

Emergency preparedness and response handbook

Saving lives and protecting rights



EFAST and IHART members.
PHOTOS: ACTIONAID

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This handbook is dedicated to our dear colleague **Sunil Sharma** of ActionAid India, a passionate, dedicated, optimistic and superbly capable individual who we were all proud to know and work with.

Sunil's commitment to supporting those living in poverty and exclusion, particularly during emergencies as a valued EFAST member, was an inspiration.

His presence is greatly missed.



A message from Biranchi Upadhyaya,

International Director of Programmes,
on behalf of the Senior Leadership Team,
ActionAid International

We know that a range of factors including climate change, the global economic situation and continuing poor governance are resulting in more intense, more frequent and more complex disasters. As always, it is people living in poverty and exclusion who are the most vulnerable, and bear the brunt of such crises.

At the same time, at ActionAid we recognise the potential that emergencies provide for engaging and mobilising communities to assert and claim their rights from those in power. I have experienced this in several contexts, and am convinced that responding to emergencies is crucial to our overall poverty reduction and development agenda. Our new organisational strategy articulates this as one of our key objectives.

By 2017, we aim to have assisted at least five million people experiencing disasters or conflicts in ways which respect and strengthen rights, support recovery of livelihoods, empower women and promote solutions for long-term change (Key Change Promise 8, *People's rights to end poverty*). The emphasis here is not necessarily on what we do in emergencies, rather how we do it.

This handbook provides practical guidance on how to ensure ActionAid and the communities we work with are prepared for disasters, and able to respond immediately. But beyond this it aims to articulate how we can operationalise our human rights-based approach in emergencies, so we are not only addressing basic needs (which we recognise as basic rights) but supporting communities to analyse and address their vulnerabilities to the multiple hazards they face.

Building resilience is a critical component of both ActionAid's emergency response and our longer term development programming, and one that we hope will help lessen the impact of future disasters on the most vulnerable people we work with. This handbook is a key tool in facilitating that process.

Biranchi Upadhyaya, International
Director of Programmes, ActionAid



A message from Bijay Kumar,
Head of International Humanitarian Action
and Resilience Team, ActionAid International

It is my pleasure to introduce this revised edition of the *Emergency preparedness and response handbook*, produced by ActionAid's International Humanitarian Action and Resilience Team (IHART).

The guidance provided in this handbook is based on ActionAid's rich experience in actively responding to emergencies around the world since 1999. It is a product of our collective learning over this time, and takes into account our achievements, successes and the challenges we have faced. We recognise, however, that learning is a continual process, and as such are committed to updating and revising content in line with learning from future responses.

This handbook aims to act as a practical guide for ActionAid staff across the federation, as well as partners and communities we work with, to improve the speed, quality and efficiency with which we respond to disasters. It aims to do this by facilitating the adoption of the agency's rights based values, philosophy, tools and approaches in our emergency preparedness and response programming.

Ideally, the handbook should be read in advance of a disaster, but it is also designed so that relevant sections can be used independently as reference guides during a disaster response. For this reason the handbook uses cross-references throughout to avoid repetition in each section.

It is not intended that the handbook will be read cover to cover, rather that staff will access relevant sections as and when necessary.

It is anticipated that the handbook will be most useful for operational staff and partners at country and LRP level, providing user-friendly guidance to strengthen our ability to prepare for and respond to disasters, all the time linking to our human rights-based approach and ongoing development programmes. The handbook covers core programming and management processes during emergencies, focusing on:

- Key management processes, and how to make decisions around these.
- Roles, responsibilities and accountability in emergencies.
- Programming response – what we deliver and what principles inform the standard and quality of our response.
- Organisational policies, values and principles relating to emergency response.
- Tools, templates and checklists to facilitate emergency preparedness and response.



Bijay

Bijay Kumar,
Head of International
Humanitarian Action
and Resilience Team,
ActionAid

Sections 1 and 2 provide an overview of how ActionAid responds to disasters. **Section 1** outlines the key principles that are adopted in ActionAid's humanitarian programming. **Section 2** describes the main processes and structures that guide our emergencies work. These sections can be shared with external audiences who are broadly interested in our approach.

Sections 3-5 describe the key actions that need to be taken by different parts of the organisation to respond after a disaster. **Section 3** focuses on the first 72 hours, **Section 4** on the first month, and **Section 5** on six months and beyond.

Section 6 deals with preparedness and should be used by any country programme or partner that is prioritising disaster response in their plans and strategies. For the 2012-2017 strategy period IHART has prioritised 24 countries¹ defined as high risk (in terms of likelihood and impact of natural disasters and/or conflict) to receive international level support in developing country and LRP level preparedness plans.

Section 7 describes in more detail some of key aspects of emergency programming, including our human rights-based approach in emergencies, women's rights in emergencies, accountability in emergencies, tools for communicating with disaster-affected communities, and also provides sector specific guidance on areas such as food security and livelihoods.

Finally, **the Annexes** contain key organisational policies, documents and templates referenced throughout this handbook.

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burundi, Cambodia, DRC, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all colleagues who have contributed their invaluable knowledge and expertise to this handbook over the years. It is impossible to name everyone involved so apologies if I miss anyone, but I would like to particularly thank all past and present members of IECT/IHART, and colleagues across the federation including Alistair Alexander, Aloysius James, Andrea Hafliker, Anjali Kwatra, Beatrice Costa, Clare Bickerdike, David Archer, David Twydell, Donna Muwonge, Edmond Kabagambe, Farah Kabir, Geoffrey Okoth, Gift Chatora, Hannah Burrows, Harjeet Singh, Javeria Ayaz Malik, Jemal Ahmed, Jennifer Harrison, Joanna Kerr, Krishnan PV, Leah Berry, Lesbia Morales, Louise Sowden, Marco de Ponte, Marie Ann Fernandez, Natalie Curtis, Paula Feehan, Patricia Cassidy, Philimon Majwa, Rockefeller Mungati, Shashanka Saadi, Sumaila Rahman, Vicky Holden, Yilma Muluken and Zaira Drammis.

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It is my great privilege to present this handbook to the ActionAid federation. We hope you find this a useful and practical tool to guide your work on emergency preparedness and response throughout the next strategy period. The handbook is intended to be a dynamic document and we welcome your thoughts on how to further strengthen both the content and format, so please do share any comments, queries and/or contributions via email:

emergencies@actionaid.org

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Sakeena, 40, was supported by ActionAid after her home was destroyed by flooding in Sindh province, Pakistan. "Now my children have a house to feel at home and I have a source of livelihood too. These goats have a magic power...they can help ward off hunger and poverty."
PHOTO: UMAR FAROOQ/ACTIONAID