

ACT Alliance CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

*Revised version approved by the ACT Alliance Governing Board in May 2024
(Replaces the original approved by the ACT Alliance Governing Board
on 5 February 2011, with Appendix approved in 2016)*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance is a Christian membership-based organisation committed to providing high-quality humanitarian, development and advocacy programmes and to working in an open and accountable way.¹ The Alliance was founded with clear respect for the independence of its members. At the same time, the ACT Alliance has a vested and collective interest in the performance of individual members or groups of members.

ACT members commit to adhere to the ACT Code of Good Practice as a minimum standard for membership, which is part of the overarching ACT Alliance Quality and Accountability Framework, emphasizing alignment with principles of quality, accountability, and ethics. As part of their commitment to these common principles, ACT members commit to non-proselytizing in the course of their work with the ACT Alliance.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Code of Good Practice for the ACT Alliance sets out common values, principles and commitments that will shape the humanitarian, development and advocacy work of ACT members. It outlines the minimum professional and ethical standards required from all ACT members.²

The ACT Code of Good Practice is an organisational-level commitment for ACT members to continuous improvement whilst striving to achieve best practice principles. It complements the ACT Code of Conduct³ which serves as a guide for individual staff of the ACT Secretariat and ACT members to make ethical decisions in our professional lives and, at times, in our private lives.

The Code of Good Practice addresses the following principles for all ACT members:

- i. *Overarching principles* – the fundamental principles that guide our work as an alliance.
- ii. *Organisational principles* – the principles that promote professional management, leadership and support in ACT member organisations to guide how we work, and which provide the foundation for effective and accountable programming.
- iii. *Programmatic principles*⁴ – the principles that guide our actions in ACT member programmes addressing capacities and promoting justice and equality in line with ACT policies and guidance.
- iv. *Partnership Principles* – the principles that support ACT members working together and promote collaboration, cooperation and partnership among alliance members.

3. ACT ALLIANCE PRINCIPLES

i. Overarching Principles

Each member of the ACT Alliance commits to...

1. Act in ways that respect, promote agency and protect the dignity, uniqueness, and the intrinsic worth

¹ ACT Alliance Founding Document, February 2009

² See end of document for Appendix – ACT Alliance non-proselytism statement, adopted by the ACT Alliance Governing Board in 2016.

³ ACT Code of Conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power:

<http://actalliance.org/about/standards-and-policies/>

⁴ The programmatic principles will be reviewed every three-five years to embrace new developments and in some cases, new scientific evidence, so to ensure a credible and accurate reflection of sound programmatic practice for the ACT Alliance.

and human rights of every person;

2. Work with communities and individuals on the basis of need and human rights without any form of discrimination, ensuring that the capacities and capabilities of communities are considered at all times, and especially those who suffer discrimination and those who are most vulnerable;
3. Speak out and act against those conditions, structures and systems which increase vulnerability and perpetuate poverty, injustice, human rights violations including the degradation of the environment;
4. Support formal and informal local agency and capacity and locally-led efforts in ways that respect equality, transparency, a results-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity;
5. Not utilise humanitarian or development assistance to further a particular religious or political partisan standpoint⁵;
6. Uphold the highest professional, ethical and moral standards of accountability to those with whom we work, to those who support us, to each other, and ultimately to God;
7. Meet the highest standards of truthfulness and integrity in all of our work; and
8. Endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

ii. Organisational Principles

Each member of the ACT Alliance commits to...

1. Accountable and transparent governance and management
2. Develop and maintain the organisational capacity necessary to support development and humanitarian programmes in terms of mobilisation of resources and to create management conditions to achieve strategic objectives;
3. Act in ways that will protect God's creation, restore the environment and respect human rights;
4. Promote gender justice and gender mainstreaming;
5. Ensure the safety and security of our staff and volunteers;
6. Adhere to protection and safeguarding policies and procedures, ensuring mechanisms are in place to prevent and respond to harassment, exploitation abuse and other forms of violence;
7. Engage where possible with local churches and/or other faith-based actors, recognizing their role in providing spiritual care as well as essential humanitarian and development assistance to local communities;
8. Manage financial resources in an efficient, transparent and accountable manner; and
9. Reflect in communication and fundraising materials the dignity, resilience and initiative of affected communities.

⁵ See end of document for Appendix – ACT Alliance non-proselytism statement, adopted by the ACT Alliance Governing Board in 2016.

iii. Programmatic Principles⁶

Each member of the ACT Alliance commits to...

1. Uphold high ethical, human rights and programmatic standards in all of our work.
2. Ensure that people and communities in situations of crisis and vulnerability can exercise their rights and participate in actions and decisions that affect them.
3. Work to ensure that people and communities access timely and effective support in accordance with their specific needs and priorities and that appropriate and timely support reaches the most deprived adults and children within communities.
4. Address the root causes of poverty, rights deprivation, injustice, and exclusion in appropriate ways, ensuring that communities are better prepared for and more resilient to potential crisis.
5. Identify links between humanitarian assistance, peace and development and related advocacy work, anticipatory action, recovery, reconstruction and disaster risk reduction.
6. Work with local partners where possible, and/or use work approaches that support local community capacity and prioritise the use of local human, material and cultural resources.
7. Assist People and communities to access support that does not cause harm to people or the environment.
8. Ensure the people and communities that the organization work with have access to relevant and timely information including on their rights in relation to the commitments and responsibilities of the organisation, as well as how to provide feedback or make a complaint.
9. Ensure use of effective systems for feedback, monitoring, evaluating and learning.

iv. Partnership Principles

Each member of the ACT Alliance commits to...

1. Nurture and sustain partnerships to support more effective and fair ways of working together with an emphasis on greater sharing of power, learning, and knowledge;
2. Commit ourselves to being transparent with, listening to, learning from, and sharing experiences with other members and partners in order to improve the quality of our work and draw on the rich diversity of our alliance and network.
3. Build relationships, strengthen effectiveness and work collaboratively, adopting complementary strategies in our work, recognizing the value and abilities that each of us have.
4. Build and sustain transparent and accountability-based relationships to support coordinated and effective humanitarian, development and advocacy responses within the alliance as well as with other national and international development and humanitarian institutions and agencies.
5. Strengthen the capacity of local partners responding to the developmental and humanitarian needs of their communities.

⁶ The Programmatic Principles reinforces our commitment to high ethical, human rights, and programmatic standards mandated by the Quality & Accountability Framework, including humanitarian principles and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS). This ensures clarity on the Code's adherence to universally recognized standards, making it obligatory for those involved in humanitarian response efforts.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Code of Good Practice is the responsibility of each ACT member. The ACT Alliance Quality and Accountability Framework outlines the minimum standard policies. It is the responsibility of each ACT member signatory to ensure that it has in place the minimum standard policies, that it ensures their socialization and active application, and that it regularly reviews and updates them. The ACT Secretariat may request documentation in this regard from any ACT member.

5. COMPLIANCE AND SANCTIONS

All ACT Alliance members must adhere to and comply with this Code of Good Practice. Member organisations not compliant with the Code of Good Practice and/or ACT's minimum standard policies, will be subject to an appropriate sanction or course of action by the ACT Governing Board.

It is expected that all ACT members will attempt to resolve any compliance or conflictual issues among and between each other, especially if members are working in partnership.

In the case of non-resolution of conflict or presumed non-compliance with the Code of Good Practice or ACT's minimum standard policies, a formal complaint from one (or more) ACT member organization(s) about (an)other ACT member organization(s) can be submitted through the ACT Complaints Mechanism, whose committee will follow the relevant complaints handling process.⁷

6. ORGANISATIONAL ADHERENCE

As an ACT member, being a signatory to this Code of Good Practice means that, upon joining the alliance, the ACT member commits to apply ALL principles from this Code.

The representative of the ACT member organisation, whose signature appears below, confirms that the organisation's Board and management, has read, understood and is in agreement with the content of this Code of Good Practice and its Appendix below. The member organisation also accepts any consequences to its membership of non-adherence of any of the above principles under this Code and of non-adherence to its Appendix below.

Full name of Organisation:

Full name of Representative:

Position of Representative:

Date:

Signature of Representative:

Place:

⁷ As per the ACT Alliance Complaints Policy.

APPENDIX 1 – ACT Alliance non-proselytism statement

The Appendix to the ACT Code of Good Practice was approved by the ACT Governing Board in June 2016.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines proselytism as: “to try to persuade someone to change their religious or political beliefs or way of living to your own”. It is this understanding of proselytism that forms the basis for this ACT Alliance non-proselytism statement.

ACT Alliance members are bound together by core values expressed in the Alliance founding document. Through these core values the ACT Alliance and its members affirm that

- All persons are created in the image of God
- God is known through Jesus Christ and revealed through the Holy Spirit and Scriptures
- God stands beside the poor and oppressed
- The Church is called to manifest God’s gracious love for all people and work towards a reconciled human community as one body of Christ
- The earth and all it contains are God’s gifts and are to be protected and shared in good stewardship

ACT Alliance’s humanitarian, development and advocacy engagement is a witness to God’s unconditional love for the world. ACT Alliance affirms its overall rights-based approach where poor and marginalised communities are at the centre. ACT Alliance affirms the freedom of religion or belief as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and freedom of religion as a human right as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights including its affirmation of everyone’s right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

ACT Alliance does not use humanitarian or development assistance or advocacy programmes to further a particular religious or partisan political standpoint. This means that ACT Alliance and its members

- Reject the use of any aid, either to an individual or to a community, to advance religious or partisan political standpoints
- Reject the use of their programmes to advance religious or partisan political standpoints
- Reject the use of manipulation, coercive techniques, force or exploitation of people’s vulnerability to advance religious or partisan political standpoints
- Are truthful and transparent about their identities and motivation when asked and offer information about the goals of their organisations and programmes if requested
- Advance through their engagement and programmes, where necessary, with tolerance of differences in belief and protection of those whose human rights are not respected

In keeping with that, we celebrate when people’s lives are enriched by faith, but we reject any attempt to misuse humanitarian or development assistance or advocacy programmes to manipulate either an individual or a community towards a particular religious belief. We believe such attempts lack integrity, result in poor development and dishonour the One who is our motivation.

Breach of this Code of Good Practice, including the appendix, is subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Membership Disciplinary Policy and ACT Complaints Policy.