



Report on Workshop 2

The Online Early Response Template Structure

Applying Core Humanitarian Standards

Executive Summary and Key Outcomes

This report documents the progress made in the second workshop of the **ALERT** project, which brought together 11 participating agencies along with analysis and input from Coventry University. The day long workshop saw participants reviewing the Response Plan element of the ALERT system as well as revising the Core Humanitarian Standards, which are well placed to be incorporated into the ALERT system.

During the workshop participants were able to review the Response Plan element off the ALERT system. The response plan module is an important module in ALERT through which agencies can fill in response plan templates which can be then viewed as proposals by donor agencies.

It is important that agencies feel confident with the flexibility and responsiveness of the ALERT system and be assured that it accommodates the key elements of one's own response plan. Bringing these two elements together, the workshop was an opportunity for agency representatives to **re-familiarize with the system** and how it works. In particular one of the key objectives was achieved:

- **Participants reviewed the correlation between ALERT and each agency's current response plan template** and ensured that all elements from their current 'planning templates' are captured within the ALERT process.

The second key area of the workshop was reviewing the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS). These set out nine commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It also facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis; knowing what humanitarian organizations have committed to will enable them to hold those organizations to account. The workshop was an opportunity for participants to shortlist CHS preparedness actions. To this end, a second key outcome of the workshop was:

- **Propose Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) preparedness activities that could be included in ALERT as mandated minimum preparedness activities (MPAs).**

Further to the above, during the workshop agencies were able to see just how far ALERT has come since workshop 1 in November 2015, as well as the proposed direction it is heading. Though still in a development stage, both participating agencies as well as donors were able to see screenshots of the current prototype, and how these link together.

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An Introduction to the Workshop

ALERT is a three-year project funded by the Department for International Development (DFID)'s Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) through the START Network. The project is delivered through a multi-agency consortium consisting of CARE International, Concern, Handicap International, HelpAge International, Islamic Relief, Oxfam and Coventry University.

This is the **second** in a series of workshops bringing together agencies to jointly contribute to developing the system and provide concrete input to the design.

The **first workshop** resulted in broad agreement on the emergency preparedness process for the ALERT system. We drew on the collective knowledge of everyone in the room to:

1. Confirm the emergency preparedness process that will be supported by the ALERT system and agree the key terms (labels) and definitions that will be used in the software and the training materials.
2. Develop the risk monitoring and analysis process for the system, in the form of guidance and 'intelligent' drop down lists

Workshop 2

This was the second in a series of workshops bringing together agencies to jointly contribute to developing the system and provide concrete input to the design. There were two parts to Workshop 2:

The ALERT team and Coventry University partners are now developing **the early response planning component** for the system. Agencies' response plans come in many different formats and were reviewed and analysed in order to align the fit between current agency templates and the ALERT system. During the workshop participants had an opportunity to see where their agency's emergency preparedness planning and response plan elements fit within ALERT. This analysis will be used as the basis for developing the 'on-line response plan template' (currently based on the START Fund Template). The rationale of the on-line planning module is that the focus is only on the planned humanitarian response since all the other detailed activities are already encompassed elsewhere within the ALERT process.

The second part of the workshop **introduced the link between ALERT and the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)**. Together we considered how we can use preparedness activities to support the country office achieve its CHS compliance. There is an element of preparedness embedded within the CHS Standards, so if we can determine the preparedness activities related to each of the nine CHS standards then the execution and monitoring of these activities will support a Country Office not only in maintaining its level of preparedness but also achieving CHS compliance. The big advantage of linking ALERT to CHS activities is that preparedness activities are assigned, tracked and monitored. ALERT enables the Country Office to achieve the dual purpose of preparedness and CHS compliance. ALERT will also provide agencies with an 'auditable' trail of CHS compliance.

Report Aim and Objectives

Overall, this report aims to summarise feedback gained on the day of the 10th March 2016 workshop; focusing on two areas – the response plan templates and the incorporation of Core Humanitarian Standards into the ALERT Process.

The objectives of this report are to:

- Collate the key feedback on response plan content or elements where available and analyse it against the start fund template.
- Identify any additional elements required in an early response plan template/wizard.
- Define an early response template that can be the basis of the on-line 'Wizard' that potentially will be able to populate multiple donor funding templates.
- Propose CHS preparedness activities that could be included in ALERT as mandated minimum preparedness activities (MPAs). This is currently a 'work in progress'.

Agencies in Attendance

Action Against Hunger, Action Aid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Concern, Handicap International, HelpAge International, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Medair, PLAN UK, Tear Fund, Welthungerhilfe, Mercy Corps, START Fund, DFID, START Network, START MEL.

Others in Attendance

Isobel McConnan- Event Facilitator

Andrew Collodel- HelpAge International

Raomola Nadkarni- HelpAge International

Vincent Henson- HelpAge International

Dr El Parker- Coventry University

Dan Watson- Coventry University

Daniel Paul- Coventry University

Sophie Wyne- CU Ambassador

Jess Green- CU Ambassador

Matt Lyle- CU Ambassador

Session 1a: Accommodating preparedness actions within the ALERT System

The objective of the first session was for agencies to review where in the ALERT system the individual elements of their response plans were located. This also allowed agencies to understand the ALERT system in more detail with relation to their own individual plans, as well as to give feedback on their views of the system.

Table 1 below shows the preparedness elements as identified in agencies preparedness documents and the location in which they are hosted within the ALERT system and as agreed by agencies.

Table 1: Locations of Preparedness Elements within ALERT	
Preparedness Activity	Location with the ALERT System.
Country Office Overview – Administrative & political system, DRR Actors, partners, system & capacity Civil-society context Agency’s existing & historical project details. Staffing, staff roles & Responsibilities (organogram) Agency Humanitarian Policy Agency HR policy & Process Surge capacity	Country Profile
Country Context Political & economic analysis Social context – demographics, culture Food security, health & nutrition Environmental Issues Current security situation. Infrastructure analysis (Health, transport, Energy etc.)	Country / Baseline Context
Risk Context Analysis of hazards & prioritisation/ranking Review of Historical disaster impacts Vulnerable/exposed geographical areas Vulnerable groups	Risk Analysis

<p>Community capacity & coping strategies</p> <p>Risk /Seasonal Calendar</p> <p>Early Warning</p> <p>ALERT Levels</p> <p>Developing and using indicators</p> <p>Trends in hazards & threats</p> <p>Possible MPA's (things that can and should be defined and in some cases actioned, prior to an emergency)</p> <p>Co-ordination Structures, strategy/mechanism</p> <p>Communication Strategy & Resources (internal & external)</p> <p>Media Strategy & Resources</p> <p>Business continuity Planning</p> <p>Project Risk Management guidance</p> <p>Internal or external training and capacity building for preparedness & response.</p> <p>Evidence of staff training and their skills competencies</p> <p>Evidence of staff knowledge of policy, processes & standards (internal & external).</p> <p>Possible funding sources and strategy</p> <p>M&E Strategy & Resources</p> <p>Evidence of learning and implementing lessons learned</p> <p>Community Engagement Strategy</p> <p>Procurement, Supply & Logistics planning</p> <p>Response set-up/start-up plan</p> <p>Needs Assessment plan</p> <p>Assess overall assets vs demand</p> <p>Donor Mapping /Seek range of funding</p>	<p>Indicators</p>
<p>Scenario Planning (of which the "early response template/plan is an output???) – defining possible emergency scenarios and outlining potential responses</p>	<p>Response Plan</p>

Session 1b: ‘Preparing for Early Response’ Template Structure in the ALERT System

The data collated and analysed here are the results of feedback received from agencies during the workshop on the preliminary analysis of response planning elements, detailed in agency preparedness documentation (as provided on posters for annotation in the workshop).

Workshop Objectives and Tasks:

During the workshop agencies:

- Identified and validated where their response planning elements fitted in to the ALERT early response template.
- Identified any missing elements from the draft ALERT early response template.
- Identified and validated other preparedness activities and identified where they were located elsewhere in ALERT.
- Identified non-preparedness activities included in their response plan template and acknowledge they are not covered by ALERT.

The intention is that entries made in the ALERT Early Response Template by agencies during the preparedness phase, could be swiftly updated with accurate data and information where possible in immediate anticipation of a response. Agencies will determine which donor they will approach for funding and the ‘wizard’ will structure the fields so as to meet the requirements of the chosen donor. This will maximise efficiency in attaining funds (in the end from multiple donors by avoiding repetition) and may in some case allow anticipatory funding.

A review of the response plan elements required by donors and attaining buy-in from those donors is a work in progress. However, there is considerable support for this approach from DfID and the Start Fund, so that template was taken as a logical starting point for the structure of the ALERT Early Response template.

The following table summarises consensus and differences in response plan elements presented in the sequence of the Start Fund Template, based on the feedback of those agencies in attendance. The table also identifies additional elements identified during the analysis as being required by agencies in addition to those stated in the Start Fund template. It is expected that the template structure output from this workshop will be subsequently adapted and reviewed in future workshops. However it does provide a basis for the design of the ALERT Early Response Plan/Funding Wizard.

Table 2 below shows the “planning for early response” elements as mapped against the requirements of the Start fund funding template. In the next phase the requirements of other donors will be mapped and a second version of this “planning for early response” template circulated for comment and consensus from agencies.

Table 2: Early Response Elements		
Suggested ALERT Early Response Template Elements	Can provisional content be added based on risk analysis, country profile and MPAs	Donor requires element. (SF = Start Fund), Agencies want element in addition (= A)
Project or Program Title	Yes	SF
Location of Project <i>could link to Google map or similar</i>	Yes	SF
Start Date	No	SF
End Date	No	SF
Emergency Context		
Summarise the emergency situation (cause, any antecedent condition and intensity)	Yes	SF
How is the emergency situation likely to develop in the short term (up to 12 weeks)	Yes	SF
Emergency context update (Hazards & other threats, Political, Economic, Security context immediately pre & post response initiation) (<i>refer to Risk Analysis and Country context update</i>)	Yes	A
Explain impact of emergency on potential beneficiary groups	Yes	SF
Funding sources available for response to this emergency. (<i>Refer to information in your funding strategy MPA</i>)	Yes	SF
Activity Summary		
Overall Goal	Yes	A
Brief description of proposed response project & approach	Yes	SF
Brief description of coordination strategy with partners, clusters etc. (<i>refer to information in your Co-ordination MPA</i>)	Yes	SF
Brief description of set-up and operation over project duration - (<i>early Response set-up MPA summary box text appears & can be edited, attachment option for Gantt chart</i>)	Yes	SF
Brief description of procurement, supply and logistics. (<i>Refer to information in your to MPA</i>)	Yes	SF
Description of Target Population		

Which vulnerable groups are you targeting and why	Yes	SF
How is/will the target group be involved in the intervention (<i>refer to information in your MPA & CHA</i>)	Yes	SF
Expected Results		
What will success look like and in what timeframe	Yes	SF
Describe the risks to the success of the project and how you are managing them. (<i>Refer to MPA on Project Risk Management</i>)	Yes	SF
Monitoring & Accountability		
Briefly describe the monitoring & accountability process (to include learning lessons) that you will employ to ensure quality and accountability. (<i>refer to MPA on M&E</i>)	Yes	SF
Project Activities (table)		
Outline description of planned activities	Yes	SF
Output of each activity	Yes	SF
Indicator of short – medium term effects	Yes	SF
Target population (demographics & number)	Yes	SF
Source & supply (<i>link to country office information</i>)	Yes	A
Budget Breakdown		
WaSH, Health, Shelter, Nutrition, Camp Management, Education, Protection, Food Security & Livelihoods, Other AND Transport, Security, Logistics, <i>Accommodation</i> , Staffing and support, Monitoring and evaluation, Capital items, Overheads, Management support. (<i>Breakdown in ALERT same way as Start Fund until analysis of other donor requirements then resolve to finest and sequence aggregation depending on requirement</i>)	Yes	SF
Funding required from this donor (<i>automatic summation of selected rows</i>)	Yes	SF

Agencies raised other ‘preparing to respond’ activities during the workshop discussions around the template. Those listed in table 3 below can be addressed in the Advanced Preparedness Actions (APAs) Section of the ALERT System (which agencies would prefer to be called Anticipatory Response Actions).

Table 3: APAs mentioned by agencies but beyond the scope of the “Early Response Plan” Template
Initiate Programme Response Management
Update ‘organogram’ for response
Surge (as opposed to plan it – do it!)
Review needs assessment approach and prepare to deploy Needs assessment teams
Update Media & Communications approach to suit context.

There were several qualitative comments captured by the Coventry University staff and student ambassadors, which resemble pertinent discussions had within each group. Though these may not necessarily represent the view of all agencies, nor can be fully quantified, they are worthwhile acknowledging so the response from the ALERT team can be noted.

Several Agencies felt that the Response Plan (as opposed to a contingency plan(s) developed as part of the MPA phase) was beyond the scope of the ALERT system. However, the ALERT team believes this is more an argument over terminology- though titled Response Plan, the actual module used to do this in the ALERT system is where agencies plan what they would do IF an event occurred, which in effect is an extension of a contingency plan. The ALERT system merely allows agencies to fully track and see at what stage their contingency plans are at, even if not named as such.

There were several discussions (present in the majority of the groups to different degrees) where participants felt that the system should ‘stop’ before response and the submission of funding proposals for anticipatory or early response, so as to only be used by agencies as a means of documenting their preparedness levels without this information being openly available to donors. This was for several reasons, though there was a consensus that agencies may exaggerate their true preparedness levels as to be the most likely to access funding.

Some agencies felt that the response plan template would not be used by their agencies, in some cases because they had or were developing bespoke software and or processes for their own response linked to response project management. In this case, the ALERT team would like to hear from these agencies and work out how they can fully integrate ALERT into the preparedness process.

The overall response from the ALERT team is that the primary aim of ALERT is improved preparedness in order to ensure a timely, and where possible anticipatory, response. Particularly for those agencies that have a less well developed preparedness process; a system that seamlessly shifts from preparedness into response via the response plan/funding wizard should in principle reduce delays in response. Those agencies with effective mechanisms in place can opt out of the response plan/funding step, and utilise the system to better their preparedness accountability and monitoring.

A number of actions were identified in the preparedness/response plan documents provided that agencies agreed could be effectively accommodated elsewhere in the ALERT system. The extent of the list below is a reflection of our analysis of the wider preparedness process of some agencies rather than just the response plan element. There were some elements that were determined as falling into response project management elements and so were likely to be beyond the scope of the ALERT system.

There are areas that the ALERT system cannot accommodate, and these are noted in table 4 below.

Table 4: Non-Preparedness Actions identified in documents provided that are beyond the scope of the ALERT System
Needs assessment Updates – any needs assessment data that becomes available after the initial early response action
Detailed Country Mapping – as per needs assessment data likely to be available after early response is mobilised.
Donor Mapping & further funding
Response Assessment & Accountability data – Any data resulting from M&E of the response
Exit Strategy – whilst outlined at early response it is likely to be developed in detail later
Detail on Advocacy process
Detail on communication process if adaptation required from communication MPA
Detail on Response Approach – Participatory/Child centred

Session 2: Minimum Preparedness Actions for the Core Humanitarian Standard in ALERT

The second part of the workshop looked at the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), and how ALERT, and in particular the Minimum Preparedness Actions section, could be used to ensure compliance with these.

Session Objectives and Tasks:

During the workshop agencies:

- Identify CHS criteria which could be removed to shorten the amount needed and therefore lessen work of Country Offices
- Ranked and commented on the 9 CHS sections and identified a CHS criterion that was not needed.
- Proposed preparedness action for each of the CHS commitments – Reviewed actions, ranked and prioritised according to the criteria, feedback and reflect on the same.

Participating agencies were asked which of the CHS criteria were not needed/deemed unnecessary. Table 5 below shows the results of this question.

Table 5: Review Of CHS Criteria Deemed Not Necessary		
Proposed criteria to review Minimum Preparedness Actions	Votes	Comments
Representative of good practice	10	Carefully chosen preparedness (MPAs) will 'force' good practice
Relevant to preparedness	1	Wouldn't be there if not related to preparedness
Expected impact is worth the effort	3	No Comments
Actionable	0	
Verifiable	0	
Adds value (avoids repetition of existing requirements)	3	If it is being done elsewhere - great - just upload evidence of it and we are prepared
What could be done at agency vs sector level	0	

The first criteria 'Representative of good practice' was voted out of the above list. Overall the group felt that the criteria could be reduced to 4 or 5 in number. The criteria 'Expected Impact' is worth the effort and Adds value could be similar to each other and require further clarification.

Next, we asked participants to **rank** the preparedness actions from **high to low priority** with reference to the above criteria and **review** each action and comment for each CHS commitment. They were asked to comment as per below;

We agree with it (v)

We are not sure (?)

We don't agree (x)

The overall impressions on the CHS discussion were mixed. While most agencies felt the need and importance of the actions, they were concerned on how to define the list and integrate it with preparedness and different agency actors.

Some key points that came out in the discussion were:

- Some actions may be undertaken by the government or other agencies therefore don't want to be judged against them
- Some actions are part of day to day working and not part of 'preparedness'
- Some agencies have different views on what they should be measured against
- Several agencies felt it's important accountability comes to the forefront but there seem to be too many standards
- Some actions need re-working to be more aligned to preparedness. The group also felt that the agencies need to ensure that the actions a directed at the right people, e.g. national actors, communities etc.
- The group also expressed interest in receiving guidance documents on how to make the above preparedness actions happen

While some of the above points have been taken into consideration while drafting the list of actions, this is a work in progress. The ALERT team will refine this based on further feedback and further interactions with agencies.

Table 6 below shows the draft list of actions ranked in order of HIGH to LOW priority and revised based on participant's comments.

Table 6: CHS Actions Ranked in order of priority HIGH to LOW	
	1. Communities and people affected by crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.
1.2	Context specific needs assessment templates are available in relevant languages and staff are trained on how to use them.
1.5	Contingency plans and response have been prepared in consultation with national, including relevant government and international stakeholders and including a sample of local communities. There is clarity on role of the organisation within national contingency plan.
1.1	Analysis of the context, culture, livelihoods, vulnerabilities and stakeholders that includes gender, age, culture and diversity takes place on a regular basis and is documented to inform response to crisis.

	2. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to the humanitarian assistance they need at the right time.
2.7	Possible suppliers have been pre-selected in line with contingency plans, including to cover the option of cash programming and relevant supply chains are in place.
2.4	Decision making procedures and ability to respond to different events is documented.
2.9	Plans exist to scale up staff in a way that doesn't undermine the capacity of other humanitarian actors.
2.2	Constraints (logistical, political, security, economic, staffing) specific to the context have been identified and measures to mitigate or anticipate them have been taken.
2.3	The organisation has identified the sectors and areas where it has the capacity and expertise to respond, and those where it will let others do so.
	3. Communities and people affected by crisis are not negatively affected and are more prepared, resilient and less at-risk as a result of humanitarian action.
3.5	Potential negative effects of humanitarian response in the areas of people's safety, security, dignity and rights, SEA, culture, gender and social and political relationships, livelihoods, the local economy, the environment have been identified.
3.1	Capacity mapping, including that of government and civil society has been conducted.
3.4	Social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities have been identified, using existing risk assessment and preparedness plans.
3.2	When appropriate, partnerships exist or have been entered into through MoUs, with clear roles in the short and medium terms (exit strategy).
	4. Communities and people affected by crisis know their rights and entitlements, have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them.
4.1	Staff is representative of the diversity of the context (communication, language and gender) in which it operates.
4.3	Key communication material, including a message library is available in relevant local languages;
4.2	Gender and age sensitive policy and tools on community engagement and feedback are available and known to staff.
4.4	Preferred media channels of various groups in the population are identified.
	5. Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.
5.1	The organisation has trained staff and appropriate tools to explain to people and communities it works which behaviours they should be expecting from staff. A code of conduct exists, and has been explained to and signed by staff and volunteers. The code of conduct has been explained to partners and preferred suppliers. The communities also know parts of the code of conduct that concerns them
5.3	A safe complaints handling process, appropriate to the local community is in place and known to staff as well as communities it is in touch with. Its development has involved local communities.

	6. Communities and people affected by crisis receive coordinated, complementary assistance.
6.1	The activities and capacities of other humanitarian stakeholders' activities and capacity, including National Disaster Management Agency, civil society and international stakeholders are known.
6.2	The organisation participates in relevant coordination mechanisms and shares information when appropriate.
	7. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect delivery of improved assistance as organisations learn from experience and reflection.
7.3	The organisation can rely on staff and evaluators with knowledge of context and relevant sectors.
7.1	The organisation has documented lessons from experiences relevant to the context and region and applied them to the current preparedness plan.
7.4	The organisation has an appropriate and trained M&E capacity.
	8. Communities and people affected by crisis receive the assistance they require from competent and well-managed staff and volunteers.
8.1	An emergency response manual is available, together with standard job descriptions for emergency response deployments
8.3	A contextually appropriate induction package for staff and volunteers is available for inducting staff or volunteers who join the emergency team.
8.5	Security is constantly monitored by an appointed focal person who is responsible for security planning and regular staff updating and training.
8.4	The country office understands the skill sets of its staff and understands the deployment options of staff in emergency response. (e.g. driver with an engineering degree)
	9. Communities and people affected by crisis can expect that the organisations assisting them are managing resources effectively, efficiently and ethically.
9.3	Internal control systems are in place to prevent and identify fraud and corruption.
9.1	Country, logistics, communications, HR and IT department has established procedures, systems and protocols for emergency response and is able to scale up to respond to increased departmental needs.

The ranking of the CHS will be used by the ALERT team to select those criteria most appropriate, taking into account their importance, but also the time and resource burden on Country Offices to complete them. The ALERT team will also try and convert these actions into tasks which can be executed, so they can be included as mandatory preparedness actions. As stated this is a work in progress, and there will need to be more input from agencies to finalise this list.

However, because of ALERTs ability to have supporting documentation and evidence attached to each MPA, it provides a unique and user friendly way to now only comply with the Core Humanitarian Standards, but also leave an auditable trail so their compliance can be assessed and reviewed.

Report Summary

Overall the workshop has been deemed a success, with a great amount of feedback from participating agencies, both for the response plan section and the review of the CHS.

The workshop serves as a starting point for understanding how the response plan module can be utilised, and adapted from its current form, to suit the end users. However, there is still much clarification needed. First, there is a clear need for further clarification of terminology. What was clear from the workshop was that there is a disparity between agencies terminology, and a confusion over what is meant by response plan vs contingency plan vs preparedness plan. This is a trend sector wide, but the ALERT team realise that for the system to be effective more work needs to be done on developing clearer and accepted terminology.

The workshop also proved that more work needs to be done on analysing elements of a response, and using this analysis to better inform the development of the Response Plan Wizard. This will also need input from donors and further input from agencies.

The Core Humanitarian Standards section of the workshop flagged up several concerns regarding the integration into ALERT. However, an overall positive acknowledgement that it is an important factor which can improve credibility and standard of preparedness. At this stage, the Core Humanitarian Standards integration into ALERT is a work in progress. The comments provided during the workshop will be further analysed and the method of integrating CHS into ALERT will be further revised and presented.

ALERTs next Steps

The workshop was a good chance for further interaction between the ALERT team and participating agencies and we hope to have your further input during the next stages. The next step is a confirmation of the Response Plan module as well as the CHS preparedness actions, which the ALERT team will achieve through online surveys. This also acts as a chance for agencies to see that we have taken their views into account, and correct us where there has been any misunderstanding. Furthermore, the team will also start analysing donor funding templates.

The online surveys will also enable agencies to review and feedback into different response plan fields. The donor funding template will be used to further develop the Response Plan wizard. This allows agencies to fill out one centralised response plan, which will then autofill a number of other donor funding proposal documents. There will also be further work on agency Response Plans and the surveys will aim to act as a good feedback mechanism to align everyone's thoughts on the donor response plan, Response Plan wizard as well as CHS integration into ALERT.

We look forward to your input in the future.

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