

**ACT Alliance
ADVOCACY STRATEGY**

*Approved by the ACT Alliance Governing Board
May 2016*

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Global Strategic Framework of ACT Alliance for 2015-2018 integrates advocacy as a cross cutting strategy in its four aims: human dignity, community resilience, environmental sustainability and a robust alliance. This strategy sets out ACT Alliance's objectives and approaches for advocacy over the coming period, and will guide governance, members, forums, secretariat, advisory groups and other structures in their advocacy agenda.

1.1 Principles and Values

ACT advocacy work is grounded in **Christian faith**, which teaches that all persons are created in the image of God. ACT believes that the **life of every person** has intrinsic value and that every life is God-given and should be upheld and lived in dignity. Our work is grounded in God's bias towards the poor and oppressed and therefore, poor and marginalised populations are at the centre of ACT's advocacy. It follows a **rights-based approach**, thus supporting and amplifying the voice of people and communities in pursuing their rights and in their efforts to hold their local and national authorities accountable. ACT advocacy will assist local communities in monitoring how governments meet their obligations and promote respect and fulfilment of human rights. The focus of our advocacy is on the **dignity, rights and resilience** of people and communities, with a particular focus on the impacts of climate change, recognising that communities have the capacity and the legitimacy to advocate for themselves, and that networks such as ACT, can support their efforts.

Advocacy in ACT is an expression of **global solidarity with poor and marginalised people everywhere**. It amplifies voices that speak against social and structural injustices, and promotes human rights and the protection of the environment. ACT understands that global systems and structures often cause or exacerbate social, political and economic injustices, inequality and various forms of discrimination, and that these impact more radically countries in the developing regions of the world. At the same time, ACT recognises that social norms and practices working at local and national levels can also work to deny people and communities their rights. ACT advocacy will seek transformational development and sustainable change in communities.

1.2 Definition of advocacy

ACT understands advocacy as a strategic set of activities designed to influence decision-makers, laws and regulations, structures and practices to address the root causes of injustice. Advocacy may be done publicly or more privately, and can include policy research, campaigning and public events, lobbying and policy dialogue, media work and production of materials to support the different types of activities. Awareness raising is part of advocacy when it is seeking to educate and increase understanding on issues of injustice. ACT will use different advocacy methods as appropriate to ACT members and their contexts, and which are most effective to achieve the desired policy and practice change.

1.3 Scope and structure

Advocacy work within ACT will be evidence-based, relying on the **local experiences** of its members, partners and the communities with whom we work and will be driven by accurate and timely information from the ground. ACT forums and communities of practice are the eyes and ears of the alliance. When the target of advocacy efforts is **national** or **regional**, ACT forums will lead, supported by the secretariat as requested. Where a regional or sub-regional ACT forum exists, this is the venue for coordinating regional advocacy



initiatives. The ACT secretariat offices in the regions will play a key role as facilitators. At this level, advocacy towards regional multilateral organisations, e.g. American States Organisation, Mercosur, ASEAN, African Union, etc. will be prioritised. All or part of the global ACT Alliance will be mobilised as appropriate in cases where country specific issues and causes could benefit from international advocacy, solidarity and diplomacy. The ACT Alliance Call for Urgent Advocacy Mechanism is one mechanism which will facilitate such mobilisation.

As a global alliance, ACT must also build on the experiences of members to advocate for change at a **global level**. Advocacy with multilateral bodies and global processes will be focused on priority issues arising from the work of members and forums. The UN, as a key forum for global issues, is one priority for ACT. ACT engages with the UN and its member states' delegations in New York and Geneva, and also with regional power centres (EU, SAU, AU). A second global priority is the World Bank through the Moral Imperative Initiative. Where they exist, ACT Alliance advocacy bodies, targeting regional power centres support the advancement of the elements of ACT's global agenda, which are relevant to those power centres.

ACT Alliance will take on a key **leadership role within the ecumenical** family's global advocacy particularly in seeking greater collaboration, development of methodology and joint messaging. Areas of joint ecumenical advocacy collaboration include gender justice and climate justice and the rights and protection of migrants and displaced persons. ACT will intentionally seek greater collaboration with other faith actors outside the ecumenical family, and with other civil society organisations and networks.

ACT Advisory Groups will advise the secretariat and governing bodies on advocacy at the global level. The Advisory Group on Advocacy (AGA) will maintain oversight and ensure coordination of ACT's global advocacy work, including climate change advocacy. The Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group (HPPG) and Development Policy and Practice Group (DPPG) will also take responsibility for content of humanitarian and development advocacy, respectively. The **ACT secretariat** ensures that systems are set up and maintained to enable members to share information, and facilitates the setting up of groups to work together on advocacy issues, linking the work of members in different countries and regions to the global level. It ensures leadership and coordination of advocacy with the UN and other multilateral agencies; coordinates the provision of support to develop the capacity of the alliance to engage in advocacy; coordinates the communication of activities; and is responsible for the overall monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the advocacy objectives to the ACT governance.

The regionalised secretariat structure must serve as an effective tool for ACT Alliance advocacy. ACT Alliance advocacy will be evidenced by: strong communication and coordination mechanisms, which are being used by members; south-south exchanges for learning and sharing experiences of advocacy; and by good examples of stereo advocacy in practice, with coordinated initiatives at multiple levels for the priority global issues.

2. AIM AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.1 Strategic Aim

ACT Alliance members and forums are enabled to advocate effectively together at national, regional and global levels on issues of human dignity, community resilience and environmental sustainability leading to positive and sustainable change in the lives of people affected by poverty and injustice.



2.2 Strategic Objectives

ACT Alliance advocacy aims to achieve the following strategic objectives:

1. By 2018, ACT Alliance members and forums are enabled to advocate in the humanitarian system for a shift in power towards locally-led responses, with greater integration and investment in resilience, reduction of vulnerability, increased accountability to disaster-affected populations and a stronger recognition of the distinctive role of faith actors in the resilience of affected communities.
2. By 2018, ACT Alliance members and forums are enabled to advocate for an effective sustainable development agenda that ensures no one is left behind, that is guided by good development policy and practice and maintains equality and human rights at its core. ACT's development advocacy seeks to enable the participation of civil society organisations, including faith-based organisations, and the communities with whom they serve, in decision-making, agenda setting, follow-up and review at all levels, including in the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. ACT Alliance members and forums continue to advocate for climate justice, particularly on support for community resilience in developing countries, low carbon development, and the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, guided by the principles of equity, human rights, and gender justice.
4. By 2018, ACT Alliance forums have put in place ways to enhance their advocacy capacity and coordination at national, regional and global levels for increased effectiveness, quality and member and forum ownership and engagement.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1 – SHIFT IN POWER TOWARDS LOCALLY-LED RESPONSES

By 2018, ACT Alliance members and forums are enabled to advocate in the humanitarian system for a shift in power towards locally-led responses, with greater integration and investment in resilience, reduction of vulnerability, increased accountability to disaster-affected populations and a stronger recognition of the distinctive role of faith actors in the resilience of affected communities.

To achieve this objective, ACT Alliance will develop its strategic influence by bringing the voices and experiences of affected communities, and faith perspectives, into the humanitarian policy and decision-making platforms and processes in order to ensure effective and efficient humanitarian response. In addition, humanitarian advocacy will be established as a crucial part of ACT's emergency response in order to amplify people's voices, to ensure that responses respect humanitarian principles and are appropriate to people's rights and needs.

3.1 Priorities

- I. **Shift in power towards locally-led responses**, with greater integration and investment in resilience, reduction of vulnerability, increased accountability to disaster-affected populations;
- II. Stronger recognition of the **distinctive role of faith actors** in the resilience of affected communities;
- III. Increased international attention and **response to protracted crises**, including a call for political action to address the underlying root causes;



- IV. Addressing **forced displacement** and **migration** in their different manifestations and contexts, through an approach that integrates advocacy, humanitarian assistance, long-term development and capacity building as deemed appropriate by the alliance, with a strong focus on protection of the most vulnerable and seeking sustainable and durable solutions;
- V. Increase in amount and predictability of **humanitarian finance**, and finance mechanisms that facilitate access to national and local responders.

3.2 Advocacy platforms

ACT will focus on the following advocacy platforms and processes in this strategic period:

- The **World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) 2016** and how ACT will engage in the process before, during and after, in terms of implementation and follow up of its outcomes, in particular regarding the roles of locally-led responses and faith actors.
- Consistently engaging with UN Agencies, specifically **OCHA, UNHCR, and IASC/EDG** to intentionally bring the voice of affected communities and faith perspectives.
- Expert input into interagency bodies such as, **IASC, SCHR, ICVA, Interaction, VOICE, CHS Alliance, Sphere** in order to take advantage of ACT membership and participation in these bodies.
- Dialogue with local, national and regional authorities.

3.3 Advocacy in focus countries

Humanitarian advocacy content is primarily driven by humanitarian situations, and therefore is predominantly reactive and responsive in nature. ACT Alliance humanitarian advocacy and diplomacy will be driven by accurate and timely information from the ground, highlighting the strength of the alliance and its role as a global FBO network. ACT will continue its advocacy related to the so-called ‘forgotten and protracted’ crises in order to keep them on the international community’s agenda and to highlight the required political actions. This will include advocacy around issues of peace, conflict and violence, which are intertwined with the humanitarian situations and contexts. In addition, ACT will focus on forced displacement and migration across the world.

Therefore, ACT will focus its advocacy on protracted crises and some unique countries and contexts. These include, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Sudan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar.

3.4 Internal actors

To achieve this strategic objective **members** and **forums** will be supported and facilitated by the **ACT secretariat** (in Geneva, New York, Nairobi, Amman, San Salvador, Brussels, and Bangkok), and advised and supported by the **HPPG**. Several communities of practice, notably **CoP on DRR, CoP on Security** and **CoP on Protection** will contribute. ACT advocacy will be anchored in national, sub-regional and regional forums. **AGA** will advise on strategy and the political direction of the alliance.



4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 – EFFECTIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

By 2018, ACT Alliance members and forums are enabled to advocate for transformation and effective sustainable development agendas that ensure no one is left behind, that is guided by good development policy and practice and maintains equality and human rights at its core. ACT's development advocacy seeks to enable the participation of civil society organisations, including faith-based organisations, and the communities with whom they serve, in decision-making, agenda setting, follow-up and review at all levels, including in the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

ACT Alliance will engage in advocacy for the principles of sustainable development in order to contribute to transformative change, with policies and practice that work in favour of the poor. ACT's sustainable development advocacy will be holistic, rights-based, evidence-based, and will seek transformational participation of communities.

The global, regional and national policy and political arenas, which include the processes and policies on sustainable development, human rights (particularly those of women and girls), role of business and private sector and financing for development will serve as convening points for ACT Alliance advocacy. In addition, ACT Alliance will deliberately contribute to the efforts of the ecumenical family to advocate for transformational change, human rights, dignity and climate justice.

In the spirit of leaving no one behind and in view of ACT's rootedness in community and its global reach, the alliance will seek and renew partnerships and collaboration with other faith-based and civil society actors, particularly around fighting inequalities.

4.1 Priorities

- I. **Fighting inequalities** in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, looking specifically at civil society engagement and coalition around leaving no one behind and focusing on women and girls, local communities and the role of faith actors.
- II. **Enabling civil society space** with an emphasis on the role of civil society, including faith-based organisations, in human rights and accountable governance. ACT will work with others to fight the shrinking political and operation space for civil society.
- III. **Business and human rights** in the context of the UN Business and Human Rights Forum and within the wider discourse around the role of the private sector in development. ACT will aim at strengthening its understanding and policy direction on this issue and on bringing voices and experiences from communities, including faith communities, affected by the impact of extractives industries and violation of land rights, into decision-making platforms.
- IV. **Financing for development** with a focus on the processes related to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the question of financing the implementation of the SDGs.



4.2 Advocacy platforms

ACT advocacy within the development policy and practice sector will focus on:

- The **High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)**: ACT Alliance will focus on adherence to national level implementation of the select SDGs and global level accountability and tracking of their progress.
- World Bank Engagement on Sustainable Development: ACT Alliance will take advantage of its co-facilitating role (with Islamic Relief and the World Bank) in the Cooperation Group on implementing the SDGs to push for the implementation of the SDGs, with a focus on the role of faith actors. ACT will continue in its role as one of the pioneers of the “Ending Extreme Poverty; a **Moral and Spiritual Imperative**” initiative.
- Financing for Development: ACT Alliance will engage in advocacy related to the **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** in view to secure modalities for CSO engagement in future FfD meetings in tandem with principles for effective development. ACT will also bring the important aspects of finance from climate justice, SDGs, and Business and Human Rights processes.
- **Development Effectiveness** (Civil Society Partnership for Development Effectiveness and the Istanbul Principles): ACT Alliance serves as the coordinator of the Faith-Based Organisation Sector in the Civil Society Partnership. Through this network, ACT Alliance will advocate for the greater role of faith actors in both policy and practice of development effectiveness.
- **Commission on the Status of Women, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action**: Collaborating with ecumenical, interfaith, UN and others ACT Alliance will engage with the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women to advocate for the rights of women and girls from a faith perspective.
- **UN Business and Human Rights Forum**, special focus on the implementation of UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights: ACT will focus on national and regional level advocacy related to (inter alia multinational) companies engaged in extractive industries and those whose activities affect the land rights of communities. The Alternative Mining Indaba in Southern Africa, with targeted mobilisation of churches and faith-based communities toward global extractive industry, will be prioritised. ACT will further support a global ecumenical advocacy towards the UN Business and Human Rights forums.

4.3 Advocacy in focus countries

For Business and Human Rights advocacy, ACT Alliance will focus on the extractive industries and on land rights work in Southern Africa, Central and South American regions and Europe. Specific countries will be selected, while at the same time seeking a collaborative regional agenda and advocacy action.

The SDG advocacy agenda, Financing for Development, gender justice and development effectiveness will have strong national and regional dimensions, through the work of the forums, whilst maintaining a global level coordination and engagement.

4.4 Internal actors

To achieve this strategic objective the **members** and **forums** will be supported and facilitated by the **ACT secretariat** (in Geneva, New York, Nairobi, Amman, San Salvador, Brussels and Bangkok) and advised and



supported by the **DPPG**. Several communities of practice, notably **CoP on DRR, CoP on Gender, CoP on Rights in Development, CoP on migration and development** and **ACT EU** will contribute. ACT advocacy will be anchored in national, sub-regional and regional forums. **AGA** will advise on strategy and the political direction of the alliance.

5. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3 – INCREASED CLIMATE ACTION AND AMBITION

ACT Alliance members and forums continue to advocate for climate justice at all levels, in particular on support for community resilience in developing countries, low carbon development, and the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, guided by the principles of equity, human rights, and gender justice. ACT Alliance's climate justice and sustainable environment advocacy will seek to influence selected international and national decisions, agreements and processes related to climate change, notably the Paris Agreement, SDG 13 and Sendai Framework for DRR, in order to ensure that they protect the rights and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people.

While the climate summit in Paris COP21 delivered a framework to support climate action in the coming years and decades, the agreement in itself will not deliver the level of global action required to adequately tackle climate change. However, it includes a series of processes, which should increase ambition and promote global cooperation.

ACT climate change advocacy will be based on a number of principles, including human rights, gender and equity. Lobby actions and informal dialogues will be implemented as a strategy to build trust and confidence among parties. Where relevant, research and documentation initiatives will be taken to support public, media messaging and advocacy actions. Climate justice campaigning and mobilisation will play an important role in ACT Alliance and will be coordinated at different levels. Campaigning and mobilisation will focus on the policy and political priorities set out by the alliance and will use the experiences and lessons learned from the Act Now for Climate Justice Campaign that the alliance ran towards COP21.

5.1 Priorities

Two of the policy themes that the alliance has focused on and developed over the last four years will remain. These are climate resilience (adaptation and loss and damage), and low carbon development, incorporated into the priority to work for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and climate actions envisioned by the SDGs. In addition, implementation of the Sendai Framework for Action on DRR will be a priority. The means of implementing resilience, including finance, capacity development and technology will be part of the advocacy under this priority.

- I. **Resilience (including adaptation and loss and damage):** focusing on three aspects, first the development of an effective Warsaw International Mechanism on loss and damage (WIM), second, the development of National Adaptation Plans at national levels, and third the technical examination of adaptation in the Conference of the Parties
- II. **Low Carbon Development:** focusing on three dimensions, first the development of Low Carbon Development Strategies (2050 targets) by countries at national level, second, development of national 5-



year climate plans, i.e. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at national level and lastly access to renewable energy for poor and vulnerable people.

- III. **Entry into force and full implementation of the Paris Agreement:** The Paris Agreement (2015) will only enter into force when at least 55% of the Parties to the UNFCCC, representing at least 55% of the global greenhouse gas emissions sign it. ACT will mobilise its membership and other ecumenical actors to ensure that the agreement is signed and operationalised in time for its entry into force in 2020.

5.2 Advocacy platforms

ACT Alliance will take advantage of its specialised focus on the UNFCCC and the experience it has garnered over the last strategic period. Where relevant it will include other international platforms such as the HLPF of the SDGs, the FfD's AAAA, and the Sendai Framework for DRR/UNISDR. Efforts will be made to move much of the advocacy to the national level, focusing on the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Some of the climate related decision-making processes will be taken within the UNFCCC at international level and others will be taken at the national level where governments and parliaments need to adopt plans and take decisions about concrete climate action.

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: ACT will make use of its observer status to the UNFCCC to follow the Conferences of the Parties and the two technical subsidiary bodies, SBSTA and SBI.
- Green Climate Fund (GCF)
- Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM)
- SDG's HLPF

5.3 Internal actors

To achieve this strategic objective the **members** and **forums** will be supported by the **ACT secretariat** (in Geneva, New York, Nairobi, Amman, San Salvador, Brussels and Bangkok), and advised and supported by the **AGA's Climate Change Advocacy Group (the successor of AGCCA)**. Several communities of practice, notably **CoP on DRR** will contribute. ACT's advocacy will be anchored in national, sub-regional and regional forums. AGA will advise on strategy and the political direction of the alliance.

6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4 – ENHANCE CAPACITY AND COORDINATION

By 2018, ACT Alliance forums have put in place ways to enhance the alliance's advocacy capacity and coordination at national, regional and global levels, for increased effectiveness, quality and increased member and forum ownership and engagement.

ACT must be able to undertake quality, effective advocacy. The alliance will therefore invest in capacity development for its members and forums. Advocacy capacity building will be guided by the ACT capacity development and learning strategy and the advocacy policy and procedures. This will be an ongoing process within the life of the alliance and will focus on enhancing the capacities of leaders and spokespersons, developing the capacities of forums and developing technical capacities for impact in the advocacy work of the alliance. Capacity development will include a range of methodologies and approaches, but focus will be on experiential learning, peer-to-peer exchanges, mentoring, and coaching across the alliance.

6.1 Priorities

- I. Establishment of the ACT Advocacy Academy
- II. Strengthening the evidence base for the alliance's advocacy
- III. Launch and roll out of the ACT Urgent Call for Advocacy

ACT Alliance will make use of modern technology and institute web-based learning, (the ACT Advocacy Academy), to facilitate the exchange and sharing of alliance expertise across the network. The academy will provide space for members to share relevant materials and information and to provide a platform for learning and sharing experiences, to pool and make accessible advocacy materials, success stories, etc., across the membership.

The ACT Advocacy Academy will utilise already available advocacy materials across the alliance. Forums and ACT secretariat offices in the regions will adjust relevant materials to fit the needs and contexts of countries, regions and thematic issues, while recognising the advocacy capacities at different levels and by different members and forums. Where necessary materials on the theological basis for ACT advocacy and common understanding of advocacy from a theological perspective will be developed or sourced from WCC and other ecumenical organisations. Priority will be given to advocacy capacity required to support the three thematic strategic objectives contained in this strategy.

The presence of the ACT secretariat in the regions will be used as a good avenue through which ACT members' specific needs in advocacy capacity development will be mapped and routed to AGA from time to time. This will provide ongoing direction on the members' specific needs with regard to advocacy capacities. Forums, members, advisory groups, community of practices who have capacity on specific issues will be called upon to share their expertise with those who seek to learn and develop their advocacy capacity.

The ACT Urgent Call for Advocacy will be utilised for advocacy around urgent cases and situations that require the activation of the alliance's solidarity and political mobilisation.

ACT Alliance's work is advocacy based. For this reason we will establish mechanisms for gathering evidence in support of existing advocacy initiatives within the alliance. We will also establish ways to identify trends which might inform the alliance's future choices of advocacy topics, whether at national, regional, regional power centre or global levels.

6.2 Internal actors

AGA will work in collaboration with **Quality and Accountability Advisory Group** and others within the alliance, including thematic advisory groups (**DPPG, HPPG**) and relevant communities of practice to follow through the advocacy capacity development processes. The secretariat will play a coordination role.