

**ACT Alliance  
MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY**

*Approved by the ACT Alliance Governing Board  
June 2016*

## VISION OF ACT ALLIANCE ON MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

ACT Alliance has a strategic membership composition committed to sharing and working together at all levels and capable of adding value with an effective humanitarian response, high quality long-term development and advocacy. The identity, operations and communications of ACT Alliance inspire member collaboration and strategic relationships as part of the ecumenical movement and civil society and with other faith-based organisations.

## FOUNDATIONS AND VALUES

ACT Alliance is committed to its founding document, its policies, including the Code of Conduct and the Code of Good Practice and Principles of Partnership, and working in an ecumenical spirit, and ethical values<sup>1</sup>. The ACT Membership Strategy contributes to the implementation of the global strategy of ACT Alliance “Full Life and Dignity for All” which seeks to advance the engagement of the alliance members.

Based on these key documents, ACT Alliance bases its Membership Strategy and management of membership affairs on the adherence to ACT Alliance policies and the following principles:

- Integrity – truthfulness, professionalism and accuracy in actions
- Transparency – openness and enabling access to information
- Accountability – answerability to stakeholders and intentional broad consultations
- Independence – self-government
- Accompaniment – active engagement in journeying together and responsiveness to the realities of members
- Partnership – recognising the interdependence of stakeholders
- Mutual learning – seeking constant improvement through dialogue
- Ecumenical spirit – investing in relationships and ecumenical collaboration

The implementation of these principles is the task of all who engage in membership matters within ACT Alliance.

## GOALS

ACT Alliance sets the following strategic goals for the period until the end of 2018:

1. ACT Alliance, building on the strengths of its current members, seeks moderate membership growth, based on seeking improved operational capacity and alliance sustainability through intentional member recruitment.
2. ACT Alliance members, committed to improve quality and accountability and to adhere to the ACT Alliance policies, participate meaningfully in the life and decision-making of the alliance, in different levels and ways.
3. ACT Alliance members, ready to share resources, build a sustainable ACT Alliance and reach out to other actors as part of a broader movement.

<sup>1</sup> As a follow-up from “the Malawi consultation”, celebrated in September 2014, a follow-up item on the theological basis of ecumenical diakonia has been agreed, which will further elaborate on these values. The ACT Alliance founding document provides a rich description of the values ACT Alliance stands for.

## STRATEGIC APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING THE GOALS

**Goal 1.** “ACT Alliance, building on the strengths of its current membership, seeks moderate membership growth, based on seeking improved operational capacity and alliance sustainability through intentional member recruitment.”

ACT Alliance consolidates its current membership base and addresses issues which hinder ACT members’ continued engagement in the life of the alliance by seeking modalities of engagement which meet their needs. The membership continues to grow moderately, based on seeking improved operational capacity, improved geographical reach and alliance sustainability. The new members know and understand the obligations of ACT members and are able to enjoy the rights of members to the full. They have the required capacity for actively taking on the role of an ACT Alliance member, including its participation and contribution towards strengthening the joint action and strategy of the forums (national, sub-regional or regional). They seek an active life as a member in ACT Alliance and are committed to being accountable for ACT Alliance membership and actively sharing their strategies, aspirations and learning. ACT Alliance has increased intentionality in its member recruitment and membership relations and services. The lifecycle of a member is transparently described and support is offered from within the membership for new members to engage. Alliance structures inspire member-driven approaches to engagement.

- ACT Alliance addresses issues, including financial ones, which continue to hinder participation of current members in the life of the alliance and seeks solutions and engagement modalities which best meet their needs.
- ACT Alliance widens its membership criteria allowing non-proselytizing and ecumenically-oriented mission organisations to enter into full membership. These organisations have significant and reportable development, advocacy and/or humanitarian programmes with demonstrated track records and proper accountability. Mission organisations must meet all the membership criteria and demonstrate adherence to all policies, including the ACT Code of Conduct.
- ACT Alliance enables membership of churches and church-related organisations outside the WCC and LWF constituency. In their case, membership is by invitation only. These members are selected and invited by the ACT Governing Board on a case-by-case basis on proving a clear demonstrated added value to ACT.<sup>2</sup>
- ACT Alliance global members form a category of global members. The global members participate in national, sub-regional and/or regional forums where they have national or regional chapters. Additionally, the global headquarters participate in the global members’ forum. The Governing Board facilitates a statutory change enabling these members to access the governing bodies of the alliance.
- The ACT member accompaniment cycle is defined from initiation to exit. The ACT secretariat is tasked and resourced to implement the services defined in the cycle and the ACT governance monitors the feedback coming from the membership. The intention is to enable access to the alliance members, to

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<sup>2</sup> Churches and church-related organisations eligible for invitation by the Governing Board should meet the following criteria: 1) Work closely with other national, regional and international ecumenical, inter-faith and civil society organisations that share similar objectives, ecumenical values, spirit and engagement; 2) Have a good standing with ACT Alliance and a pre-existing positive partnership with other ACT members; 3) Endorse ACT Alliance’s values, vision and mission and demonstrate willingness to sign all mandatory policies of the alliance.

The process to be followed by the Governing Board is: 1) Identify the selected organisation; 2) Before the organisation is contacted, ask the Membership and Nominations Committee to screen the organisation according to the existing procedure for membership applications; 3) Contact the selected organisation and conduct an interview to verify if there is mutual interest in ACT membership; 4) Launch consultation with ACT membership in order to establish there are no objections from the membership; 5) If no objection is received from the ACT membership, the Governing Board will proceed with the invitation.

flexibly engage in the life of the alliance. A peer system for new members is developed which helps them get the most out of their membership early on. Mutually agreed accompaniment of potential members by existing members is facilitated by the ACT secretariat. This support enables introducing and maturing membership.

- ACT Alliance seeks to constantly improve its operational capacity and, therefore, seeks to identify gaps in its abilities and reach and, through membership recruitment and development, fill these gaps. Global, regional, sub-regional and national plans are developed to this effect.
- The membership application process is enhanced by a capacity assessment of the applicant. This is conducted by the Membership and Nominations Committee and the ACT secretariat. The purpose of the process is to identify whether the applicant has the basic capacity required to meet membership commitments but also that it is able to add to the capacity of the alliance as a whole. The alliance through members, forums and the ACT secretariat offers accompaniment in policy adherence.
- ACT members have easily accessible information regarding various membership-related issues, such as the membership application process, membership suspension, membership restoration, membership withdrawal, membership exclusion, and complaints handling, and they understand well the roles and responsibilities of the Membership and Nominations Committee, ACT Governing Board, ACT Executive Committee, ACT Finance Committee and ACT secretariat, related to these processes. Information required for the application process will be available in English, French and Spanish.
- The Membership Policy establishes ways and means to address issues related to membership. It also gathers all necessary policy guidance on membership issues into one document. Amongst others, the policy will create an opportunity for the member, as well as for the Membership and Nominations Committee, to initiate conversations around the termination of the membership if it seems redundant or if the member is seen to damage the alliance.

**Goal 2.** “ACT Alliance members, committed to improve quality and accountability and to adhere to the ACT Alliance policies, participate meaningfully in the life and decision-making of the alliance, at different levels and in different ways.”

ACT Alliance seeks to evolve as a member-driven alliance where members drive and participate in the life of the alliance at different levels and in different ways. ACT forums and other alliance structures provide a meaningful place for learning and strategizing for effective implementation. ACT forums grow increasingly as natural meeting-points for ACT members, their guests and the broader ecumenical family who seek to achieve greater impact with combined resources. If problems in the life of the alliance arise they are proactively mediated and solutions are found. ACT Alliance members are committed to quality and accountability with intentionally created space for learning and improvement. ACT Alliance fosters best practise among its members and extends invitations to learning initiatives to interested churches and church-related organisations in the broader ecumenical movement. ACT members self-assess adherence to policies. The ability of each ACT member to meet its commitments is the calling card of the entire alliance. The alliance creates increasingly incentives for the members to demonstrate and evidence their ability to meet the standards and requirements set by various policies and commitments of the alliance.

- Regional and global membership plans identify ways and means to inspire a member-driven alliance in the regions and at the global level. Global and regional communities of practise, which are formed around thematic interests, as well as regional, sub-regional and national ACT forums play a key role in implementing the membership plans.

- By the end of 2018, 75% of ACT members describe their engagement in the ACT forums as meaningful and productive.
- ACT secretariat staff learn facilitation techniques which support their capacity to enable member-drive and greater engagement of members in various alliance initiatives and engagements.
- Alliance members are asked regularly to give feedback on their membership experience through an on-line survey. The feedback influences membership services and ACT secretariat priorities. The annual survey helps ACT governance analyse gaps in adherence to ACT policies. In the first phase adherence to the following policies will be studied: 2016 Code of Conduct, Code of Good Practice, Membership Agreement; 2017 Principles of Partnership, Co-branding; 2018 Child Safeguarding Policy, Core Humanitarian Standard.
- Due to the changes introduced in the membership criteria, ACT Alliance places a particular emphasis on support and accompaniment of new members, including the international and national mission organisations, to demonstrate their adherence to the mandatory ACT Alliance policies, particularly the Code of Good Practice and its provision of non-proselytising.
- ACT secretariat develops a web-based learning environment to promote sharing and learning in the alliance and extends this invitation to the broader ecumenical movement. This environment enables a roll-out of globally and regionally relevant learning opportunities but also helps ACT members and ACT forums share their learning offers.
- Through support and guidance for work planning and by sharing good examples, two thirds of ACT forums, by the end of 2018, have engaged in advocacy or long-term development work which has helped to make the forum engagement more meaningful for a larger number of ACT members.
- Through support and guidance for work planning and by sharing good examples, ACT forums are encouraged to proactively include ecumenical partners, including churches from the WCC and LWF who currently are not members of ACT Alliance, to the work of the alliance. They are also encouraged to develop collaboration with the broader civil society and with other faith-based organisations.
- ACT secretariat's regional presence facilitates South-to-South exchanges between ACT forums.
- ACT secretariat reaches out to members of the Membership and Nominations Committee, Advisory Group on Complaints Handling and members of the ACT Governing Board if mediation is needed in order to solve relational issues within ACT forums or between ACT members.
- A methodology for self-assessment and learning is created to support member commitment to ACT policies.
- An ACT Forum Award highlights high achievement of ACT forums in ensuring member compliance.

**Goal 3.** "ACT Alliance members, ready to share resources, build a sustainable ACT Alliance and reach out to other actors as part of a broader movement."

Committed membership of the ACT Alliance enables the sustainability of the ACT Alliance. The ACT Alliance seeks sustainability to keep its long-term commitment with the communities it works with. It continues to be important to ACT Alliance and its membership that it remain independent and able to make choices independently based on the humanitarian imperative and rights-based approaches. The diversity of funding sources helps to maintain that independence.

- ACT Alliance members are able to meet their membership commitments and contribute with various resources to strengthen the life of the alliance.

- The members fundraise 20% from external sources for the global alliance budget by 2018. This goal will be reached through fundraising support for the ACT secretariat and through joint programming and consortia proposals at global, regional and country levels.
- The national and regional fundraising capacity of ACT Alliance members is enhanced through capacity strengthening at relevant levels.
- ACT members are supported to do quality financial planning and budgeting allowing them to comply with ACT membership financial commitments and are accompanied by ACT members (and the ACT secretariat where possible) with the required capacity. The ACT secretariat supports in building member consortia and in accessing funding opportunities for collaborative initiatives.

This Membership Strategy is implemented by various entities of ACT Alliance, notably the Governing Board, Membership and Nominations Committee, Finance Committee, secretariat, ACT forums at all levels, advisory groups and communities of practise.

