

**ACT Alliance
EXTERNAL RELATIONS POLICY**

*Approved by the ACT Alliance Governing Board
in 2016*

1. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF ACT EXTERNAL RELATIONS POLICY

As a global humanitarian, development and advocacy network, ACT Alliance recognises the important role of relationships with key stakeholders in the humanitarian and development sectors. In its Founding Document, the alliance made the commitment that “we will build relationships, strengthen effectiveness and avoid duplication through our cooperation.”

The scope of this policy is limited to formal relationships; both short- and long-term, which ACT Alliance aims to develop with institutions which are not members of the alliance. ACT will make an effort to support and benefit from relationships at all levels, taking into consideration the respective contexts. This policy will guide all ACT external relationships in order to enable the alliance to “work closely with other national, regional and international ecumenical, inter-faith and civil society organisations that share similar objectives¹.” This policy supports and encourages a range of informal relationships and connection with Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), international organisations including the UN and others, and will support existing relationships of members. It will neither prescribe nor limit the ability and possibility of members and forums to engage with a wide spectrum of stakeholders. External relations will be guided by the alliance’s vision and mission.

It seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To elaborate on the rationale and justification for each relationship that ACT Alliance will pursue with external entities;
2. To determine the requisite external relationships for attaining the vision and mission of the alliance, including the implementation of its long-term strategic direction;
3. To outline key external bodies with which ACT Alliance will deliberately seek to relate;
4. To establish principles, and processes that will guide ACT Alliance’s relationships with external entities;
5. To provide guidelines for governance, members, secretariat staff, and partners who would represent ACT Alliance in external structures²;
6. To anticipate and mitigate risks that may arise from ACT’s members’ and forums’ relationships with external entities.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- I. **Value addition** – All external relations must seek to add value to the strategic direction of the alliance.
- II. **Risk benefit analysis** – In situations where there are risks associated with a relationship with an external entity, the benefits of such a relationship must clearly outweigh the risks. A risk benefit analysis must be done in such situations.
- III. **Accountability** – The secretariat focal point, representative member or individual responsible for any particular external relationship is accountable to the alliance through its appointing structures (i.e. governance, General Secretary, forum, management of the secretariat) and must act in accordance with the mandate given.

¹ ACT Founding Document

² This is done in conformity with the Terms of Reference for ACT Members Representing ACT in External Global Boards and Process document, approved by ACT Governing Board in April 2013.



- IV. **Quality and capacity of representation** – every effort shall be taken to ensure that all representation or other participation in the context of external relationships is done by individuals who can commit time, expertise and other key ingredients to the function.
- V. **Transparency** – All relationships between ACT and external entities will be on the basis of transparency, and information about the relationship and the content of discussions will be made available to members of the alliance as required, recognising that on occasion there will be a need for confidentiality and discretion. Where funding is involved, a terms of reference (ToR) will be created to clearly communicate the nature, purpose and timeline of each significant partnership.
- VI. **Branding** – The ACT Alliance branding/ co-branding policy is applicable in cases where ACT Alliance engages in activities with external partners.
- VII. **Learning** – ACT Alliance is a learning alliance, and as such, every opportunity will be taken to intentionally learn from cooperation with external entities and share these experiences across the membership.

3. STAKEHOLDER CLUSTERS

3.1. *Ecumenical partners*

The Founding Document of ACT Alliance states that “we give priority to the role of local churches and their ministries in responding to the humanitarian and development needs of their local community.” In this regards, relationships with churches and church-based organisations that are not members of ACT Alliance are considered a priority. The World Council of Churches and other ecumenical organisations, including those from Roman Catholic and Evangelical traditions, National Councils of Churches, Regional Ecumenical Organisations, and others play an important role in the sectors in which ACT Alliance works, and therefore various relationships at all levels and with different structures of ACT Alliance will be encouraged.

3.2. *Other faith-based actors*

ACT Alliance recognises the importance of joint or coordinated humanitarian, development and advocacy action with other faith-based organisations and networks. ACT shall prioritise and encourage building relationships at all levels with similar networks from other faiths working in the humanitarian and development arenas, particularly for the purposes of joint messaging and advocacy and joint action.

3.3. *Non-governmental organisations and networks*

The main rationale for building relationships with civil society networks is the recognition that ACT Alliance is part of the global, regional and national civil society. There are, and will be, many cases where ACT will be required to act and speak in solidarity with other civil society organisations. Therefore, pursuing strategic relationships with these organisations is beneficial.

3.4. *Governments and inter-governmental institutions*

ACT recognises the role of governments as primary duty bearers on behalf of their citizens in terms of securing human rights and sustainable development. Much of the alliance’s lobby, advocacy and campaigning therefore

aims to influence government policy and practice and therefore credible relationships with governments, inter-governmental bodies and unions are envisioned for the purpose of advocacy and collaboration that fosters the mission of the alliance. Apart from key governments in both the Global South and North, some of the key inter-governmental platforms include the Africa Union, European Union, Association of South Eastern Asian Nations, Association of American States, and others.

3.5. ***United Nations and other multilateral and bilateral agencies***

The global agenda has, for the past decades, been convened by the United Nations and its agencies and programmes. Sustainable development, environment and climate change, human rights, humanitarian policy and practice, gender, trade and many other agendas that are core to ACT Alliance are carried by processes either hosted by, or convened by the UN. ACT Alliance is accredited to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as an observer, thus, enabling the alliance to access and participate in key processes.

3.6. ***International finance institutions***

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund exert a huge influence on development, development plans and economies of many countries in the world, especially developing countries. The interest of these institutions in the work of faith-based organisations has grown over the years, as exemplified by the recent ‘*Moral Imperative*’ message and consultation on religion and development led by the World Bank. Financial institutions have a regional and national presence, for example the various regional development banks, whose influence on governments is enormous. Many of them also serve as conduits for financial and technical resources that can be tapped into by civil society organisations.

3.7. ***Private sector entities***

The prominence of business and the private sector as development and humanitarian actors has grown significantly over the past few years. The knowledge of ACT Alliance as well as its interaction with different parts of the private sector continues to grow. A deliberate and intentional strategy around multi-faceted relationships and interaction with this sector needs to be developed.

4. EXTERNAL RELATIONS CHECKLIST

The checklist below covers external relationships that are formal in nature.

4.1. ***Developing an explanatory note***

Once a potential external relationship has been identified, or once an external organisation/entity has approached ACT Alliance for a work relationship, a simple explanatory note will be developed, which will contain an explanation and objectives for the relationship. The note would include, if necessary, the terms of reference for the relationship, together with information such as timeframes, risk analysis and whether there is need for a memorandum of understanding, or other administrative processes.

4.2. ***Endorsement of relationship***

The explanatory note is presented to the secretariat core management team who will review the benefits and the risks of the proposed relationship and make recommendations to the General Secretary for final approval, or referral to governance. Advice will be sought from relevant advisory groups where necessary.

4.3. ***Assigning a focal point(s)***

The General Secretary is responsible for formal external relationships of ACT Alliance at the secretariat level. It is however expected that there may be relationships that the General Secretary may choose to assign to a secretariat staff member, a member organisation or a member of the ecumenical family. In each of the formal external relationships that ACT Alliance pursues, a focal point will be assigned.

4.4. ***Linking to Advisory Group and/or Community of Practice***

Depending on the needs, an additional structure, other than the secretariat, within the alliance will be mandated to follow up and report on each external relationship, particularly in terms of content requirements.

5. ACT REPRESENTATION ON GLOBAL BOARDS AND PROCESSES

The remit of ACT's external relations includes cases where individuals (or organisations) are mandated to represent ACT in global, regional and national boards and processes. In such cases, the Terms of Reference for ACT Members Representing ACT in External Global Boards will be applied.

6. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

All external relationships of ACT Alliance will be evaluated at the end of each strategic period of ACT Alliance, or more frequently should there be need. Lessons learnt from the relationships will be clearly elucidated. However, each focal point will be required to provide an annual status report of specific relationships, and to alert the General Secretary in cases where the relationship requires immediate intervention.