

Emergency preparedness and response handbook

Saving lives and protecting rights

Annex 1 : security of communities in emergencies policy

ActionAid International board meeting – April 2013	
Title of paper	ActionAid Policy on Security of Communities in Emergencies (revised).
Written by	International Emergencies & Crises Team and Director of Country Co-ordination.
Information, discussion or decision?	For International Board endorsement and Decision on Motion to 2013 General Assembly for approval.
What are the potential risks?	Non-compliance by members and country programmes in implementing the policy will risk the achievement of our strategic objectives and reputational risks to the federation in not living to our values.
Who are the stakeholders?	All national boards and country management teams, the International Board, International General Assembly and International Secretariat.
What are the budget implications?	The Disaster Preparedness and Response Fund has resources to support countries while the countries have adequately budgeted contingency funds for responding to emergencies.
Are there confidentiality issues?	No.

Summary paragraph including what do you want to achieve:

This policy is a revision of the existing Rights holders security policy. The revision has been necessary to align to the International Strategy in delivering on Strategic Objective 4 and to the new International Secretariat structures. The policy aims to ensure commitment across the federation to our values of solidarity with those living in poverty and affected by disasters, in line with our human rights based approach. Consistency in implementing the policy will enable ActionAid maintain its accountability, reputation and profile with people living in poverty.

ActionAid's Policy on Security of Communities in Emergencies

1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out principles and policies for ensuring the security of communities ActionAid is actively working with in local rights programmes during emergencies and crises. The previous policy titled Rights holders security policy has been revised to align with, and support achievement of objectives in People's action to end poverty, as well as fitting in with the International Secretariat structure. This policy also defines the mandates, roles and responsibilities of the members, country programmes and the International Secretariat in responding to emergencies affecting communities where we are working.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

2.1 ActionAid believes that the protection of the lives of vulnerable communities we work with, their wellbeing and property during emergencies, conflicts and crises is in line with the human rights based approach. Concerted efforts to build community preparedness to respond, and resilience before, during and after the disaster, are part of this approach. Hence, members of the ActionAid federation (affiliates, associates, country programmes and International Secretariat) will respond to orange and red alert emergencies, working with affected communities and our partners to demonstrate collective responsibility to save lives and support to reinstate livelihoods.

2.2 ActionAid, as a signatory to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Code of Conduct for NGOs in Disaster Response¹, has committed itself to the principle that the humanitarian imperative (saving lives) comes first in our work with those living in poverty. ActionAid is also committed and has signed up to the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Standards², which outline requirements for timely and appropriate response, and to the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) that is an industry standard for accountability and quality management, particularly to disaster-affected communities.

2.3 In view of ActionAid's primary legal and contractual responsibility to employees, staff safety and security must take precedence if, at any time, a choice has to be made between the legal responsibilities and duty of care to staff in relation to the imperative to respond to the emergencies affecting communities we work with.

¹ <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code.asp>

² <http://www.sphereproject.org>

3. ACTIONAID'S APPROACH

Emergency response is an issue of rights – and the lack of their protection and fulfilment by duty bearers. ActionAid's overall approach to ending poverty aims to tackle the root causes of people living in poverty and injustice by reducing their vulnerabilities, caused by injustice including in times of disaster and conflict. ActionAid's emergency response work will be based on a thorough analysis of the causes of vulnerability – politics, gender and power dynamics. Emergency preparedness and response are mutually reinforcing components to build capacities of vulnerable communities to develop resilience, mitigate the impact of disasters and play active roles in responding to the crises.

Affiliate/associate members and country programmes will build the capacities of people living in poverty and their institutions to be actively involved in preparedness and response activities.

Our emergency response will be guided by a human rights based approach, building capacity in local communities and co-ordination through strategic partnerships, and will include protection of civilians, especially women and children.

ActionAid will provide assistance on the basis of communities' vulnerability status, and will give special assistance to marginalised groups such as female-headed households, people living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, the elderly and minorities. ActionAid recognises especially the differential impact of emergencies on women and will ensure women's leadership and promotion, protection and fulfilment of their rights in emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

ActionAid categorises threats/ vulnerability of communities according to an alert level system that is very much in line with humanitarian standards. The alert levels (**YELLOW, ORANGE, RED**) are defined in the Standard operating procedures in orange and red alert emergencies (SOP) document, which gives the operational guidelines for implementing this policy. The federation's response will be defined by the agreed alert level of the disaster.

¹ <http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/conduct/code.asp>

² <http://www.sphereproject.org>

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Members and country programmes

- All members/country programmes prone to emergencies, conflicts and crises will invest in developing and operationalising ActionAid preparedness plans at LRP and national level. Countries will be prioritised as being low/medium/high risk based on analysis of the country's vulnerability to weather and conflict related disasters and capacity to respond. This list will be reviewed periodically by International Emergencies and Crises unit and approved by the Senior Leadership Team³.
- Members/country programmes are required to respond to **ORANGE** and **RED** alert emergencies that affect the lives and livelihoods of communities we are directly working with in local rights programmes or with partners.
- In a case where a country management team is unwilling to respond to orange or red emergencies the Country Director will have to provide justification in writing why they are unable to respond and get it approved by both National Boards (for affiliates) and the Chief Executive of ActionAid International. National Boards may request ActionAid International to organise an effective response directly or through suitable local partners.
- National Boards are expected to provide oversight in ensuring the emergency preparedness of country teams in line with this policy and ensure that preparedness is in line with strategic country priorities.
- In extreme circumstances where the country management team is overwhelmed by the scope of the disaster and/or individually/collectively affected by the disaster, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the National Board (in the case of affiliates/associates) and the Director of Country Coordination (for country programmes) can mandate the relevant Directorate and Unit (I/ECT) to intervene and respond in a red or orange level emergency, as well as manage the country operations. The Country/Executive Director and management team will in this circumstance be required to 'step aside' and be supported to resume their management duties when conditions to do so have become favourable.
- In case of differences of opinion between National Boards and International Secretariat, the final decision will lie with the ActionAid International Chief Executive, in line with this policy and in consultation with the International Board.

³ As at Jan 2013, 24 countries are prioritised on the medium and high risk categories and are the focus during the strategy period. This will be updated as necessary where there is increased exposure to disasters and when new countries join the Federation.

- For emergencies defined as red alert, all fundraising markets (VHDUs) are required to activate processes to raise funds from institutional, high value donors and appeals. For emergencies defined as orange alert, institutional and high value fundraising opportunities are prioritised.

International Secretariat

- The International Secretariat, through the International Emergencies and Crises Team, will co-ordinate international responses to **RED** and **ORANGE** level emergencies and support **YELLOW** alert responses as requested by countries.
- International Secretariat functions will provide necessary support according to the responsibilities contained in the Standard operating procedures in **ORANGE** and **RED** alert emergencies document and the Terms of reference for International Oversight Group.
- The International Secretariat, through the International Emergencies and Crises Team, will set up and manage a Disaster Preparedness and Response Fund to support countries in responding to **ORANGE** and **RED** alert emergencies.
- The International Secretariat will initiate communications, policy and campaigns work alongside the response to build profile, raise awareness and to support fundraising during **ORANGE** and **RED** alert emergencies.
- The Directorate responsible for emergencies work will develop and update the *Standard operating procedures in orange and red emergencies* and any other guidelines to operationalise this policy, which shall be approved by the Senior Leadership Team.

5. RESPONDING TO DISASTERS IN NON-OPERATIONAL COUNTRIES AND AREAS

For major emergencies in countries where ActionAid does not have a presence, the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team, in consultation with the Chair of the International Board, has the mandate to take decisions on responding to disasters in countries where ActionAid does not have a presence. This is in line with the Country entry and exit policy approved by the General Assembly in 2012. This decision will be based on: reputational risk of ActionAid not intervening; strategic advantage in responding, and where there is confirmed funding/resources outside the ActionAid International budget.

Where emergencies happen outside of our local rights programmes in member countries and country programmes, the Country/Executive Director will decide whether or not to initiate a response in line with our HRBA approach to emergencies and also in consideration of reputational risks, strategic importance and availability of funding resources outside the annual plan and budget.

Depending on capacity and availability of additional resources by development partners or governments, the Country Management Team may decide to support a national response co-ordinated by the government or other agencies, bringing in best practice from our approach.

6. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy is applicable to all members and country programmes where ActionAid is working directly with people living in poverty and in partnership with local organisations in local rights programmes and national projects.

7. CONCLUSION

The International Board is requested to endorse this revised policy and move it as a motion for approval by the 2013 General Assembly as the policy affects all members of the federation and country programmes. Where emergencies happen outside of our local rights programmes in member countries and country programmes, the Country/Executive Director will decide whether or not to initiate a response in line with our HRBA approach to emergencies and also in consideration of reputational risks, strategic importance and availability of funding resources outside the annual plan and budget. Depending on capacity and availability of additional resources by development partners or governments, the Country Management Team may decide to support a national response co-ordinated by the government or other agencies, bringing in best practice from our approach.

