members. Six are CHS certified, and 5 have undergone self-assessment. Others accept ACT Alliance Secretariat's support and guidance and work to meet the requirements for communities.

ACT Alliance members are each accountable to their own governance structures as well as to the ACT Alliance Secretariat in terms of the accountability-related obligations of membership. ACT Alliance membership requires adherence to fifteen mandatory policies and seven mandatory international standards, including the ACT Alliance and ICRC Codes of Conduct and the CHS. ACT Alliance Secretariat relies on voluntary self-reporting of compliance by members. As the ACT Alliance Secretariat's membership monitoring processes mature, and tools are developed to check member compliance regularly and consistently, overall quality and accountability at community level will be better assured.

The revised ACT Alliance Secretariat Complaints Policy (May 2021) requires that 1) members set up their own complaints systems, which includes consultations with communities and 2) a functioning CRM is in place for communities (either the member's or ACT Secretariat's) to receive ACT funds.

Members must belong to Forums, and each Forum is required to establish an EPRP: both are also preconditions to receiving funds through an Appeal or the RRF. Lack of member engagement and active participation in Forums is a challenge ACT Alliance Secretariat is currently grappling with. Forums are also the body through which reference groups and ACT Alliance programmes (for example, Q&A and gender) work, learn and share. Forums are the vehicle by which ACT Alliance Secretariat demonstrates the added value of alliance membership and needs to strike a balance between supporting and overwhelming members.

Under certain circumstances membership may be suspended, although awareness-raising and advocacy are more common approaches to achieve compliance, along with communication of new and revised policies; development of e-learning and training-of-trainer modules; monitoring regular reports from members and where possible, field visits as required by the scale of an Appeal. The Global Q&A Officer supports the humanitarian programme team and Forum

members to implement the ACT Quality and Accountability Framework (QAF) and develop capacities where gaps exist, through face-to-face trainings, e-learning and coordinated support.

## 4. Overall performance of the organisation

### 4.1 Effectiveness of the governance, internal quality assurance and risk management of the organisation

ACT Alliance Secretariat's overall internal quality assurance and risk management score, based on average weighted findings across select CHS indicators, is 2.7 – approaching full conformity with the relevant CHS requirements relating to internal quality assurance systems and risk management. Risk management and ownership is clearly defined, and regularly reviewed and monitored. COVID-19 required, and was met with, leadership, as the CMT coordinated COVID-19 actions and established an internal COVID-19 Business Continuity Group with support from the SRG and ACT Security Group (ASG). The ASG also provided security risk management support to ACT Alliance members on business continuity challenges, developing safe office and programming procedures in a pandemic context and addressing staff mental health concerns.

**Quality assurance at the ACT Alliance Secretariat level:** The ACT Alliance Global Strategy (2019-2026) defines ambitions for strengthening quality, accountability, learning and impact, with specific expectations detailed in the Quality & Accountability Framework (QAF). The Secretariat's annual work plan includes activities related to putting the QAF into practice. This has included multiple policy revisions (complaints, communications), learning initiatives (on Code of Conduct (CoC), complaints, child safeguarding) and communities of practice to support competence development (safeguarding).

**Quality assurance at the ACT Alliance Appeal level:** The Humanitarian team, led by the Head of Humanitarian Affairs, is implementing the revisions to the humanitarian mechanism and PMER system in 2021-22. This includes remote management and monitoring approaches and a Forum-level requirement for compliance and online reporting on learning from response to response, although these changes are not yet fully realised at the Appeal level. Policies and guidance on participation, inclusion and accountability are in place. Humanitarian responses are currently adaptive and based on relevant technical standards

**Quality assurance at the ACT Alliance membership level:** Members self-report on aspects of CHS compliance in annual surveys that were updated in 2019 and 2020 to include the CoC, complaint-handling mechanisms (CHMs), child protection and gender justice. Although the survey is an expectation of membership, in 2020 the completion rate of this survey was 65 members out of 138, or 47%. Alongside low member participation in the survey, self-reporting is not always accurate. ACT Alliance Secretariat's membership monitoring processes and tools are being developed to check member compliance regularly, to better assure overall quality and accountability at community level.

**Risk management at the ACT Alliance Secretariat level:** The GB owns the risk 'categories' of membership, political, reputational, financial and staffing, although staffing does not feature in the current risk matrix (May 2021). The Secretariat undergoes annual external financial audits and implements risk-mitigation actions with guidance from the GB. The risk matrix is managed by the CMT, who review it twice a year. Mitigation actions for GB-level risks include sub-delegation to working groups tasked with action, for example the Sustainable Funding Working Group, or the COVID-19 Business Continuity Reference Group. Combined mitigation of several risks is covered in a Crisis Communication Plan developed by a Crisis Management Team (Head of Communication, Head of Operations, Global Security Advisor).

### 4.2 How the organisation applies the CHS across its work

Quality and accountability feature in the ACT Alliance Global Strategy 2019-2026 and receive consistent emphasis at all levels of ACT Alliance Secretariat staff support to members. Commitment of staff resources in both the dedicated role Global Quality and Accountability Officer, and the time of Humanitarian Advisers, Regional Representatives and staff in

programmes maintains this focus. A CHS Action Plan has been jointly developed by the Humanitarian and Operations teams to monitor actions taken to address non-conformities.

The initial audit in 2017 found the ACT Alliance Secretariat performed well against the requirements of the CHS, identifying areas of weakness in areas that the ACT Alliance Secretariat had limited control. The process of revising the Humanitarian Mechanism led to the closure of 7 corrective action requests (CARs) at the mid-term audit (MTA).

The mid-term audit noted that oversight of members' compliance, and the mandate to address deficits, posed a challenge for the ACT Alliance Secretariat, particularly given the members' different levels of experience with the CHS and capacity to comply with it. The revised Engagement Model of membership was implemented, requiring annual reporting including on compliance, alongside forum annual reporting as a compliance. ACT Alliance Secretariat continues to be challenged by member non-compliance, and alongside focussed support, the Secretariat is currently agreeing and establishing measures and steps to be taken with members that do not comply. The recertification audit finds that the ACT Alliance Secretariat continues their focus, commitment and practical interventions to correct identified non-conformities and improve areas of weakness within the Secretariat.

Multiple policy revision initiatives align expectations of ACT Alliance membership with CHS requirements. The realisation of the humanitarian mechanism reform and new monitoring guidance and practice will contribute to strengthening weaknesses identified in monitoring and identifying unintended negative effects. New finance and data management systems and a revised human resource management approach serve to enhance Secretariat-level accountability and efficiency.

Reference Groups, communities of practice and ACT Forums continue to support improved quality and accountability. Forum Coordinators are enthusiastic and effective in their roles, strengthening forum-level capacity, sharing learning within and beyond (to regional and global levels) and preparing for emergencies. CHS awareness and implementation is a strong focus of their work, reflected in forum-level reporting. The commitment of the Central American forum is particularly noted, in the effort to prepare for the audit and support CHS compliance. The online EPRP platform supports members to analyse their ability to respond to a disaster and to pre-plan responses as much as possible.

Engagement with the CHS Alliance and Sphere at the Board level, implementation of the SCHR Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme and ongoing expansion of learning opportunities with the ACT Learn online learning platform all contribute to the ACT Alliance Secretariat's objectives to promote and advocate for quality and accountability in the humanitarian sector.

---

### 4.3 PSEA

As one of the cross-cutting themes represented by a number of indicators across different commitments, ACT Alliance Secretariat's weighted score against the PSEAH Index is 2.5, signalling the issue still needs some attention.

Humanitarian programme design is based on needs and vulnerabilities and the ACT Alliance Secretariat provides guidance to members to ensure that risks of harm to people and communities are identified and mitigated and that measures are in place to protect people from sexual exploitation and abuse. Information-sharing policies, particularly on commitments to PSEA, and policies on engaging communities are in place. Areas for improvement are found where members are not systematically providing information to affected communities about themselves, the principles under which they operate, and how members expect staff to behave. Members do not systematically ensure representation is inclusive.

The ACT Alliance Secretariat provides members with guidance, training and examples for feedback and handling of complaints, and has a fair and confidential complaint management process. The CoC culture is consistent across staff and member staff, and staff work to the

---

values of the ACT Alliance. ACT Alliance Secretariat has security and wellbeing policies in place for staff, as well as corruption risk management processes.

#### 4.4 Localisation

ACT Alliance Secretariat's weighted score on localisation is 2.8, particularly because its structure supports and works through local faith-based organisations. Leadership from the highest level of the ACT Alliance Secretariat continues to encourage and challenge members to progress commitments on localisation. At the next General Assembly, members will discuss racism in international humanitarian and development work, power relations (money, north south, decision-making), digital divide, LGBTQI discrimination and abuse and fundamentalisms and democracy.

Policy and guidelines for humanitarian action elevate both local leadership and ownership, emphasising sustainable recovery and the development of local capacities. The Rapid Response Fund (RRF) is ACT's main mechanism for locally led response in accordance with the localisation agenda of the Grand Bargain, providing financial resources to national members that have the capacity to respond to small-scale and medium-sized emergencies that do not meet the criteria for a wider ACT Appeal. Appeal design documents include strengthening community resilience and local ownership / leadership.

Areas for improvement are again identified at the member level, where processes need to be systematically applied to identify and act on unintended negative effects, and consideration of environmental impacts needs strengthening. Member agreements with implementing partners need to define quality and accountability obligations clearly and consistently.

#### 4.5 Gender and diversity

Another cross-cutting theme that is represented by a number of indicators across different commitments is gender and diversity. ACT Alliance Secretariat's weighted average score is 2.5, signalling the issue needs attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirements.

ACT Alliance Secretariat's Gender Justice Policy (2017) seeks to increase inclusivity and gender equality and minimise the risk of gender-based discrimination and violence. The Gender Justice Policy, due for an update in a 4-year review cycle, does not require collection of disaggregated data and member reporting does not systematically reflect inclusive participation. Members also do not systematically pay attention to the gender, age and diversity of those giving feedback. The ACT Alliance CoC commits signatories to not exploit, abuse or discriminate. Perceptions around the fairness of the implementation of staff policies and procedures vary amongst those staff interviewed during this audit.

### 4.6 Organisational performance against each CHS Commitment

Commitment	Strong points and areas for improvement	Feedback from communities	Average score*
<b>Commitment 1:</b> Humanitarian assistance is appropriate and relevant	<p>The ACT Alliance Secretariat operates a range of policies, both principle-based and programmatic, that consider capacity and diversity of communities with an understanding of humanitarian principles.</p> <p>Appeals are based on systematic, objective and ongoing analysis of context, and impartial assessments of needs and risks take place to fully understand local context. Programmes are adapted to changing needs and capacities.</p>	<p>Community members felt that programming was impartial and targeted to their needs.</p> <p>Communities are involved in the needs assessment process, with the needs of at-risk groups being captured and addressed.</p>	2.8

	<p>While humanitarian templates require disaggregated data, this does not systematically filter to evaluations or member monitoring.</p>		
<p><b>Commitment 2:</b> Humanitarian response is effective and timely</p>	<p>Programmes are designed taking into account local community constraints: appeal documents, risk assessment / management processes, and EPRPs. Members and their implementing partners conduct field visits and localised community-based risk assessments involving community members.</p> <p>The ACT Humanitarian Mechanism develops the RRF to cover small and medium-sized crises in a timely manner. Alongside the Humanitarian Policy 2021, the Secretariat will seek to enhance all the modalities and efficiencies of funding mechanisms, aiding decision making and acting without unnecessary delay.</p> <p>The Secretariat is flexible to adapt at programme level and that it supports members to the same. The identification of poor performance is also happening, but a gap in this happening systematically is observed.</p> <p>Templates have the flexibility to adapt, but some members cited the lack of space and/or dedicated sections for outcome reporting.</p>	<p>Community members confirmed that their local constraints and challenges are a focus.</p> <p>Community members felt that members (and implementing partners) were knowledgeable about their programme work and communicated this well.</p>	2.4
<p><b>Commitment 3:</b> Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects</p>	<p>ACT Alliance Secretariat's members are strongly oriented toward building on local capacities and improving community resilience. The ACT Alliance Global Strategy 2019-2026, and the Humanitarian Policy 2021 both show a commitment building upon local disaster risk reduction and resilience capacities.</p> <p>The Secretariat provides advice to its members for technical aspects of the implementation of projects through its regional staff including HPOs, but specific guidance or a system to identify actual negative effects related to livelihoods and the economy are not in place.</p> <p>The Secretariat maintains a range of policies and guidelines, and introduced COVID-19 specific guidelines surrounding PSEA. Appeal templates require analysis of both 'do no harm', and the 'strengthening of local capacities'.</p>	<p>Community members said that they felt they would be better off and more resilient as a result of the project, and the training they had received.</p> <p>Community members felt that marginalised and disadvantaged groups were appropriately represented, and that there was a focus on infrastructure and livelihood development – benefiting the local economy.</p>	2.8
<p><b>Commitment 4:</b> Humanitarian response is based on communication,</p>	<p>ACT Alliance Secretariat policies set expectations of members on information sharing and engaging communities in all stages of humanitarian work, as well as ensuring that</p>	<p>In general, community members were aware of the organisation's purpose and origins, and the programmes being implemented.</p>	2.4

<p>participation and feedback</p>	<p>external communications are accurate, ethical, and respectful.</p> <p>Members are not systematically providing information to communities on expected behaviour of staff and ACT Alliance Secretariat guidance on this can be strengthened. Members commit to community participation and other principles (gender justice) in Appeal applications, but are not monitored or required to report on these. Feedback on the quality of assistance is not systematically sought and diversity of those giving feedback is not recorded.</p> <p>ACT Alliance Secretariat has not yet defined measures to take with members that do not comply with these requirements.</p>	<p>Communities were not consulted in programme decisions but told what will happen or what will come.</p> <p>Communities were not asked about satisfaction (although those interviewed reported that they are satisfied).</p>	
<p><b>Commitment 5:</b> Complaints are welcomed and addressed</p>	<p>ACT Alliance Secretariat Policy (May 2021), establishes the expectations that 1) members set up their own complaints systems, including through consultations with communities, and 2) a functioning complaint mechanism is mandatory to receive any ACT Alliance-sourced funds. ACT Alliance Secretariat has established multiple channels to support members to define their own complaint policies and processes.</p> <p>Members commit to establish complaint mechanisms in Appeal applications, but are not monitored or required to report on this.</p> <p>ACT Alliance members must inform communities about organisational commitments (including on PSEA), the expected behaviour of staff, as well as how to complain, but members are not yet systematically following this guidance.</p> <p>ACT Alliance Secretariat has not yet defined measures to be taken when members do not comply with these requirements.</p>	<p>Community members know how to complain, however none consulted were involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of complaints mechanisms.</p> <p>Community members felt they were treated with respect by staff and understood what behaviour was acceptable from staff, but had not been explicitly informed about this.</p>	2.3
<p><b>Commitment 6:</b> Humanitarian response is coordinated and complementary</p>	<p>The ACT Alliance, as a network-based organisation, continues to embody exceptional commitment to providing coordinated and complementary assistance. Forum level EPRPs facilitate coordinated responses to new emergencies. There is a strong focus on complementarity within the Alliance and with other entities such as national and local authorities. At global level, the ACT Alliance shares information through networks, the General Secretary and Secretariat engage in regional ecumenical forums, and local and</p>	<p>Community members consulted, confirmed that the member works with local Government administration and departments and appear to have an amicable relationship.</p>	3.2

	<p>global thematic advocacy (climate, gender justice, human rights and peace &amp; security).</p> <p>The ACT Alliance Secretariat supports members based on shared values and mutual understanding, and members value this collaborative and respectful relationship.</p> <p>ACT Alliance Secretariat does not ensure members share accountability requirements with local partners in subgrant agreements.</p>		
<p><b>Commitment 7:</b> Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve</p>	<p>The CHS Action Plan 2019-2021 shows clear intention to review and update the monitoring systems through holistic programming, the Humanitarian Reference Group (HRG), Communities of Practice (CoP), and joint monitoring visits.</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches of the Secretariat continue to be detailed at strategic policy level, appeal / forum level, and also within member and implementing partner MoUs, systems and procedures. An updated Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) system will come in the planned operations manual, however, this process is currently ongoing.</p> <p>The ACTLearn collaboration agreement serves to enhance membership collaboration and support learning processes in ACT Alliance Communities of Practice, Reference Groups and in national forums, and the Secretariat is still an active member of ICVA, SCHR, the CHS Alliance, and Sphere (with a seat on the board), all with mechanisms to contribute to learning and innovation across the sector.</p>	<p>Community members and incentive workers (implementing partners) said that learning is shared with communities through community meetings, and the recording (and presenting back to communities) of success stories.</p>	2.8
<p><b>Commitment 8:</b> Staff are supported to do their job effectively, and are treated fairly and equitably</p>	<p>ACT Alliance Secretariat sets expectations for staff conduct from the point of recruitment, adhering to the SCHR Misconduct Disclosure Scheme. The ACT Alliance CoC, the Child Safeguarding Policy, a recently launched Safeguarding CoP and newly developed child safeguarding online resources all ensure staff work to the values of the organisation.</p> <p>The ACT Alliance's online learning supports ongoing and widely available staff capacity building, which is particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic and times of reduced organisational budgets. Staff are knowledgeable about the CoC and appreciate the ACT Alliance e-learning modules.</p> <p>Reduced staffing numbers and high operational demands are stretching staff capability, risking</p>	<p>The community members interviewed interact with an ACT Alliance member and local partners. They appreciate the kindness and respect afforded to them, and the competence of the staff that provide trainings and support.</p>	2.6

	<p>burnout that could further impact staff capacity. An elected Staff Representative Group is providing feedback on the next iteration of staff rules and regulations and management are committed: to consistency in job contracts, allowances, and benefits; to review and confirm job descriptions and standardise job titles; and to revisit the appraisal system.</p>		
<p><b>Commitment 9:</b> Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose</p>	<p>The ACT Alliance revised humanitarian mechanism requires that all humanitarian responses are based on preparedness and planning. Training and support are provided to ACT Alliance members to prepare mandatory EPRPs, strengthening ACT Alliance's capacity to respond effectively with improved coordination, timeliness, and scale. Capacity and resource mapping (human, material, financial) enables timeliness and efficiency.</p> <p>An environmental policy is in place, but there are no accompanying processes to implement it. ACT Alliance Secretariat does not monitor or require reporting on members' commitments on environmental markers.</p> <p>ACT Alliance Secretariat policies and processes governing the use and management of resources are in place, including to manage the risk of corruption and take action if it is identified. However, there is no clear responsibility for checking, approving and monitoring Appeal budgets.</p>	<p>The community members interviewed interact with an ACT Alliance member and local partners and express concern at reducing humanitarian budgets but feel that the organisations are doing 'as much as they can, with what they have'.</p>	2.5

\* *Note: Average scores are a sum of the scores per commitment divided by the number of indicators in each Commitment, except when one of the indicators of a commitment scores 0 or if several scores 1 on the indicators of a Commitment lead to the issuance of a major non-conformity/ weakness at the level of the Commitment. In these two cases the overall score for the Commitment is 0.*

## 5. Summary of non-conformities

Corrective Action Requests (CARs)	Type	Resolution due date	Date closed out
2021 - 2.5: PMER guidance is not yet formalised to adapt programmes and address poor performance on a systematic level, that includes mechanisms for member outcome reporting.	Minor	2023-11-05	
2019 - 2.5b: The ACT Alliance Secretariat does not systematically adapt programmes based on monitoring results.	Minor	2021-08-01	2021-11-05
2019 - 2.5c: ACT Alliance Secretariat does not systematically identify and address poor performance of its members.	Minor	2021-08-01	2021-11-05

2019 - 3.6: The ACT Alliance Secretariat does not systematically support members to identify actual unintended negative effects in the areas of: people's safety, security, dignity, and rights; sexual exploitation and abuse by staff; culture, social and political relationships; livelihoods; local economy; the environment.	Minor	2021-08-01	2021-11-05
2021 - 4.1: ACT Alliance Secretariat does not adequately support members to provide communities with information on the expected behaviours of their staff.	Minor	2023-11-04	
2019 - 5.4: The ACT Alliance Secretariat does not take appropriate action where members are found not to have a documented complaints procedure.	Minor	2021-08-01	2021-11-05
2019 - 5.6: The ACT Alliance Secretariat does not take appropriate action when a failure to sign the Code of Conduct is identified and communities are not consistently being made aware of the expected behaviours of staff.	Minor	2021-08-01	2021-11-05
2021 - 9.4 : ACT Alliance Secretariat does not provide specific guidance or support members to assess, monitor and prevent the potential impact on the environment when using local and natural resources.	Minor	2023-11-04	
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>3</b>		

## 6. Sampling recommendation for next audit

<b>Sampling rate</b>	The standard sampling rate, based on the number of Appeals at the time of the Maintenance Audit, is suitable. No deviation from this standard sampling is required.
<b>Specific recommendation for selection of sites</b>	Given COVID-19 related travel restrictions during this recertification audit, an ACT Appeal country was not visited. Once restrictions ease, it is recommended that a site visit be conducted.

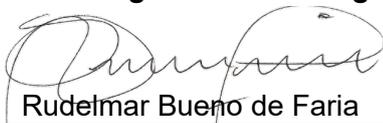
## 7. Lead auditor recommendation

<p>In our opinion, ACT Alliance Secretariat has demonstrated that it continues to conform with the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.</p> <p>Based on the evidence obtained, we confirm that we have received reasonable assurance that the organisation has implemented the necessary actions to close the minor CARs identified in the previous audit and continues to meet the requirements of the Core Humanitarian Standard.</p> <p>We recommend maintenance of certification.</p>	
<p><b>Name and signature of lead auditor:</b></p>  <p>Nik Rilko</p>	<p><b>Date and place:</b></p> <p>05 November, 2021          Featherston, New Zealand</p>

## 8. HQAI decision

<b>Certificate:</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certification maintained <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate suspended	<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate reinstated <input type="checkbox"/> Certificate withdrawn
<b>Next audit:</b> Surveillance audit before 2022/11/05	
<b>Name and signature of HQAI Executive Director:</b>  Pierre Hauselmann	<b>Date and place:</b> Châtelaine, 10 December 2021

## 9. Acknowledgement of the report by the organisation

<b>Space reserved for the organisation</b>	
Any reservations regarding the audit findings and/or any remarks regarding the behaviour of the HQAI audit team: <i>If yes, please give details:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Findings:</b> I acknowledge and understand the findings of the audit I accept the findings of the audit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Name and signature of the organisation's representative:</b>  Rudelmar Bueno de Faria	<b>Date and place:</b> Grand-Saconnex, 24.01.2022

## Appeal

In case of disagreement with the decision on certification, the organisation can appeal to HQAI within 14 days after being informed of the decision. HQAI will investigate the content of the appeal and propose a solution within 10 days after receiving the appeal.

If the solution is deemed not to be satisfactory, the organisation can inform HQAI in writing within 30 days after being informed of the proposed solution, of their intention to maintain the appeal.

HQAI will transmit the case to the Chair of the Advisory and Complaint Board who will constitute a panel made of at least two experts who have no conflict of interest in the case in question. These will strive to come to a decision within 30 days.

*The details of the Appeals Procedure can be found in document PRO049 – Appeal Procedure.*

## Annex 1: Explanation of the scoring scale\*

Scores	Meaning: for all verification scheme options	Technical meaning for all independent verification and certification audits
0	Your organisation does not work towards applying the CHS commitment.	<p><b>Score 0:</b> indicates a weakness that is so significant that the organisation is unable to meet the commitment. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification:</b> major weakness;</li> <li>• <b>Certification:</b> major non-conformity, leading to a major corrective action request (CAR) – No certificate can be issue or immediate suspension of certificate.</li> </ul>
1	Your organisation is making efforts towards applying this requirement, but these are not systematic.	<p><b>Score 1:</b> indicates a weakness that does not immediately compromise the integrity of the commitment but requires to be corrected to ensure the organisation can continuously deliver against it. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification:</b> minor weakness</li> <li>• <b>Certification:</b> minor non-conformity, leading to a minor corrective action request (CAR).</li> </ul>
2	Your organisation is making systematic efforts towards applying this requirement, but certain key points are still not addressed.	<p><b>Score 2:</b> indicates an issue that deserves attention but does not currently compromise the conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification and certification:</b> observation.</li> </ul>
3	Your organisation conforms to this requirement, and organisational systems ensure that it is met throughout the organisation and over time – the requirement is fulfilled.	<p><b>Score 3:</b> indicates full conformity with the requirement. This leads to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Independent verification and certification:</b> conformity.</li> </ul>
4	Your organisation's work goes beyond the intent of this requirement and demonstrates innovation. It is applied in an exemplary way across the organisation and organisational systems ensure high quality is maintained across the organisation and over time.	<p><b>Score 4:</b> indicates an exemplary performance in the application of the requirement.</p>

\* Scoring Scale from the CHSA Verification Scheme 2020