ALERT Consortium:
Delivery of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) System to measure the usability and impact of the ALERT platform

Baseline Report on ALERT’s usability and potential long-term impact

Contents

I. Executive Summary ........................................................................................................................................... 2
II. Overall Analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 3
III. Analysis of participant feedback from previous ALERT meetings ................................................................. 9
IV. Results of post-training feedback surveys .................................................................................................. 13
V. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................................... 18
Annexes .............................................................................................................................................................. 19
Annex A – Suggested glossary of terms for use on ALERT platform ................................................................. 19
Annex B – Informant Interview Guide .................................................................................................................. 23
Annex C – Informant Interview data ................................................................................................................... 25
Annex D – Additional usability survey data ........................................................................................................ 35

The Operations Partnership (OP)

18 September 2017
1. **Executive Summary**

ALERT aims at supporting four ‘proof of concept’, via establishing an online information management platform designed around IASCs recommended preparedness approaches and methodologies. This platform once operational, should deliver the four main benefits outlined below:

1) ALERT makes NGO emergency preparedness more effective, leading to faster and more efficient decision-making systems for emergency response.
2) ALERT can provide the necessary information for donors to make better informed, earlier and more equitable funding decisions in times of crisis and in times of ‘peace’.
3) National and local NGOs that use ALERT are more likely to be included and have more opportunities to participate in inter-agency emergency response and preparedness systems.
4) ALERT can enable more coordinated and collaborative emergency preparedness activity (e.g. risk monitoring).

After more than two years of implementation, the ALERT project contracted a consulting firm, The operations partnership (OP) in developing this baseline report among other tasks. To do so, OP undertook a secondary analysis of existing project documentation and reports, conducted an initial review of software; analysed existing data on preparedness activities of 12 key NGO stakeholders (Start Network Members) prior to using ALERT. OP then developed tools for basic data collection using the key performance indicators established in the draft Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) plan, they conducted Key informant interviews with key ALERT project stakeholders (including project team, Consortium members, DEPP team). Key performance indicators were developed and form part of the MEL plan. Overall analysis has been made by observing how the evidence supports the four statement proof of concepts, mentioned above.

Overall out of four proof of concepts, ALERT seems to satisfy three of them. However, the ALERT project has reached the stage where noticeable progress were made over the preparedness processes and the platform itself, but not on the effective use of the platform during a real emergency.

Out of the four proof of concepts, the analysis of baseline data clearly demonstrates that the first one is clearly where most expect the results to be noticeably observed.

For the second proof of concept, while ALERT seems to be a promising tool to support decision making, most concern was around contexts where information and decisions were deemed highly sensitive primarily due to the prevailing political situation and how the information could potentially negatively impact on donor decision making.
Establishing the baseline for the third proof of concept statement was the most challenging with less baseline data available, despite being seen important going forward especially with the localisation agenda.

The fourth proof of concept was widely recognised, as ALERT is clearly recognised as a collaboration tool that can create synergy, avoid duplication and building complementarities. For example it can indicate an operational presence in the country – i.e. 3 W (who, what, where), level of preparedness for each agency, CHS preparedness.

Generally ALERT is welcomed, even where agencies had their own emergency preparedness procedures and processes. However roll out is key and getting buy-in and creating trust will be vital to ensure appropriate levels of information sharing and collaboration, this together with how donors subsequently utilise the information for their own decision making will be paramount. It will be important to monitoring and assess how national NGOS can effectively engage in the process and the level of uptake and ongoing use from agencies outside of the consortium going forward, as unless driven by a donor requirement many agencies may not use it.

Thus it is foreseen that while ALERT show promising opportunities, however further work is required to fully exploit them. Area to consider, could be as follow:

- Fully demonstrate the four proof of concepts, with the caveat that this can only be done after a real emergency response (if possible L3 natural disaster)
- Ensuring the credibility of the Preparedness approach laid out by the ALERT platform
- Monitor and assess how national NGOS can effectively engage in the process and the level of uptake and ongoing use from agencies outside of the consortium going forward.
- Enhancing data visualisation through a dashboard that monitor the key indicators to measure ALERT performance, such as # of countries deploying the system, # of active ALERTS, # Alerts being funded, # of coordinated ALERT processes and # of hazard risks in country responded to through ALERT.
- Reviewing the platform performances after an Emergency Response
- Expanding the usage of the platform to users beyond the START network and get it endorsed by the IASC working group on Emergency Response and Preparedness (ERP)

II. Overall Analysis

A. Background

The ALERT project is a START Network project led by HelpAge International and supported by a consortium of humanitarian agencies and academic institutions (Islamic Relief, Handicap International, Care International, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam, Coventry University). With support from the Department for International Development (DFID), the ALERT project is part of an ambitious suite of projects under the umbrella of the Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme (DEPP) which is designed to develop decentralised initiatives to capacity building, and to improve the quality and
speed of humanitarian response in countries at risk of natural disaster or conflict related emergencies.

Being prepared to respond to an emergency is essential to reducing disaster related deaths and suffering. The ALERT consortium has designed technology for improving the way humanitarian agencies prepare for and respond to disasters. The aim is for ALERT to be the NGO disaster preparedness system that integrates new disaster preparedness processes with technology and has been designed collaboratively by humanitarian response agencies. Ultimately to prove the concept of ALERT as a solution for planning, managing and maintaining high levels of emergency preparedness. The ALERT consortium requested the development of a Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Plan for ALERT, with associated monitoring, evaluation and learning tools to guide the consortium in identifying points of improvement for the technology and overarching project impact during the testing and roll-out phases of this innovative, multi-country preparedness project. Before the end of the project in March 2018, ALERT aims to develop evidence in support of four ‘proof of concept’ statements below, this report provides the baseline analysis:

1) ALERT makes NGO emergency preparedness more effective, leading to faster and more efficient decision-making systems for emergency response.

2) ALERT can provide the necessary information for donors to make better informed, earlier and more equitable funding decisions in times of crisis and in times of ‘peace’.

3) National and local NGOs that use ALERT are more likely to be included and have more opportunities to participate in inter-agency emergency response and preparedness systems.

4) ALERT can enable more coordinated and collaborative emergency preparedness activity (e.g. risk monitoring).

B. Overall Analysis and Findings

In developing the baseline OP undertook a secondary analysis of existing project documentation and reports, conducted an initial review of software; analysed existing data on preparedness activities of the 12 key NGO stakeholders (Start Network Members) prior to using ALERT. OP then developed tools for basic data collection using the key performance indicators established in the draft MEL plan, they conducted key informant interviews with key ALERT project stakeholders (including project team, Consortium members, DEPP team). Key performance indicators were developed and form part of the MEL plan. Overall analysis has been made by observing how the evidence supports the four statement proof of concepts, outlined above.

It must be noted that this baseline report was developed September/October 2017 and so some data gathering e.g. key informant interviews were undertaken well into the period of implementation. This is why this baseline report is not referencing the final MEL plan designed for the ALERT project.

The analysis of baseline data clearly demonstrates that the first ‘proof of concept’ statement is clearly where most expect the results to be noticeably observed:
1) ALERT makes NGO emergency preparedness more effective, leading to faster and more efficient decision-making systems for emergency response.

Most anticipate that ALERT will assist in planning for a rapid response and subsequently benefit affected communities, noting that agencies feel it is vital that ALERT be based on the best and most effective practices, including what to avoid in an emergency phase (with the warning, that mistakes are being repeated). The ALERT project needs to clearly manage expectations and setting out what it is and is not possible with the ALERT platform – particularly regarding its assistance in decision-making. However, ALERT cannot fix all problems nor can it make management decisions for an individual agency, noting that context is also important and using ALERT may not be suitable for some contexts, for example in the case of man-made disasters and where data restriction may be imposed by governments or affect the security of the personnel on the ground.

“ALERT is seen as an effective tool that brings a very complex and massive thing (emergency preparedness) together in a comprehensive way without being overwhelming, in one place with accompanying tools and templates.”

However agencies foresaw challenges as follow:

- **Decision making** – Several concerns were highlighted such as a need for guidance on decision making on relevant hazards. Guidance would also be required in term of analysing the needs in term of capacity, control and predictability, in short, what should we monitor, what should we plan for? Moreover how do you disaggregate decisions required from headquarter (HQ) and field level. Finally what balance should we attain when looking at performance monitoring versus mandate to respond. Some agencies have more independent country offices than others. ALERT should allow a head office to see general overview, better understand reality of a country offices needs and activities. Country offices should manage the information, share with local partners and donors, to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Access** – concerns ranged from access to the software, particularly around bandwidth limitations, to whether they would be able to utilise the information and plans during any telecommunications damage in a humanitarian emergency and would like the capability to use and work offline.

- **Alignment with existing practices, procedures and approaches** - Some agencies are reluctant or unable to change their ways of working so want the platform to accept data as is, without any change to their own systems and existing practices, this differs depending on individual organisation’s hierarchy and relationships. Similarly, some agencies struggle with how to complete ALERT, while reinforcing the role of communities, their resilience and engagement throughout the process. Customisation often being requested with impact on the overall complexity of the system; however any reduction in standardisation would limit any comparison across agencies and in turn make it less appealing to donors and coordination bodies.
- **Existing footprint** – use requires an operational presence in the country, level of preparedness for each agency, and their level CHS preparedness. However it was recognised that the platform supports the completion of the 3 W (who, what, where).

- **Capability and capacity** – many agencies were concerned on the burden of gathering the required information to feed into the system at country level, together with the added burden of review and sign off from HQ to enable successful uptake. Incorporating a skills profile for users to complete, so that individuals and agencies have an overview of their capacity and in what areas people require further training, would be welcomed. There were particular areas of concern for participants during the training, related to their level of autonomy and knowledge of the risk and scenario elements of the platform, participants also struggled with the preparedness actions, suggesting that individuals are not yet comfortable with their ability to use the preparedness actions elements of the platform by themselves. This could also indicate that some of those attending training have limited emergency preparedness and response skills or authority.

The vast majority of individuals perceive the platform as being useful for their agency’s preparedness efforts. For example, everything can be held in one place, and knowledge is not detained by only one individual, hence improving institutional retention knowledge. They see ALERT as relevant to their work, and would recommend the platform to other organizations or colleagues. Interestingly, a majority of individuals perceive the platform to duplicate other preparedness efforts. Thus, while the platform is perceived as being very useful, it is also seen as potentially duplicating existing efforts, potentially drawing interest away from its use.

Respondents say the value of links to other systems, such as mapping systems, but rather than embed a mapping solution into ALERT itself they would like to see integrated feeds that bring in useful information like GDACS and mapping, but cautioned that the project should be careful not to stray into other areas which do not meet the ultimate goals of the end users or where others better were placed to provide the products.

For the second proof of concept, the potential for donors to engage on ALERT for funding preparedness is seen by a number of respondents as highly important, however most concern was around contexts where information and decisions were deemed highly sensitive primarily due to the prevailing political situation and how the information could potentially negatively impact on donor decision making:

1) ALERT can provide the necessary information for donors to make better informed, earlier and more equitable funding decisions in times of crisis and in times of ‘peace’.

The potential for donors to engage on ALERT for funding preparedness is seen by a number of respondents as highly important, especially for uptake and usage both of the platform and to improve response. It can certainly help to influence donor decisions as many donors are looking for confirmation of existing operational presence. Agencies
see the possibilities for the platform to assist in facilitating national / local NGOS in accessing funding, similarly it was recognised that the ALERT platform could be useful in terms for obtaining funding for emergency preparedness activities.

ALERT has been designed in a way that donors should have more confidence that agencies can respond quickly and ALERT could have the potential to influence donor decisions. However it will largely depend on the degree of standardisation in humanitarian ecosystem, for example, if there are different approaches to defining MPA’s, different measurement tools, different interpretations of ALERT indicators, different indicators for risk of worsening phase etc, it will not be effective, but would assist in enhancing organisational effectiveness in prioritising what to respond to.

However significant concerns over agency competition for donor funds that could dilute overall collaboration, and lead to a reluctance for organisations to work closely especially in for information sharing, with an added risk that agencies could play the system to achieve funding goals. Some respondents were worried about how donors would interpret the information particularly with regard the readiness of an agency to respond, and if this would lead them to adjust their funding accordingly and negatively. However it is likely to encounter resistance – and donors are seen as key to influencing ALERT’s eventual outcome. While the value for institutional donors was evident, respondents did not see the platform as way for public fundraising.

Challenges remain:

- Danger of out of date information being stored on the platform.
- Implications / impact of not sharing data collected - for example when information could be regarded as sensitive particularly in regard to disease epidemics, conflict and volatile political environments.
- Need to ensure synergies with other mechanisms to ensure e.g. cross-reference with START FOREWARN group to ensure same language/advice.
- Will commitment to transparency create a situation of potentially reduced funding for some agencies, especially at local and national levels?
- A validated and systematic approach for commencing pre-emptive action that enables advance response funding from the Humanitarian Response system for any disaster type occurring.
- Transparency is important – small specialised agency so are a bit concerned about donors wanting to see lots of green lights. Thus generating the risk of agencies entering false data to be more attractive to donors. Moreover there are still concerns as whether the donors would use the platform information to support their decision making.

Despite being seen important going forward especially with the localisation agenda, establishing the baseline for the third proof of concept statement was the most challenging with less baseline data was available.
3) National and local NGOs that use ALERT are more likely to be included and have more opportunities to participate in inter-agency emergency response and preparedness systems.

Key to this proof of concept was whether it was feasible to achieve a truly inclusive and collaboration across all agency types, from community based, non-governmental, inter-agency and governmental bodies, to increase understanding and knowledge building. The platform itself is challenged by its operational language and effective roll out to all partners within the consortium is as a huge hurdle, let alone wider. While the localisation agenda puts national and local agencies at the forefront, concerns on whether the commitment to transparency will create a situation that could potentially result in reduced funding for some agencies, especially at local and national levels.

At a country level governments do not always welcome partners in some contexts, but have significant roles to play in preparedness – so as minimum they need to understand ALERT exists, and what it do for a response and for local NGOs. National and local NGOs currently have limited opportunity to access the platform for now, within focus countries there has been some input from agencies in Pakistan.

The fourth proof of concept was widely recognised,

4) ALERT can enable more coordinated and collaborative emergency preparedness activity (e.g. risk monitoring).

However levels of coordination and collaborating and overall information sharing was subject to the level of openness and transparency an individual agency feels comfortable together with the level of sensitivity required to work in a particular context. Generally it is felt that there is enough openness and collaboration already existing, for example joint needs assessment are very common within the sector but this does not always lead to joint response planning. ALERT can be used to facilitate joint preparedness and response planning. However in some circumstances it could be risky to share information – for example it was felt to be out of the question in most conflict scenarios, it may depend on a governments outlook and will depend on data shared / not shared, e.g. disease outbreak, sensitive nutritional data. In risky / access-restricted situations, real info likely to only be exchanged face to face, as it is now. Currently, some were working with the system with all data is set to a private network, saying once they were happy with the system they would migrate their information to public access.

ALERT is clearly recognised as a collaboration tool, that can create synergy, avoid duplication and building complementarities, for example it can indicate an operational presence in the country – i.e. 3 W (who, what, where), level of preparedness for each agency, CHS preparedness.

ALERT is seen as a good thing as it will enable agencies to challenge themselves and consult with other NGOs. For end users, it’ll give the opportunity to cross verify their own information with other agencies. Thus strengthening analysis as well as enhancing data sharing and perhaps ultimately allow a greater standardisation of approaches and
tools. However this is very much dependent on factors such as; how the system is rolled out, how it complimented existing individual agency preparedness activities, the level of stakeholder ownership and buy in.

Data viewed by other agencies in-country, sharing information was seen as a key aim of the ALERT platform as all are focussed on same end goal. Threshold system shows RAG status on preparedness actions completed per country.

Generally ALERT is welcomed, even where agencies had their own emergency preparedness procedures and processes. However roll out is key and getting buy-in and creating trust will be vital to ensure appropriate levels of information sharing and collaboration, this together with how donors subsequently utilise the information for their own decision making will be paramount. It will be important to monitoring and assess how national NGOS can effectively engage in the process and the level of uptake and ongoing use from agencies outside of the consortium going forward, as unless driven by a donor requirement many agencies may not use it.

### III. Analysis of participant feedback from previous ALERT meetings

The following feedback was synthesised from information gathered from the following sources:

- Reports on the first three ALERT workshops (All 3 workshops were organised for collaborative design purposes):
  - May 2015
  - March 2016
  - September 2016
- RFOUR software report November 2016
- Pakistan workshop report March 2017

Some of the feedback has been paraphrased out of necessity, to make it more accessible and actionable, but care was taken to understand and preserve the meaning from each source used.

Seven main thematic areas were identified in analysing this feedback, as follows:

1. Software usability.
2. ALERT as a collaboration tool.
3. Use of a shared lexicon.
4. How ALERT assists planning for rapid response.
5. Benefit to / impact on affected communities.
6. The ability to capture, and apply, lessons learned.
7. How to roll out usage of ALERT via training.
Bullet point feedback per thematic area is provided below:

1. **Software usability.**
   - Concerns regarding overall access, limited bandwidth, and consequences of damaged telecommunications infrastructure.
   - How does risk assessment relate to ALERT software – risk assessment is very important and so should have a space on the software.
   - Further accessibility such as the development of an App, engaging more actors and coordinating with other agency information’s systems such as UN OCHA’s?
   - Positive feedback about ALERT being open source, and it’s clear and standardised process and display.
   - Danger of out of date information being stored on the platform.
   - The software should continue to only house what is operationally necessary, whilst allowing document upload fields which can connect the software system more tightly to the preparedness process which is very important.
   - Customisation is often requested but would increase complexity.

2. **ALERT as a collaboration tool.**
   - How inclusive and collaborative can the system truly be across community based, non-governmental, inter-agency and governmental bodies to increase understanding and knowledge building?
   - Implications / impact of not sharing data collected - for example when regarded as sensitive particularly in regard to disease epidemics, conflict and volatile political environments.
   - How can synergies be built amongst sister NGOs, whilst avoiding duplication and complementarities built.
   - Issues of agency competition for donor funds may dilute overall collaboration, creating a reluctance between organisations to work closely in terms of knowledge sharing and information management.
   - How best to integrate ALERT with government and UN processes?

3. **Use of a shared lexicon.**
   - Need for further clarity and acceptance of terminology – this is a sector-wide issue, but there is clearly a disparity between agencies terminology, eg. a confusion over what is meant by response plan vs contingency plan vs preparedness plan.
   - Language and rolling out to partners is a challenge.
   - Cross-reference with START FOREWARN group to ensure same language/advice – use start fund anticipation window as an example?
   - A review of terms and definitions exists on page 14 of the synthesis report for workshop number 1 (November 2015) – this will be built upon and then shared with easy access from the ALERT platform.

4. **How ALERT assists planning for rapid response.**
   - How has / can ALERT contribute to organisational system development and increased surge capacity?
• A number of INGOs indicate low in-country capacity to carry out potentially in-depth data-gathering exercises, indicating that a number of steps have to be significantly reviewed by head office and country teams to enable successful uptake and coordination.
• ALERT should communicate only the best and most effective practices, including things to avoid in an emergency phase (this is serious, mistakes are being repeated).
• In many cases, respective country teams would be better placed to determine what to monitor, and what constitutes a trigger, especially in terms of military and politically sensitive environments.
• More work needs to be done on analysing the elements of a response, and using this analysis to better inform the development of the Response Plan Wizard.
• Need something more about making decisions on relevant hazards – looking at capacity, control, predictability – should we monitor, should we plan?
• Incorporate skills profile for users to complete, so that individuals and agencies have an overview of their capacity and in what areas people require further training.

5. Benefit to / impact on affected communities.
• Data gathering – shared responsibility and standards are necessary across ALERT platform users.
• A community led approach is important in preparedness activities.
• ALERT should encourage more inclusive and gender-sensitive ways to respond.
• The emphasis on incapacity was observed, and viewed as potentially demeaning for the exposed communities. More attention needs to be paid to potential resilience in the face of impending disaster.
• Convincing people it’s a good idea to do preparedness, and its value, is a major challenge especially with partners – what can be shared to tackle this? The potential for donors to engage on ALERT for funding preparedness is seen by a number of respondents as very important.
• Will commitment to transparency create a situation of potentially reduced funding for some agencies, especially at local and national levels?

6. The ability to capture, and apply, lessons learned.
• “We need to learn by doing, e.g. taking one district as a model for each province. We struggle to make models to present to Govt. or other donor organisations.”
• How do we ensure applicability of learned things, and their inclusion when preparing new resources?
• MEL: It is suggested that the feedback framework is designed in a collaborative way with members of the ALERT consortium (present day status).

7. How to roll out usage of ALERT via training.
• The training should focus more on the process of preparedness and not just the ALERT system. Due to the complex nature of preparedness, people could potentially feel overwhelmed - find ways to ‘reduce the noise’.
• Need to be careful with language - be precise but not academic, if audience are practitioners it makes translation easier.
• Clarify at each stage the flexibility of the system – it is not prescribing hazards, rather it is up to each agency what they want to monitor so it doesn’t seem intimidating.
• Need for constant retraining – possible to have a network of trainers across agencies via a TOT approach, supported by other online resources, funding permitting?
• Adaptable training for different audiences i.e. youth?
• Recommend simulation exercises be carried out to test performance of agency plans and use of ALERT.
IV. Results of post-training feedback surveys

Participants on the last day of the ALERT training sessions in London, Chiang Mai and Pakistan\(^1\) were asked to respond to an online questionnaire, facilitated by OP. This section provides analysis of the key findings within each training location, as well as overall statistics across all three locations.

The questionnaire used is a modified version of the System Usability Scale (SUS). SUS yields a single number representing a composite measure of the overall usability of the system being studied across ten dimensions:

1. Frequency (I think that I would like to use these elements of the platform frequently)
2. Complexity (I found these elements of the platform unnecessarily complex)
3. User friendliness (I thought these elements of the platform were easy to use)
4. Autonomy (I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use these elements of the platform)
5. Integration (I found the various functions in these elements of the platform were well integrated)
6. Consistency (I thought there was too much inconsistency in these elements of the platform)
7. Learning curve (I would imagine that most people would learn to use these elements of the platform very quickly)
8. Difficulty (I found these elements of the platform very cumbersome to use)
9. Confidence (I felt very confident using these elements of the platform)
10. Knowledge (I needed to learn a lot of new information before I could get going with these elements of the platform)

The last section of the questionnaire asked each participant for their overall impressions on the platform (five additional questions). Overall, the results of the usability survey are very positive for the current version of the ALERT system (accessed during trainings on 28 July, 11 and 18 August 2017). The following graph displays the recoded results (negative statements answers were recoded into ‘positive’ so all green colors indicate a good level of satisfaction).

---

\(^1\) The ALERT team has further continued using the usability survey, results can be found at Annex D
Across all ten usability items, autonomy, difficulty, and knowledge required to use the platform were perceived as the items requiring improvement or additional attention. While the proportion of respondents identifying these elements as potential challenges do not constitute a majority, this suggests that there is some insecurity about using the platform on one’s own due to its difficulty and necessary knowledge.
Participants rating the **risk indicators and response plan** elements of the platform also identified autonomy and knowledge as key potential challenges. The complexity, integration, and user friendliness items did not receive any negative responses, suggesting that they are viewed as some of the strongest elements of the platform.

Participants rating the **risk and scenarios** elements of the platform also identified autonomy and knowledge as the most challenging items with greater frequency compared to the other elements. The complexity and consistency items also garnered some negative responses, but not as markedly as autonomy and knowledge. The items confidence and frequency did not receive any negative ratings.

Participants rating the **preparedness actions** elements of the platform also identified autonomy, difficulty, and knowledge as the items needing greatest attention. This aligns with the other results on the other elements of the platform, suggesting that individuals are not yet comfortable with their ability to use the preparedness actions elements of the platform by themselves.

The vast majority of individuals perceive the platform as being useful for their agency’s preparedness efforts, relevant to their work, and would recommend the platform to
other organizations or colleagues. Interestingly, a majority of individuals perceive the platform to duplicate other preparedness efforts. Thus, while the platform is perceived as being very useful, it is also seen as potentially duplicating existing efforts, potentially drawing interest away from its use.

When disaggregating the results by country, it becomes clear that individuals in London perceive the different items within the platform most positively. The only item to receive any ‘strongly disagree’ responses was autonomy, although there were very few responses on this item. Individuals in the Chiang Mai training were the most critical about the platform, with a vast majority identifying autonomy and knowledge as the most challenging items.

All of the other items received a sizeable strongly disagree or disagree rating, except for frequency, suggesting that participants saw the utility in using the platform frequently, but found it too difficult to use. A notable proportion of individuals in Pakistan identified autonomy, difficulty, and knowledge as the critical challenges, largely echoing the overall results.
The relevancy of the platform was not under question for participants in any of the training sessions, with nearly all agreeing that it was relevant to their work. In almost equivalent results, a majority of participants in all training sessions considered the platform as duplicating other efforts or were unsure/neutral.

London and Pakistan participants were more likely to recommend the platform to colleagues, while those in Chiang Mai were the least likely to use the platform as an integral part of their work or were unsure/neutral. Perhaps relatedly, participants in Chiang Mai were also the least confident in their ability to use the platform without direct supervision.
V. Conclusion

Generally ALERT is welcomed, even where agencies had their own emergency preparedness procedures and processes. However roll out is key and getting buy-in and creating trust will be vital to ensure appropriate levels of information sharing and collaboration, this together with how donors subsequently utilise the information for their own decision making will be paramount. It will be important to monitoring and assess how national NGOS can effectively engage in the process and the level of uptake and ongoing use from agencies outside of the consortium going forward, as unless driven by a donor requirement many agencies may not use it.

Thus it is foreseen that while ALERT show promising opportunities, however further work is required to fully exploit them. Area to consider, could be as follow:

- Fully demonstrate the four proof of concepts, with the caveat that this can only be done after a real emergency response (if possible L3 natural disaster)
- Ensuring the credibility of the Preparedness approach laid out by the ALERT platform
- Monitor and assess how national NGOS can effectively engage in the process and the level of uptake and ongoing use from agencies outside of the consortium going forward.
- Enhancing data visualisation through a dashboard that monitor the key indicators to measure ALERT performance, such as # of countries deploying the system, # of active ALERTS, # Alerts being funded, # of coordinated ALERT processes and # of hazard risks in country responded to through ALERT.
- Reviewing the platform performances after an Emergency Response
- Expanding the usage of the platform to users beyond the START network and get it endorsed by the IASC working group on Emergency Response and Preparedness (ERP)
Annexes

Annex A – Suggested glossary of terms for use on ALERT platform

Definitions and Terminology for Use in the Alert System
The table below, sets out definitions and terminology as agreed at the first Alert workshop, in November 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anticipatory Response Actions (ARAs)</td>
<td>Actions that build on the MPAs to raise the level of preparedness to a “response ready state” prior to the disaster. These actions are usually specific to a particular anticipated risk or hazard and context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cascading Hazards</td>
<td>A primary threat is followed by a sequence of subsequent dangerous events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingency Plan</td>
<td>A contingency plan (CP) sets out an (anticipated) initial response strategy and operational plan to meet critical humanitarian needs during the first (three to four) weeks of an emergency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster</td>
<td>An event which results in serious disruption to a community or society causing widespread human, material, economic and environmental losses and which exceeds the ability of those affected to cope using their own resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
<td>Reducing disaster risks through the analyse and management of the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessen vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Warning</td>
<td>The provision of timely and effective information, that allows action to be taken to avoid or reduce risk and prepare for effective response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Warning System</td>
<td>Early warning systems include steps to: understand and map hazards; monitor and forecast impending events; processing and disseminate understandable warnings to those involved, and undertake appropriate and timely actions in response to the warning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Planning</td>
<td>Emergency planning is a process which aims where possible to prevent emergencies occurring, and when they do occur, good planning should reduce, control or mitigate the effects of the emergency. It is a systematic and ongoing process which should evolve as lessons are learnt and circumstances change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evolving Hazards</td>
<td>Hazards that change over time e.g. armed conflict, drought and food insecurity; and so require continued monitoring after onset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure</td>
<td>A state whereby people and assets are present in areas likely to be affected by a hazard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard</td>
<td>The threat (flood or conflict for example) that has the potential to cause a disaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>The effect of the hazard occurring in the exposed area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>The degree and variation of impact in the exposed area as a result of the hazards impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator</td>
<td>Indicators are quantitative or qualitative parameters that can be monitored over time and used to analyse changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood</td>
<td>The possibility of a hazard of a specific magnitude occurring. Large events being less likely to occur than smaller events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnitude</td>
<td>A descriptor of the size of the hazard. Normally applied to natural hazards to describe the energy of force of the hazard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Preparedness Actions (MPA’s)</td>
<td>A set of priority actions that a country office must undertake and revisit as necessary, to ensure a minimum level of preparedness in order to achieve positive outcomes in the initial emergency response phase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability</td>
<td>The extent to which something is likely to happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>The combination of the probability of a hazardous event and its negative consequences. If a hazard is likely to occur and the impact will be significant then the risk is high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment</td>
<td>A process through which the factors controlling risk (hazard and vulnerability) are analysed in order to define the risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Calendar</td>
<td>A seasonal calendar is a visual method of showing the distribution of seasonally varying phenomena (such as economic activities, resources, production activities, disease, migration, and natural events) over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold</td>
<td>A point or context (usually identified using indicators) that when reached requires action to be taken to minimise negative impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger</td>
<td>Particular circumstances which result in an action or event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>The characteristics and circumstances of those exposed that make them susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following are the core concepts and definitions that are commonly used to describe the humanitarian Emergency Preparedness and Response arena. A basic understanding of these will allow a people to better understand the emergency preparedness, supporting SOPs and associated reference materials. A common conceptual framework and language related to emergency preparedness and response will enable a stronger common response.
<p>| <strong>Complex Emergency</strong> | A situation with complex social, political and economic origins which involves the breakdown of state structures, the disputed legitimacy of host authorities, the abuse of human rights and possibly armed conflict that creates humanitarian needs. The term is generally used to differentiate humanitarian needs arising from conflict and instability from those that arise from natural disasters (ALNAP). Disaster A disaster can be either a slow on-set situation or, more commonly, a sudden event, such as an accident, an act of violence or aggression or a natural catastrophe, that causes great damage and/or loss of life. They often also produce as a by-product of the event itself, significant population movements either voluntary or enforced, resulting in Internally Displaced Populations (IDP) and/or Refugees. |
| <strong>Disaster</strong> | A disaster may be within or beyond the capacity of the National and local Disaster Management authorities to manage without outside assistance. Disasters may be caused by: _ Man–made crisis or conflict (war, terrorism, rebellions &amp; uprisings, civil unrest, demonstrations) _ Natural disaster events (seismic – earthquakes; volcanic eruptions; hydrological – hurricanes, typhoons and tsunamis; climatic - drought and famine) _ Health crises (isolated, regional or pandemic related to HIV, Avian Influenza, H1N1, Malaria, Cholera) _ Environmental events that could be triggered by natural disasters or manmade crises (Nuclear, Chemical, Industrial, Transport accidents) Humanitarian Assistance/Aid An intervention aimed at addressing and reducing the effects on a population or geographical area impacted by an emergency by saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining dignity and meeting the immediate needs of the affected and most vulnerable population. These activities include the full continuum of disaster prevention and preparedness, reconstruction relief, relief coordination, protection and support services, emergency food aid and other emergency/distress relief. |
| <strong>Emergency Management</strong> | Emergency Management is defined as the organisation and management of resources and responsibilities through planned steps for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, response and recovery in order to lessen the impact of emergencies. It requires the following management functions to be effectively carried out to be successful: Leading; Planning; Organizing and Coordinating; Controlling. Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) An Emergency Preparedness &amp; Response Plan is a plan of action for proactive preparation (readiness and creating favourable conditions for a successful response) and the efficient deployment (activation) and coordination of services (Logistics, Food Security and Nutrition, Shelter, Health, Water and Sanitation, Security), systems, equipment, personnel and |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Preparedness</th>
<th>The knowledge and capacity developed by agencies to anticipate response to and recover from the impact of potential, imminent or current emergency situations that call for a humanitarian response. This usually includes early warning, training and knowledge transfer, pre selection of qualified professional responders and the prepositioning of emergency stocks.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Response (Relief)</td>
<td>Is the timely activation, mobilisation and deployment of qualified and pre-selected human, financial, logistics and equipment and other resources and the efficient and effective delivery of those services to the affected populations based where possible on reliable Damage and Needs Assessments. This is often a coordinated multi-agency response (e.g. in coordination with the UN/IASC Cluster system) to reduce the impact of an emergency and its long-term effects. Relief activities may include search &amp; rescue, relocation, the provision of food and water, preventing disease and disability, repairing vital services such as telecommunications and transport, providing temporary shelter and emergency health care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Levels</td>
<td>A series of agreed coded steps with defined indicators describing the conditions that elevate the risk of a given situation while also describing the escalating conditions of an emergency scenario. Agencies often colour code or number them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)</td>
<td>A set of written procedures prescribed for repetitive use as a practice and in accordance with agreed upon specifications or activities carried out by designated key staff to obtain desired outcomes. SoPs ensure tasks and objectives in the DRC MENA Emergency Preparedness &amp; Response Plan (EPRP) are carried out quickly and according to pre-agreed criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Protocols (EP)</td>
<td>Policies, Procedures (including SoP), Strategic and Tactical plans, Contingency Plans (EPRP) Operational plans and Sector activity Plans of Action such as the Security Contingency Plan and any other internal or external protocols (UN/IASC Clusters, Code of Conduct, IHL, Refugee Law) that may be a resource available to the coordinators and implementers to effectively and successfully carry out the response.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The definitions listed in the table above are, as yet, non-specific to nor adopted by the ALERT platform but are examples and best practices in common use and referenced from materials created by the World Health Organization, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and other acknowledged emergency response organisations.
Annex B – Informant Interview Guide

It should be noted that as the MEL project progressed, certain of these questions were adjusted or adapted due to the fact that it became apparent that some questions could not technically be answered until later stages of the ALERT project. At the time these interviews were conducted, ALERT was still in a testing and roll-out stage, so some questions around how ALERT has impacted the operational behaviours of agencies were deemed not applicable at the current time.

As contextual information - the steps incorporated in the preparedness process are:
- Risk identification and risk indicator monitoring
- Scenario development and planning for the first stage of a response
- Creating and maintaining minimum preparedness actions
- Creating advanced preparedness actions (initial response activities)
- Managing communication in the event of imminent disaster situations

Questions for all informants:

1. What do you want from the ALERT platform?
2. What do you use the ALERT platform for? / How do you want the ALERT platform to be used?
3. What information should the ALERT platform provide?
   a. To an operational agency?
   b. To a donor?
   c. To a government (DMU – Disaster Management Unit)?
4. What would you say was the best thing about the ALERT platform?
5. If you had one issue with the ALERT platform what would it be?
6. Are there any missing features in the software that you think might be useful?
7. To what extent is the ALERT platform user friendly? (rate from 1 very bad to 5 very good)

Operational Agencies (HelpAge, Islamic Relief, Concern Worldwide, Handicap International, Care International, Oxfam):

8. Who (role, level, geographical location) inputs the information for your agency? Where do they sit?
9. To what extent the ALERT platform has made your organisation more effective? (Effective: being faster in responding, accessing funding (internal/external), accessing resources (people, training, kit), speeding up deployment of surge staff, clarifying who does what? Making decisions on response, delegating decision making). Follow on question: How would you measure this?
10. To what extent the ALERT platform changed decision making? Regarding access to resourcing for emergency planning and/or training? Kit? Have decisions been made quicker? Has there been a change in who makes the decisions? How would you measure this?
11. To what extent the ALERT platform has influenced donor decisions? Which donors? How? Do you think funding is more equitable? What about for national partners?
12. To what extent the ALERT platform has assisted you with obtaining funding? For response? What about preparedness activities? Which donors? Do you feel that you have been able to get funding quicker? What about national partners?
13. Have you engaged your national partners in the ALERT platform? Do you conduct any emergency preparedness activities with your partners?
14. To what extent has the ALERT platform influenced your emergency preparedness plans? For example can you view other agencies’ risks or plans, geographical locations? Gap analysis?
15. Have you done any joint preparedness and/or response planning with other agencies in the last six months? Have you conducted any joint needs assessment and/or response? What part did the ALERT platform play, if any, in your decision to collaborate?

Non-operational agencies / Software and HelpAge Project team:

16. What information is obtainable from the software?
17. What feedback have you received by your new helpdesk? What are the main issues?
18. How adaptable is the software by an agency?
19. How many users can an agency have?
20. Can you measure centrally how often agencies update their information?

HelpAge Project team:

21. What information do you have regarding tracking participants? Disaggregated by age and gender? (location, organisation that they work for, their position (job))
22. What links have been established by the ALERT project and other initiatives?
   a. Other DEPP projects? E.g. Surge Capacity Project, Talent Project?
   b. Braced
   c. Humanitarian Leadership Academy
   d. CDAC
   e. COSACA
   f. National NGOs
   g. National governments, DMUs
   h. Donors? (DFID RRF, OFDA, ECHO, DEC etc)
   i. CHS
   j. Others?
23. If you were to consider the Theory of Change for ALERT in broad terms, how would you describe it? Has your opinion changed in the time you have been involved in the project?
Annex C – Informant Interview data

As well as reports from previous ALERT workshops in which user feedback was gathered, the OP team consulted the following list of key informants to establish and inform an initial feedback data set. The questions used in the informant interviews can be found in Annex A - Key Informant Interview Questions. All interviews were carried out in August / September 2017.

**ALERT delivery team**
1. Saffi Jones - Project Manager
2. Vincent Henson - Project Officer
3. Luis Vidal - Project Administrator + MEL Coordinator
4. Emma Flaherty - HelpAge humanitarian manager
5. Andrew Collodel – previous Alert PM, now Head of Humanitarian Team for HelpAge

**Consortium member focal points**
6. Mohammed Afsar - Islamic Relief
7. Richard Bold - Concern Worldwide
8. Marco Peltzer - Handicap International
9. Tom Newby - Care International
10. Parisa Karbassi - Oxfam
11. El Parker – Coventry University (developed ALERT preparedness guide and training materials)

**Software Developers**
12. Martin Harris - ALERT software consultant
13. Ryan Wright - Roller (the agency developing the ALERT MVP and the upcoming mobile application and further iterations of the software)

The comments gathered during these interviews have been anonymised and grouped by question, and are presented below.

1. **What do you want from the ALERT platform?**
   - Everyone has to respond to their own priorities and are trained to respond to small-medium emergencies. My agency is now finishing a tool for preparedness (EM & Response Plan) and rolling out in Kenya, Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan. Having ALERT next to this new platform is a good thing as it will help us to challenge and consult with other NGOs. We see ALERT as a parallel development alongside our own system – hope that both platforms will support preparedness plans. Hope there will be no duplication and are committed to ALERT to March 2018 – will await feedback from teams over next month or so.
   - From a field-based point of view – I want to use it to convince country teams of the importance of preparedness, and that the tool will help them do it in a non-burdensome way. ALERT could mitigate the time burden of preparedness.
• As a minimum it’s a tool which makes our preparedness processes easier and more transparent / manageable through country operations. Our agency is a federation, works peer to peer at international level and more hierarchically at national level. It will not replace anything already running, needs to fit with what is in place. A lot of ALERT was based on our processes.

• Currently seeing if country staff are interested in using it – Mozambique plus Malawi (‘non-ALERT’ country). But can they use it without being trained by the ALERT team? It’s a usable system, but functionality and process might be difficult to navigate if not taught how to use it directly. What ALERT offers that we don’t already have is a more complete way of looking at preparedness – integrated rather than ‘tackled once and left alone’. Being held all in one place – and not about an individual but about the whole organisation...if the country director leaves, the info is still readily available.

• A comprehensive info management system, but also to coordinate and learn from each other. Facilitate access to funding for local NGOs – strong tie to localisation agenda).

• Vision = Responses are quicker and more effective.

• An Information management system to facilitate emergency preparedness.

• A validated and systematic approach for commencing pre-emptive action that enables advance response funding from the Humanitarian Response system for any disaster type occurring.

2. What do you use the ALERT platform for? / How do you want the ALERT platform to be used?

• All depends on team feedback received over next few weeks, once ALERT is in place and being used.

• To be used in-country, and in a collaborative way. As a planning tool and also used in a very practical sense to prioritise workload. To build relationships between HQ and field level to encourage collaboration and cooperation. There is work to do in building understanding and consensus – the tool is not a replacement for human collaboration – need to manage expectations on that point.

• Preparedness actions and making sure there is a systematic way of recording them / getting them done. Risk assessment will need to be monitored for usefulness over time.

• Too early to say – need to pilot first and get feedback from country level. Would like to roll out consistent prep measures, and ALERT is a tool to enable that. Esp being able to set minimum prep standards across all country programmes.

• Want it to be used to monitor hazards and prepare better. Has potentially large scope of impact – if it can be used to respond better to emergencies, then that is the ultimate goal. Tech can be used to make a big difference – the humanitarian sector should move forward with this.

• Sign-off of MVPs. The current upgrade has changed the software dynamics slightly. Feedback from users should be main drivers for future versions. I’m a big believer in preparedness – the bottom line is important, what does it mean from business
perspective – investment versus capacity to respond. Adoption is key at current moment for ALERT. Usability factors must be improved according to user feedback – especially at field level.

- For end users to input data, challenge current info, and to achieve a position where they are able to challenge workflows etc based on their own data as well as other agencies. Not just own preparedness processes, but to standardise tools and share best practices. Collaboration as important as the individual agency preparedness work.
- Currently, as we are working with the system, all data is set to a private network, once we are happy with the system it will be migrated to public access.

3. **What preparedness practices and processes did your organisation already have in place pre-ALERT? What format did / do they take?**

- Hazard monitoring – ensuring that country teams have indicators defined thresholds for risk and how it will prompt decision-making. Min advanced prep actions – we currently have response plan but not MPAs – this where we see the link between planning and response. If you don’t have anything to take forward from contingency plan, then it stays silent until needed.

4. **To what degree do you expect the use of ALERT to augment and / or support your pre-existing preparedness system? Do you expect it to make your organisation more effective?**

- At the moment, ALERT is the only potential solution to support the onward development of our preparedness system – ALERT will be the gold standard, so will be the vision for our agency, but the realistic scenario might be something between AL and our pre-existing work. Ideally using ALERT platform, but focussing potentially on certain elements over others. I’m keen to get feedback from country offices on ALERT – don’t want to over-anticipate concerns of COs, because they are best placed to share their perspectives. This is make or break for ALERT – if the country level see value, it will get used across the sector. HQ level can promote encourage and support – but are not empowered to command ALERT to be used.

- This is very much dependent on factors such as; how the system is rolled out, how it compliments existing preparedness activities, stakeholder ownership and buy in, training and orientation. It can certainly help to influence donor decisions as many donors are looking for confirmation of existing operational presence. Joint needs assessment are very common within the sector but this does not always lead to joint response planning. ALERT can facilitate joint preparedness and response planning.

- Potentially, there is an opportunity for ALERT/PEER, if sufficiently integrated into country programmes to provide a more effective response. The key changes that are being looked at are:
  - Connecting MPA to contingency plans
  - Stronger risk assessments
  - Stress testing key functions
  - Streamlining both the MPA and APA.
To measure effectiveness, A dashboard should monitor the key indicators to measure ALERT performance, such as # of countries deploying the system, # of active ALERTS, # Alerts being funded, # of coordinated ALERT processes and # of hazard risks in country responded to through ALERT.

- ALERT could have the potential to influence donor decisions, but this will depend on the degree of standardisation in the system, for example, if there are different approaches to defining MPA’s, different measurement tools, different interpretations of ALERT indicators, different indicators for risk of worsening phase etc, it will not be effective, but would assist in enhancing organisational effectiveness in prioritising ALERTs to respond to.

5. What information should the ALERT platform provide to...

a. an operational agency?
- If it works well, it will be good to have consistent and standardised dashboard indicators to track progress - across say 10-15 countries.
- MPAs on business core functions – honest & regularly verified info on core operational function. Dashboards on what resources are available in-country. Future processes should speak to ALERT / ALERT should engage with other systems as far as possible.
- Overview of preparedness situation and hazards in a particular country and what a country office proposes to do about them. More available info. Giving a way for lead members to see how countries are doing this.
- 1. Risk monitoring indicators, 2. preparedness measures, 3. country office profile. Data viewed by other agencies in-country, sharing information is a key mission of ALERT because all are focussed on same end goal. Threshold system shows RAG status on preparedness actions completed per country. Creates discomfort because of openness, but within an agency everything is visible...but outside of agency there are privacy options administered by agency admin (global), or at country level. They can hide different levels of information. There could be more flexibility on privacy – single indicators or hazards could be made private, such as conflict or population displacement.
- Difference between HQ and local level – performance monitoring vs mandate to respond. Some COs more independent than for other INGOs eg HAI. ALERT should allow HQs to see general overview, better understand reality of CO needs and activities. CO to manage info, share with local partners and donors, to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- Operational presence in the country – i.e. 3 W (who, what, where)

b. a donor?
- Transparency is important – small specialised agency so are bit concerned about donors wanting to see lots of green lights, danger of entering false data to make
more attractive to donors? Are they going to use it or not – how will they react if agencies say we do not want to share our data – going into an unknown area.

- Need to consider this in a lot of detail – need to mitigate in advance and consider dynamics between donors & NGOs. Privacy of data, especially protection data. Trustworthy / pressured relations with donors including DFID. If insufficiently prepared according to ALERT, would this cause reduction or removal of funding? But we do have to be transparent and open – a key outcome should be more efficient access to funding. Plan ahead to mitigate against reluctance to engage at field level. How is agency info being shared with donors / government? Possible to strategize around it, but is a key risk in roll-out and next stages. Agency user concerns need to be carefully taken into consideration and involved to avoid being discredited. Failure of similar systems? (eg OCHA in Pakistan 6/7 years ago)...what has come and gone? Have they failed because of lack of operational input at field level?

- Very difficult – at the moment, don’t see how it will work outside a consortium approach, where donor is funding a consortium with one comprehensive approach. In a more fragmented situation, difficult to see how agencies won’t just compete to appear as best as possible on the platform if donors are looking at the info.

- I can see the opportunities for donors and other audiences. If donors to use it, must not be donor-led – that would compromise the way that preparedness is done, for fear of how donors would perceive the readiness of various agencies and adjust funding accordingly. Using the platform for public fundraising definitely not a good idea.

- Don’t yet know how the team want to use it for donors – donors could see the three ‘buckets’ of information, but anything could be hidden by each agency.

- Potentially extremely useful in terms of getting funds into preparedness activities. Tracking them and giving transparency on funds usage. The danger may be agencies ‘gaming’ the system to achieve funding goals. Increased granularity on process for handling privacy options – only specific MPAs may be holding sensitive info rather than entire modules. Process for handling that data – process to review data marked as ‘private’ at higher level? More transparency generally better.

- System requires tweaking. In Pakistan, partners work in network, or directly with COs, so this changes the way their actions will appear in ALERT. At the moment, info provided in guidance document. Each should have their own account, as partner users, ideally. Single country profile. Enable decision-making.

- Operational presence in the country, level of preparedness for each agency, CHS preparedness.

c. a government body (not as donor but as operational partner ie. Disaster Management Unit)?

- Need proof that ALERT works for agencies before realistically thinking about how donors and government would use it.

- To know how much money the agencies have! Government are first responders and their systems are often advanced, so it’s important to include them. Also ‘Who
COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: 9935254

/ what / where’ info – but all dependent on quality and dependency of data entered onto ALERT. But ALERT can’t fix everyone’s problems and make management decisions. Context also important – may not be suitable for Myanmar for example.

- Enough openness and collaboration already exists, but in some cases could be risky – out of the question in conflict scenario, type of government will depend on data shared / not shared. In risky / access-restricted situations, real info likely to only be exchanged face to face, as it is now.
- Depends on the govt. APAN Network - structured around inter-agency comms and govts especially USAID & military.
- Govt are not always welcome partners in some contexts, but have significant roles to play in prep context – so as minimum they need to understand ALERT exists, what it can do for local NGOs, give opportunity to join. Give them opportunity to tell the ALERT team how they would like to use it. Useful for certain regions and provinces in Pakistan. What is level of involvement / understanding with govt at each local level?
- Depends on context, but privacy settings at agency level can help in sensitive environments. ALERT is modular so can turn on and off different functionality. Scotland project – theoretical discussion on ALERT, how it functions and how it should be rolled out. Sophisticate simulations but team have no idea how to roll out prep plan. Preliminary work not done properly.
- Operational presence (3W)

6. What would you say is the best thing about the ALERT platform?

- It makes people work together. I really support this – donors want it, we want it. Not to fight for money or power, there are enough problems in world and for communities we want to help – better that NGOs work in consortium and not fight between ourselves. But problem with transparency for donors remains – will this increase the spirit of competition between agencies? But agencies are not alone and face similar issues.
- Evidence to show compliance with Core Humanitarian Standard at click of a button. Global overview of emergency preparedness measures, to observe where we are weak and strong.
- Brings a very complex thing together in a comprehensive way without being overwhelming. Preparedness is a massive theme, so impressive to bring it all into one system with accompanying tools and templates.
- Really excited by the potential for inter-agency collaboration, sharing of best practice. Network functionality not released yet – Alliance 2015 group of agencies on disaster prep, group effort within one country - hope to have this aspect of the project finished by end of October. Also the quick overview delivered by the country profile.
- Usability – clean and easy to use. MPAs, actions, hazards, planning are all key areas.
7. If you had one main issue with the ALERT platform what would it be?

- This week (of training) has generated a list of things to improve.
- Some aspects are not reflective of the reality of how things would be planned for and delivered. One respondent with a global but emergency deployment role, who provides Global oversight of 5 countries, but need MPS assigned to me and to make decisions on it if I get deployed – need functionality in-country. Is it possible to have a “godlike” user that has all access levels? Needs to be more logically mapped to people’s roles. Don’t want to log in and out of different users to be able to enter data.
- Not intuitive enough, so needs more effort on using it – more tool tips and guidance. Concern with risk monitoring piece – difficult to get enough agencies to use it to make it truly effective and give a comprehensive overview…especially with slow onset hazards – need huge number of indicators which need updating frequently. Info needs to be aggregated between agencies to back up what is already known. Is there true benefit in everyone filling in all the info? E.g. all country office staff know when drought is coming – can’t force people to update it unless there is benefit to them. Sharing indicators between agencies would be useful, to divide the work and share the benefit, but this would require significant buy-in and trust.
- The training was billed as TOT, but didn’t provide anything to go and use – how do we now roll out ALERT without doing face to face training, how does it stand by itself, people need to be able to use it on a standalone basis. Also need to be realistic about what it can and can’t be used for – eg Yemen famine, conflict and cholera – ALERT does not work as fluidly in this context as for hazards in a stable country…..so there are limitations in more complex environments.
- Bulkiness of admin set-up – takes time to set up as agency admin, create country inputs. Lots of things to set up at start to ensure it works properly, eg. departments in which to store staff members. Use of terminology – needs to be consistent glossary and tool tips to explain definition as per ALERT definition.
- Usability - some elements jar. But need comprehensive feedback to ensure it is simple to use.

8. Are there any features currently missing from the software that you think might be useful?

- No indicators for advanced preparedness action – linked to other indicators. Quality indicators linked to project but not installed in programme, so when I want to include an action, I have to say if they are linked to one of 30 quality indicators (which are not in system as annex or menu – at the moment you have to know them by heart).
- Maps (team are talking to MapAction). Future function for working groups, chat groups.
- Nothing major, but all about usability – needs to be easier to control things in bulk.
• Would not want it to be longer or more complex. But it needs a terminology page, where all of the terms are listed and explained – for consistent understanding and application.

• Terminology list and tips. Organogram in country office profile to explain hierarchy in CO.

• Next phase is to build a mobile client, with ability to work offline. How to access ALERT when network is down. The team have kept a log of areas for improvement – but main focus is what users need the most. Mapping systems? Perhaps best to link to other systems via 2-way communications, rather than embed a mapping solution into ALERT itself – integrated feeds in both directions may be the best solution, like APIs. Bring in useful info like GDACS. But be careful not to stray into other areas which do not meet the ultimate goals of the end users.

9. To what extent is the ALERT platform user-friendly? (rate from 1 being very bad to 5 being very good)

• 4 – seems to be working well, no problems with finding things, whilst things can still be improved. Younger colleagues in particular are very comfortable using it.

• 4 – but only with all data inputted. 3 at the moment because not all info has been input.

• Design is very good, has quite a few bugs but that’s ok because it’s new….so probably a 4.

• 4 or 3 - easy to click, but lots of levels, sections, layers, how to go through timeline. Need to create documents before they are uploaded eg hazard prioritisation. We had to create this offline first – the tool used to do that raised some questions, eg how to define magnitude. Once you know the system it’s very user-friendly, but all software takes a little time to get to grips with – some guidance is needed to explore all functionalities. If the tips exist for everything, then that would solve the issue. Also overall guidance, walk-through training for people not able to attend training – having the training material available on an online platform like Kaya would be great.

• It’s in a good position, but mixed feedback – Pakistan participants were happy, but other trainings resulted in feedback with lower levels of usability ratings. Did London and CM participants have more technical knowledge? Have tried to make platform as simple as possible. Wanted fast loading time to cope with low bandwidth, eg. image counts done within software itself rather than relying on internet connection.

• The simpler the better – make something inherently complex easy to use. Part of the way there, especially in areas where internet speeds not the best, hardware not the latest. So need to keep interface simple and clean, like the YouGov website – overall visual effect not as important as users getting to do what they need to do quickly and easily.
10. What feedback has been received from end users? What are the main issues?
   - At CO level, they split into regions and provinces, so they needed more in-depth detail than just country...they want it split into provinces to country level map.

11. How adaptable is the software by an operational agency?
   - Privacy and other settings. Admins can switch off certain modules eg. Preparedness – will switch off for every country module. Also risk monitoring, CO profile and also response planning.
   - The team spent a lot of time on admin interface, which creates complexity on admin side (not on user side). Need to improve reporting functions, as users are bound to use the system in ways the team didn’t expect – if being used one way, should system not be updated to reflect that need? Post-March funding necessary.

12. How many users can an operational agency have? Who should input the data?
   - Unlimited. One country admin and one Country director. If CD were absent would have to share login with Deputy. Hierarchy is Global Director, Regional, Country Director – all with different levels of responsibility. Plans approved by CD then RD then also GD.
   - Country level team should input the date, spread across as many people as possible, because for most of them it’s their day job.
   - National, regional and possibly international level (in countries where we do not have existing presence and intend to work through local partners).
   - Currently assigned in-country teams connected to the ALERT programme, monitored by an adviser in head office, resourcing is in-sufficient for a full scale roll out of ALERT.

13. Can you measure centrally how often agencies update their information?
   - Not currently but we are using Google Analytics – could customise for MEL or other purposes.

14. What information do you have regarding tracking of ALERT participants? Disaggregated by age and gender? (location, organisation that they work for, their position (job))
   - Have limited opportunity to access this info for now, but NRC are currently only agency to input their data. Local orgs in Pakistan starting to as well – REEDS and one other. Name, email address captured, no other.

15. What links have been established by the ALERT project with other initiatives?
   - Financial enablers especially in Philippines. National NGOs need to adjust capacity & expectations – now focussing more on COs. CHS needs more quality control. Also WFP. MapAction to improve map functionality.
16. To what extent do you believe will usage of ALERT change agencies’ behaviour in relation to their emergency preparedness practices?

- HQs keen for control / more oversight of COs, but don’t want to transfer workload or overload CO staff. Some agencies are reluctant to change so want the platform to accept data as is, without challenging own system and existing practice. Will differ depending on organisational hierarchy and relationship, programme change.

- Will challenge operational behaviour because it makes everything visible. Develop plan then send to CD for approval. Designed that way so that donors have more confidence in agencies. People under rubble need money immediately – within 24 hours. But ALERT will not replace proposals – will give informed assessment of what agencies are able to respond. If it works, it will change behaviour of whole sector, especially the networking function.

- As part of the roll out, there is the expectation to work closely with roll out countries to streamline their ALERT content and support on Joint Assessments, the need for this is currently under review, this will be assessed as part of the organisational roll out plan.

- Too early to say - ALERT is still in early innovation stages. Pressurising sector to be more accountable and share info – collaborating with partners. Pushing on so many boundaries. Will encounter resistance – donors are only ones who can influence ALERT’s eventual outcome.
Annex D – Additional usability survey data

Usability by training location

Overall assessment
Assessment by training location

- **Bangladesh**: 50% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 25% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree
- **Chong Ma**: 50% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 25% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree
- **Kenya**: 50% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 25% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree
- **London**: 50% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 25% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree
- **Newcastle**: 20% Strongly Agree, 70% Neutral, 10% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree
- **Philipines**: 35% Strongly Agree, 25% Agree, 25% Neutral, 0% Disagree, 0% Strongly Disagree

- I am confident in my ability to use this platform without direct supervision
- I would recommend the platform to other organizations or colleagues involved in...
- I would use this platform as an integral part of my agency’s preparedness efforts
- This platform does not duplicate preparedness efforts already existing (i.e., there is no need).
- This platform fills gaps in current disaster preparedness efforts among humanitarian...
- This platform is relevant to my work.