



**ACTION BY CHURCHES TOGETHER**

# **ADVOCACY STRATEGY**

## **2020-2027**

*Approved by the Governing Board on 25 August 2020*



**SECRETARIAT:** 150, route de Ferney, P.O. Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switz. **TEL.:** +4122 791 6434 – **FAX:** +4122 791 6506 – [www.actalliance.org](http://www.actalliance.org)

**Contents:**

A. Introduction ..... 3

B. Climate Justice ..... 6

C. Gender Justice ..... 8

E. Peace and Human Security ..... 11

F. Humanitarian Advocacy ..... 12

G. Advocacy hubs, including Regional Secretariats ..... 14

I. Measuring impacts ..... 18

J. Advocacy risk assessment ..... 18

K. Role of Secretariat, Reference Groups and Communities of Practice ..... 18



rights-based, grounded in evidence and rooted in the experience of forums and members. The ACT Global Strategy emphasises ACT is a faith inspired and rights motivated alliance, which lives its faith and intentionally engages and embraces global political processes, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the agenda of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. Advocacy is an integral part of such ecumenical diakonia, with faith-based and rights-based actions affirming each other (without neglecting the sometimes inherent tensions between the two, and the diversity in the membership on advocacy issues). ACT Alliance's advocacy is grounded in Christian faith, through which we become one community, one body, and where love for the other transforms itself in the greatest testimony of justice and peace. Equally, it is grounded in a human rights-based approach, expressing global solidarity with poor and marginalised people everywhere, recognising their agency and innate human dignity.<sup>2</sup> ACT Alliance advocacy supports and amplifies the voice of all people and communities pursuing their rights and their efforts to hold their local and national authorities accountable for the realisation of these rights and for abuse of power leading to a violation of rights. This includes upholding the role and space for civil society to advocate freely, and engaging where there is space to do so.

ACT defines 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, including within the alliance itself. 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 forums, members and their contexts, and which are most effective to achieve the desired policy and practice change.

ACT Alliance advocacy includes advocacy work led and/or supported by the Secretariat (particularly but not limited to Geneva, New York, Brussels and regional Secretariats in Africa, Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean and the Middle East) and by national, regional and sub-regional forums and, sometimes, by individual members. Whenever possible and appropriate, ACT undertakes its advocacy in collaboration with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and national councils of churches.

### ACT Alliance Advocacy methods and approaches

The most important assets for ACT Alliance advocacy are its forums and members – these, supported through capacity development, connected with faith leaders and communities, and linked to the wider network of faith and civil society actors will contribute to the effective advocacy that we seek. Throughout this strategic period, ACT Alliance advocacy will take the following approaches and methods, and focus its learning on these processes to improve effectiveness:

- **Forum-centred, -driven and -rooted advocacy** – The ACT Global Strategy places forums as the core locus for developing and contextualising ACT initiatives, including advocacy, on the five thematic priorities. ACT will put in place processes and develop capacity to enable forums to engage in strategic national

<sup>2</sup> See for example, *Putting God to Rights: a theological reflection on human rights*, by ACT member Christian Aid, 2016 [https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-08/putting-god-to-rights-report-june-2016\\_0.pdf](https://www.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-08/putting-god-to-rights-report-june-2016_0.pdf)

advocacy, and promote regional perspectives in shaping policy and messaging. ACT will work to increase its advocacy effectiveness to relevant regional centres.

- **Connected local, national, regional and global advocacy** – Experience has shown that effective advocacy, particularly on structural issues and those that cross borders (e.g. climate change, migration), requires appropriate interventions at multiple levels, and that engagement at one level often leads to further opportunities at other levels. Facilitated by the oversight role accorded to the Advocacy and Policy Reference Group (APG) to ensure policy coherence, ACT will continue to develop ‘stereo advocacy’ that amplifies messaging across multiple targets and levels.
- **Thematic integration and holistic approach to advocacy** – As emphasised in the Global Strategy, ACT advocacy will increasingly include a focus on the intersection of advocacy themes addressing structural causes and issues and power, and be framed by the humanitarian-sustainable development nexus.
- **Process-orientated and strategic advocacy** – ACT Alliance will continue its focus on building targeted, long-term and process-oriented advocacy. This will be closely tied to forum driven work and intentional strategic interventions at multiple levels, as and where appropriate. By the end of this strategic period, ACT will have increased its national and regional processes, and only exceptionally engage in regional or international processes where there is not national or regional advocacy taking place.
- **Solution oriented advocacy** – ACT policy development is based on evidence and rigorous analysis, and all advocacy will include recommendations for concrete policy solutions to address the issues raised by the analysis. Additionally, ACT will look to engage in advocacy initiatives that promote dialogue on solutions, e.g. through multi-stakeholder dialogues.
- **Ecumenical complementarity and advocacy partnerships** – The strength of working collaboratively and being ‘greater than the sum of its parts’ is central to ACT Alliance. This carries into advocacy work, where potential impact is stronger where undertaken in coalitions and where many states and international organisations increasingly insist to work with larger and often multi-faith groups. ACT will seek wherever possible to contribute to and work as part of ecumenical, multi-faith and wider civil society advocacy initiatives.
- **Faith motivated and human rights based approach** – Based on ACT’s core values, advocacy will always promote the ‘leave no one behind’ principle, working to lift up the voices of those usually excluded from policy dialogue and decision-making. Working to a human rights approach from a faith identity, ACT will also work to promote the value of inclusion of faith actors in national, regional and global processes.
- **Multicultural and contextualized advocacy** – With presence and members in almost 120 countries, ACT Alliance global advocacy will reflect the multicultural, multi-language, contextualised and diverse nature of its global presence and membership.
- **Effective communications for advocacy** – All ACT advocacy will consider the communications dimension in its planning, working with appropriate communications specialists from the outset, adhering to the ACT Communications Policy and ensuring the accurate and engaging use of facts, figures, and stories.

## B. Climate Justice

### Advocacy context

The world is facing a climate emergency, and the window of opportunity for decisive action to limit global warming, build resilience and the adaptive capacity of people and communities is closing fast. The decade between 2020 and 2030 will be the most important one for ambitious policy and action for a chance to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

The Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction serve as important global frameworks guiding the actions of governments and other stakeholders to address climate change. The human rights commitments of states also serve as an anchoring for the protection of people and communities affected by climate change impacts and any appropriate response measures. In addition, national-level policies, plans and accountability remain crucial to limiting global warming and to providing support to countries and communities most affected by climate change. Despite the urgency of the aforementioned, the visions and goals of these frameworks, commitments and plans are yet to be fully implemented. ACT will leverage its position as a leading faith-based actor on climate justice and as part of the ecumenical and interfaith movement for climate justice to support these processes at the national, regional and international level from a faith, human rights, and gender justice perspective. While the urgency for climate justice is understood and accepted by increasing numbers of people (particularly younger generations, those already or at risk of being affected, faiths, and some governments and businesses), effective action is hindered by the resistance of powerful economic interests and a lack of political commitment.

### Long-term strategic advocacy objective

ACT forums/members are actively engaged in national/regional policy dialogues that are delivering climate policies and solutions that contribute to local resilience and community development. Simultaneously, ACT is contributing to the full, inclusive and ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and achievement of the sustainability principle underpinning the SDGs, while leveraging the experiences, programmes and evidence of the communities with which it works to influence transformational change for a just transition to more sustainable systems and structures.

Achieving climate justice will depend on the commitment, goodwill, and contribution of a variety of stakeholders and constituencies, including governments, the private sector, civil society, local communities, faith actors and leaders, youth movements, and many others. As a result, political will, community-level initiatives and national level policy design and implementation will be catalytic on the implementation of national climate and adaptation plans. In addition, the participation of the most vulnerable, particularly those that are often left out of decision-making, for example, women, youth and people with disabilities, will be essential. ACT will work at the national and regional level to support these processes, to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable are included, and to hold countries to account for their national climate contributions.

## Key areas/messages for the period

### i. *Averting, minimising and addressing **loss and damage***

ACT will contribute to and influence UNFCCC processes, particularly the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) and its expert groups in order to influence policies and decisions to avert, minimise, and address climate induced economic and non-economic loss and damage. ACT advocacy will include the issue of finance to enable vulnerable countries to respond to climate induced loss and damage, and be based on evidence drawn from the humanitarian and development work of ACT forums/members.

### ii. *Building **community resilience** through **national and community level adaptation***

ACT advocacy will demand greater action at national and community levels to build the resilience of people, communities, economies and systems, based on the needs of the most vulnerable and considering the relevant intersectionalities in a participatory manner, ensuring ownership and commitment of the communities and relevant actors. ACT will promote international and national policies and resource allocation geared towards this objective, and focus on climate and sustainable development financing, technology and capacity building.

### iii. *A fair transformation of economies, development plans, policies and practice, to promote a **low carbon development**, where nobody is left behind*

All countries must turn to a green transition, where all parts of the society contribute to a sustainable and low carbon development. ACT Alliance will support the global call for climate justice with messages aligning with a 1.5°C development pathway.

### iv. *Climate action must integrate **human rights frameworks and gender justice**, and faith-based values promoting protection and participation of the most vulnerable*

Recognising that climate change inhibits the ability of the most vulnerable to fully enjoy their human rights and dignity, our advocacy will hold states and other duty bearers accountable for their actions or inactions that expose people and communities to human rights violations and will build on a human rights based approach, with a particular emphasis on the rights of women and girls.

### v. *Provision of **climate finance and capacity building** for the most vulnerable within and across countries and communities*

ACT advocacy will push for climate finance to be new and additional to development and humanitarian aid and a priority to be given to the most vulnerable countries.

## Specific advocacy initiatives

Faith and ecumenical actors have taken up the challenge of harnessing locally led community resilience and supporting affected communities, particularly in the wake of extreme weather events. Together with other ecumenical actors, ACT will mobilise faith communities and leaders, recapture the positive climate justice narrative, and will amplify the moral and ethical imperative to respond to climate change through the ACT NOW for Climate Justice Campaign.

## **C. Gender Justice**

### **Advocacy context**

Inequality is a manifestation of systems of power, privilege and oppression, which are unbalanced in how they affect people. Women and girls as well as LGBTQI individuals experience shockingly high levels of discrimination and exclusion, which perpetuates poverty and deprives them of their fundamental rights. Gender stereotypes of roles, rights and responsibilities contribute to all sorts of violent practices ranging from structural to physical violence: increasing gender based violence in domestic contexts, the workplace, political spheres as well as in situations of war and conflict.

Across the globe, ACT recognises that many civil society actors, including feminist and other movements, are pushing back against regression on gender equality. A myriad of religious practices that support gender equality within and beyond Christianity become silenced and invisible in the face of such rising fundamentalisms, e.g. economic (neoliberalism), political/social (patriarchy) and religious (religious backlashes against gender equality).

This context provides an important opportunity for ACT to bring practices, teachings, and theologies to the forefront, which use the power of faith as a transformative force for gender justice and work to improve and highlight religious leaders' central role as norm setters and advocates for gender justice. ACT is positioned to be a leading faith-based actor promoting comprehensive approaches to gender justice and holistic implementation of all human rights, and as such has the potential to strengthen movements at all levels for gender justice and demonstrate that religious voices can, and must, uphold the rights of all people.

### **Long-term strategic advocacy objective**

ACT forums/members are contributing to transformational change for people of all gender identities, by addressing structural discrimination, unequal power relationships, gender norms, in order to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights, opportunities, outcomes, responsibilities, resources and rewards irrespective of gender or sexual identities, including fundamental freedoms in political, civil, economic, social and cultural fields of life.

### **Key areas/messages for the period**

Based on the 2020-27 strategic priorities for the Gender Justice Programme, advocacy will focus on the following gender-related issues: economic justice; gender-based violence; sexual and reproductive health and rights; family law; transformative masculinities; and migration. Advocacy for gender justice will also be approached from an intersectional lens to denounce any form of discrimination and exclusion to human suffering irrespective of race, gender, belief, nationality, ethnicity, age, disability or political persuasion. This will be reinforced by building strong links between ACT advocacy work on climate justice, peace and human security, humanitarian preparedness and response, economic justice, migration and displacement, and include strong youth engagement.

ACT advocacy will position the alliance as a global progressive force for gender justice, contributing to SDG 5, and gender sensitive delivery of the 2030 Agenda. It will focus on the following areas:

- i. ACT members and religious leaders are actively involved in advocating for more gender just national legislation and implementation in the Gender Justice Programme priorities by 2022, as well as the promotion of gender justice in global frameworks on migration and displacement, climate justice, peace and human security through 2026.
- ii. By 2022, the global campaign: “ACT for Gender Justice”, an awareness and advocacy campaign, is implemented and serving as the public face for the Global Gender Justice Programme. It will translate the advocacy demands into tools and messaging with the aim of communicating the Gender Justice goals and vision to different constituencies.
- iii. To exert influence at regional and global level, ACT Alliance will position itself as a leading faith actor advocating for gender justice by organising and attending high level events and delivering statements on gender equality and justice to national, regional and global processes, including sustained engagement at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the UN High Level Political Forum, as well as the International Conference on Populations and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action processes.

### Specific partnerships and alliances

In its advocacy for gender justice, ACT will partner with other faith-based organisations, including WCC, Side by Side and the Gender Working Group of the UN Multi-faith Advisory Council, UN agencies such as UNFPA, UN Women and UNDP, as well as secular organisations such as International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Western Hemisphere (Latin America and Caribbean region).

## D. Migration and displacement

### Advocacy context

Mobility has been a defining feature of human history since the very beginning, and migration has been fundamental in the shaping of people's fates. Migrants have been important contributors to their origin and destination countries, and societies across the globe have likewise benefited from the positive effects of cross-cultural learning and progress in the areas of arts, science and trade, among others. While mostly a positive phenomenon, there are nevertheless still significant challenges associated with migration, particularly in the area of rights protection.

The current global crisis of solidarity both within and between countries has led to a situation in which large numbers of people on the move are being pushed to the margins of countries and societies. As many developing countries, some of which are also contending with internal displacement, struggle to continue to care for their neighbours in crisis who are on the move, the Global North's response has been mainly a tightening of border controls, coupled with an absence of regular pathways towards protection and opportunity on their territories. The effects of climate change – both for sudden-onset disasters and slow-onset environmental degradation – have become frequent contributing factors to complex migration and displacement scenarios, yet there remains a lack of political will to recognise or address this. The result has been an increase in smuggling and trafficking of persons, of exploitative labour practices, and an increase in protracted displacement situations worldwide. This has been accompanied by increasing instances of

xenophobia and racism, gaining traction among populist parties in many developed and developing countries that are destination points for refugees and migrants.

### Long-term strategic advocacy objective

ACT forums/members have specific advocacy capacity and are undertaking advocacy related to tracking government commitments to improve rights-based policies on migration and displacement, in particular related to the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and other international human rights instruments.

### Key areas/messages for the period

Rooted in the ACT Global Strategy, the main advocacy messages for Migration and Displacement are:

i. ***Making sure that people can migrate out of choice, not necessity***

ACT's mission is built on the principles of the dignity, uniqueness and intrinsic worth of every human being. Many people are pushed to leave their homes by desperation and factors beyond their control. ACT will urge duty bearers to address adverse drivers more holistically – so that people have the option of safely and productively staying in their communities and living with dignity. This means greater efforts to promote peace, security and rule of law; eliminate poverty; promote gender equality; and combat inequalities and discrimination. ACT will advocate for the human rights of all migrants and refugees, and oppose policy measures aimed at preventing the human right to free movement. ACT will strongly promote climate justice, including access to resources needed to adapt in place, as well as rights-based solutions to increase mobility options for those affected by climate change.

ii. ***Making sure that those who move are adequately protected***

ACT seeks to eliminate suffering of all those in migration, regardless of their reason for migrating or their legal status. ACT Alliance calls on states to narrow the gap between the protection needs of migrants and refugees, and protection actually offered; and to reverse measures that restrict access to asylum. People's human rights need to be protected at all times, regardless of migratory status. This requires active advocacy to protect and promote the existing global and regional legal instruments of international protection. Both human rights and refugee law have provisions of non-refoulement, and ACT Alliance will focus on implementation to make sure people are protected. ACT will oppose criminalisation of allies – including ACT members – who assist migrants in need, and particularly those who offer life-saving assistance. ACT will encourage actions to combat trafficking in ways that do not penalise persons being trafficked; and promote the expansion of regular migration pathways for more categories of people.

iii. ***Making sure that those who have moved are welcomed and integrated***

ACT promotes a culture of welcome and inclusion wherever newcomers are present, and actively opposes xenophobia and racism in all societies, using the wide access afforded the alliance through its network of national members, including national councils of churches. Advocacy will ensure that everyone, including migrants and refugees, has equal access to decent work and essential services, and that justice and due process is a reality for all. ACT will also advocate for all those who were forcibly displaced, for whatever reason, including reasons related to climate change, to be allowed to apply for asylum or other legal pathways to safety. The alliance will speak out against the harmful and widespread practice of immigration detention – which often compounds trauma that migrants experience – and

promote community-based alternatives. In order to end the prolonged legal uncertainty faced by many migrants, ACT will endorse pursuing options for regularising migratory statuses.

iv. ***Making sure that those who return can do so in dignity and have access to support***

When returning to their countries of origin, many migrants face significant challenges. ACT Alliance opposes return migration that violates the principle of non-refoulement, or that exposes those being returned to harm or inhumane conditions. Due process must be respected, and the human rights situation after return must be monitored more effectively in all circumstances. Returns programmes based on quotas do not, by their very nature, work towards the dignity and justice of migrants and refugees. Migrants who do seek to return to places of origin should be assisted, so that return migration is safe and dignified, and so that receiving communities can promote reintegration. Supporting these aims is part of ACT's overall approach to sustainable development and leaving no one behind.

### **Methods and partnerships**

Much of this work will be implemented at national level, through ACT forums and members, and coordinated regionally and globally in the context of international mechanisms such as the Global Refugee Forum for the GCR and the International Migration Review Forum for the GCM.

## **E. Peace and Human Security**

### **Advocacy context**

The world is affected by an array of profound and interconnected crises that not only accelerate complex power dynamics, but also increase war, violence, conflicts, human rights violations and economic inequalities. Struggles for the right to life and human dignity, self-determination, freedom of expression, assembly and association, freedom of religion and belief, along with freedom from both political subjugation and increased militarisation, are manifestations of people's quest for peace with justice and security.

ACT Alliance will undertake advocacy work on peace and human security by building on the strengths of its members' advocacy in this area, and assess where the alliance can specifically add value and contribute, to avoid duplication of and/or strengthen existing efforts. As a new thematic global priority introduced in the 2019 Global Strategy, it is expected that this work will evolve and focus as the peace and human security sub-strategy is rolled out.

Specifically, ACT advocacy will look to encompass the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and work within its commitments under the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement of Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, at national, regional and global levels.

### **Long-term strategic advocacy objective**

ACT Alliance has increased its advocacy capacity and active engagement in local, regional and international peacebuilding/human security matters, and is positioned as a leading faith actor bringing the voices of local faith communities to influence peace and human security processes.

## **Key areas/messages for the period**

ACT will focus its advocacy on the following areas, reflecting that this priority remains at an early stage within the alliance and will develop further, based on increasing experience: integration as an essential element in all other areas of work.

- i. ACT will advocate for the participation of women in peace processes at all levels, using the lessons and evidence of success of ACT forums' work in placing women in peace processes and peace negotiations.
- ii. ACT members engage in joint advocacy efforts to increase recognition and accelerate implementation of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security, including proactive networking, building awareness and engaging in the relevant national and global processes on UNSCR 1325 in order to connect the peace and human security agenda with the gender justice work.
- iii. ACT advocacy will aim to strengthen linkages between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding in accordance with the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit recommendations and the 2030 Agenda. It will include support for and promotion of the importance of SDG 16, and its implementation and integration as an essential element in all other areas of work.
- iv. ACT will establish crisis communication channels between ACT Secretariat and ACT forums in violent (direct, structural, controlled) situations or situations of mass human rights violations to ensure advocacy measures are enacted together with the WCC and other relevant organisations.

## **Specific partnerships and alliances**

ACT will enhance collaboration with WCC, the UN Multi-faith Advisory Committee, and other ecumenical and interfaith partners on peace and human security, and will work with other civil society networks such as the NGO Working Group on the Security Council and Pathways for Peace. It will also build partnerships with UN bodies, including UNDP and the Office for the Prevention of Genocide in relation to advocacy on women and peacekeeping.

## **F. Humanitarian Advocacy**

### **Advocacy context**

As part of the holistic and integrated approach to humanitarian response, development and advocacy, ACT's emergency preparedness and humanitarian response will be supported by stronger humanitarian coordination and advocacy with stakeholders and duty bearers.

Building on learning from the previous period, in the current strategy period advocacy will focus on three banner commitments to the Grand Bargain at the World Humanitarian Summit where ACT has made significant investments and where member engagement is quite strong: the localisation agenda and the primary role of national/local members and local faith actors; demonstrating the important role of faith actors in humanitarian response; and strengthening of cash-based programming across the humanitarian sector.

Aligned with the ACT Global Strategy, humanitarian advocacy will contribute to ensuring a forum-driven alliance, through strong forum engagement in crisis-specific advocacy as well as strengthening the mechanisms for national ACT forums to influence ACT's global advocacy agenda.

### **Long-term strategic advocacy objective**

ACT forums/members are putting people at the centre of humanitarian response by amplifying the voices of people affected by crisis and enhancing their agency in the humanitarian system, and are promoting the role of faith-based actors as key to deliver humanitarian assistance that builds resilience and reduces risks and vulnerabilities at individual, household, and community levels.

### **Key areas/messages for the period**

ACT humanitarian response will proactively seek intersections with other ACT thematic priorities, considering that humanitarian crises provide a rich context for introducing holistic programming that builds on life-saving emergency work.

A review of humanitarian advocacy priorities is planned in 2021 in consideration of the long-term impacts of COVID-19. Advocacy priority areas include:

- i. Practical evidence and lessons learned from ACT Alliance experience that have contributed to shape wider humanitarian policy to advance localisation, participation revolution, and movement towards cash-based programming.
- ii. ACT advocacy promotes the niche of faith-based organisations, religious leaders, churches, and other communities of faith in humanitarian response, built on a strong evidence base and increased capacity of national members and local faith actors to conduct advocacy.
- iii. ACT national and regional forums, as much as global representatives, will hold duty bearers to account on their responsibility to respect International Humanitarian Law, protect civilians and humanitarian actors, and provide humanitarian assistance.

### **Methods**

In order to achieve the longer term advocacy goals, ACT will develop an advocacy agenda and mechanism in national forums to ensure ACT humanitarian advocacy is informed by communities affected by crises and participate in crisis-specific fora at global, regional and national levels, including representation in key events, and in policy and coordination platforms of the humanitarian sector, donors, and government.

### **Specific partnerships and alliances**

For promotion of its policy positions and issues specific to humanitarian advocacy, ACT will engage with relevant coordination and policy platforms such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), ECOSOC Humanitarian Assistance Segment (HAS), Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), NGO VOICE, and Charter for Change (C4C). In global and national contexts, ACT will also collaborate with other actors focusing on the role of faith-based actors through shared learning and collective advocacy, e.g. Joint Learning Initiative (JLI), Humanitarian Disaster

Institute, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO), Caritas, and Brussels Interfaith.

## **G. Advocacy hubs, including Regional Secretariats**

In 2020, ACT Alliance has advocacy hubs, i.e., offices with dedicated presence and Secretariat staff responsible for shaping alliance-wide advocacy to and supporting forums' and members' initiatives at the UN in New York and Geneva, and the European Union in Brussels. In a less formally structured way, regional secretariats also serve as advocacy hubs, both coordinating regional advocacy and facilitating links among national, regional and global advocacy initiatives. With varied degrees of involvement of forums and members, ACT Alliance has organised processes for systematic engagement to regional/global processes in relation to the five thematic priorities, e.g. the UNFCCC, CSW, Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the GCM, the Sendai Framework, etc. A more ad hoc approach is taken to other regional processes and centres of power.

During this strategic period, the key aims for ACT advocacy hubs include:

- i. To continue to develop the existing hubs working to global and regional power centres to serve as key resources for the whole alliance, aligned to advocacy primarily focused on the five priority themes and their intersections and working in accordance with the approaches outlined above (pp 2-3).
- ii. To strengthen capacity and processes that facilitate linking regional and national initiatives to global processes to facilitate vertical and horizontal links to different processes and bodies in order to maximise the impact of our advocacy.
- iii. To develop more intentional partnerships with the UN and other multilateral or supranational bodies (such as the EU) and stakeholders, aligned with the Global Strategy, to ensure the high level visibility and engagement of ACT Alliance as a relevant and competent global player in humanitarian response, sustainable development and peace and human security, and as a leading voice in the 'religion and development' agendas. This is less an end in itself, as much as opening opportunities for ACT forums and programmes to participate in policy dialogue and help shape initiatives at national and regional levels.
- iv. To work intentionally to increase ACT advocacy in the regional power centres, regional political groupings (e.g. African Union, ASEAN, etc.), regional offices of multilateral organisations (e.g. the regional Economic Commissions), supranational institutions, etc., including intentionally supporting forums and groupings of ACT Alliance members with a special interest to engage actively in advocacy on the core thematic priorities as they have articulated and contextualised those issues and supporting regional secretariats to develop their advocacy role.

In the latter part of this strategic period at the latest, ACT Alliance commits to undertake a more systematic review of its global advocacy spread and use of resources, with a view to ensuring the impact of advocacy is maximised through sufficiently resourced regional work.

**ACT Alliance Advocacy to the UN, New York – The Ecumenical UN Office (EUNO)**

The Ecumenical UN Office (EUNO) in New York, as a joint initiative of WCC and ACT, works to a memorandum of understanding agreed every two years between the two organisations, setting out the joint strategic priorities for collaborative work. EUNO will continue its development as a strategic resource for WCC, ACT and its forums, and to some extent the wider ecumenical movement.

Over the coming strategic period, EUNO will focus on supporting and increasing global and regional advocacy in ACT's priority themes and country specific issues. In particular, EUNO will ensure that ACT plays a strong, credible and leading role in global advocacy, by linking its professional expertise and on the ground experience to the religion and development space at the UN and beyond. EUNO will prioritise leading work in relation to the agenda and opportunities related to the work of the UN that is centred in NY, specifically gender; peace and security focused on the women, peace and security agenda and on ACT priority countries in conflict on the Security Council agenda; migration and climate displacement; and the SDG Framework, including its underlying principles, and financing and increasing climate urgency in its implementation. EUNO will also play a supportive role for other ACT priority themes, including advocacy to create political willingness to address gaps within existing normative frameworks and agreements.

To achieve this, the strategic emphasis is on strengthening:

- EUNO's partnerships and positioning to ensure ACT and its allies are an integrated part of relevant UN processes at a high level.
- Relationships across the UN system, entities and government missions to ensure ACT constituent parts have access to appropriate bodies in relation to ACT priorities, emergencies and emerging issues.
- Connections and ability to strategise from national to regional to global in UN and other relevant multilateral advocacy processes.
- Knowledge and capacity to use international normative standards and mechanisms as tools to hold governments and other stakeholders accountable.
- Coordinated advocacy between Geneva and New York, as well as the EU and other regional centres, to achieve greater impact for our advocacy and align ACT advocacy with the implementation of Agenda 2030 and human rights obligations.
- Ecumenical, interfaith and other stakeholder relations, cooperation and coordinated approaches.
- Relationships and networks with the effective and relevant civil society actors and networks, both faith-based and secular, to facilitate engagement in initiatives and expand the opportunities for ACT and its forums' and members' advocacy.

**ACT Alliance advocacy to the UN, Geneva**

Geneva is still considered the "humanitarian capital" globally, and is the centre for international human rights treaty bodies and other processes. Several of the roles and functions of the ACT Secretariat based in Geneva will support global and regional advocacy in ACT's priority themes and ensure that ACT plays a strong, credible and leading role in global advocacy, especially in the humanitarian and human rights space.

Over the coming strategic period, the Geneva office will prioritise leading work in relation to the agenda and opportunities related to the work of the UN that is centred in Geneva, in particular various human rights issues and mechanisms; humanitarian issues; and migration and displacement. The Geneva-based advocacy related staff will also play a supportive role for other ACT priority themes (e.g. gender justice, climate justice or peace and human security), including liaison with UN agencies or human rights related bodies and mechanisms.

To achieve this, the strategic emphasis will be placed on:

- Maintaining and enlarging partnerships and positioning to ensure ACT and its allies are an integrated part of relevant UN processes at a high level.
- Strengthening relationships across the UN system, entities and government missions to ensure ACT constituent parts have access to appropriate bodies in relation to ACT priorities, emergencies and emerging issues.
- Increasing direct contacts and access into UN processes in addition to existing and functioning access via membership in other civil society networks.
- Coordinated advocacy between Geneva and New York, as well as the EU and other regional centres, to achieve greater impact for our advocacy and align ACT advocacy with the implementation of Agenda 2030 and human rights obligations.
- Strengthening ecumenical, interfaith and other stakeholder relations, cooperation and coordinated approaches.
- Relationships and networks with the effective and relevant civil society actors and networks, both faith-based and secular, to facilitate engagement in initiatives and expand the opportunities for ACT and its members' and Forums' advocacy.

### ***ACT Alliance Advocacy to the EU, Brussels***

The ACT Alliance EU (formerly Aprovev) network is a group of ACT Alliance members, with a secretariat in Brussels, which advocates to the EU on humanitarian and development-related issues. Since the EU, as a supranational government, forms part of the government structures of EU member states, ACT Alliance's EU members see their joint advocacy as part and parcel of their advocacy to their own national governments. The EU institutions are also critical advocacy targets for non-EU ACT Alliance EU members whose national governments' policies are intertwined with those of the EU. The ACT Europe Forum includes members from nations for whom the EU is less directly relevant. This is why ACT Alliance EU is distinct from the ACT Europe Forum.

Advocacy towards the European Union will be done under the auspices of the ACT Alliance EU in Brussels, based on the ACT EU Advocacy Strategy, which was approved by its governing body in 2018, and which is based on the ACT Alliance Global Strategy.

ACT EU's close collaboration and joint strategic planning with the ACT Alliance Secretariat allows it to influence the EU and Member State (MS) positions in global processes leading to greater impact of both the alliance and the ACT Alliance EU network. Its two core thematic areas are Development Policy and Practice

(DPP) and Humanitarian Policy and Practice (HPP). These core areas are supported by so-called Special Projects, which have a specific focus and are of limited duration.

### **Priorities**

- Aiming at long-lasting social, environmental and gender justice, which leaves no one behind, DPP advocates for the coherence of EU development cooperation with the Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the European Consensus on Development.
- HPP focuses on key areas of ACT Alliance’s strategy, which are not picked up by other humanitarian advocacy actors in Brussels; localisation and survivor-led responses, the role of faith actors, diversity of the humanitarian eco-system.
- Special Projects (which are currently on Migration and Displacement, Climate Justice, Food Security, and the Middle East) all contribute to our commitment to holistic, inclusive and sustainable development.

### **H. Advocacy capacity development**

Advocacy capacity development will be guided by the ACT capacity development and learning strategy. This will be an ongoing process within the life of the alliance and will focus on enhancing the capacities of the Secretariat, forums and members, developing technical capacities for impact in the advocacy work of the alliance. Without dedicated staffing for training and capacity development, ACT forums, alongside Reference Groups and Communities of Practice (CoPs), should take responsibility for assessing their needs and work with Secretariat staff, Reference Groups and CoPs in relation to meeting the capacity development needs.

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. ACT will utilise existing capacity-building platforms, particularly the ACT Alliance Advocacy Academy to enhance the capacity of its members and forums to do effective advocacy. ACT will strategically include churches and members of the ecumenical family as well as other faith actors in its capacity development initiatives.

The guiding principles for advocacy capacity development will be:

- i. Demand-driven – tailored to the specific needs, assets and context of users.
- ii. Targeted to:
  - a. Forums
  - b. Secretariat (Geneva, NY, Brussels, regional secretariats)
  - c. Interested Members, including
    - Their supported CSO and FBOs partners
    - Accompanied communities, groups and movements
- iii. Inclusive – balancing, celebrating and integrating sophisticated advocacy work done by professionals and advocacy done by “non-experts”.

The content for advocacy capacity development will focus on:

- iv. Technical capacities to employ advocacy tools using current methods, e.g. evidence based, local to global, foresight, digital advocacy, etc.
- v. Capacity to do advocacy as a faith-based network, including principles and values of faith-based political and constituency engagement.
- vi. Thematic knowledge – climate, gender, migration, peace and human security, and humanitarian policy and practice.
- vii. Human rights based advocacy, including international human rights law, human rights frameworks, etc.
- viii. Advocacy and advocacy risks in the context of shrinking political space.
- ix. Youth and faith mobilisation for advocacy.
- x. Effective advocacy communications and campaigning.

**I. Measuring impacts:** Measuring advocacy results, including monitoring, evaluation, documentation and sharing of best practice in the advocacy cycle, is being developed as part of the comprehensive ACT Alliance PMER (Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Review) system to be in place by 2021.

**J. Advocacy risk assessment:** Advocacy risk assessment will be either included in the overall risk assessment of the Governing Board and the Secretariat, or as a separate piece.

**K. Role of Secretariat, Reference Groups and Communities of Practice:** A separate process to agree the roles, responsibilities and levels of authority is being developed for ACT Alliance policy and advocacy to reflect its forum driven approach.