



PUB 17

Together for Justice: Our Collective Action for ACT Alliance in Challenging and Polarizing Times

COVER NOTE

The ACT structure responsible for the statement is the ACT Europe Forum. We have consulted the Advocacy and Policy Group, and several other regional forums, during the preparation of the document.

TOPIC

The ACT Assembly is an opportunity for the membership to discuss how to strengthen our mutual commitment to one another, celebrate achievements and affirm the direction we wish to take as an Alliance. Together as faith actors united in the ACT Alliance and connected to the World Council of Churches, we provide a strong contribution to the saving of lives, building resilience, and achieving justice. We believe, however, that there is much more potential in working together in the Alliance than what is currently realized. At the assembly, as a global fellowship, we therefore want to lay out some main points where added value should be pursued in line with the strategic plan of ACT Alliance and commit ourselves to some key recommendations to achieve these.

STATEMENT

Together for Justice: Our Collective Action for ACT Alliance in Challenging and Polarizing Times

In times of polarization, we need stronger multilateral cooperation. In times of increasing inequality, we need to unite in the fight for justice. In times of shrinking civic space, backlash against human rights and rising authoritarianism, we need to strengthen the role of civil society as a driving force for development. In times of conflict, we need religious and other local leaders to take on an even stronger role as peacemakers. In times of climate change, we need to protect the integrity of Creation and mobilize for sustainable stewardship. We believe that faith-based organizations around the globe hold important keys to lasting change and development that they are becoming more and more relevant.

As we meet in Yogyakarta to deliberate on the future strategic direction of the ACT Alliance, we see these added values and these potential areas for growth in line with the ACT strategy.

Added Values

- **Shared Identity:** ACT Alliance is our ecumenical family, providing a shared identity as Christian voices in the humanitarian and development sectors. Our common values and understanding with each other foster trust, and thus facilitate strong cooperation with like-minded partners and capacities for accountability (e.g. the ACT Code of Conduct). Our grounding in churches and ecumenical character offer a unique culture of justice-centred and community-led approaches.
- **Global Reach and Advocacy:** Through the ACT Alliance our reach extends to countries where individual members' presence or existing cooperation with partners might be lacking. This is crucial for effective and timely humanitarian crisis response. ACT's collective advocacy at regional and global levels benefits from its wide geographic footprint and faith-based identity and provides access to decision-making fora.
- **Pooling and Sharing of Resources:** While there are diverse perspectives / approaches among faith actors to various issues, ACT Alliance provides strong leadership on gender justice, human rights and a progressive theological grounding on climate change. Joint offices and shared resources among ACT members reduce overheads and foster closer cooperation and strategic alignment. ACT serves as a platform for networking, collaboration, capacity building, mutual learning and sharing of expertise as well as resources. Policies which are developed together and then all members commit to are an added value. This way we enhance our collective strength and effectiveness.

Potential Areas for Growth

- **Strengthening Relationships:** Building a stronger ACT Alliance requires investing time and resources, sharing risks, and pursuing common opportunities. Clear communication about our level of commitment, internally among our staff and other stakeholders, and externally, is essential. Where thematic collaboration is happening in an interest-based and mutually invested manner (e.g. Communities of Practice, some Forums), this is beneficial to our common and individual efforts.

- **Enhanced Humanitarian Response:** Strengthening and expanding the ACT Rapid Response Mechanism, particularly through support to the ACT Secretariat to increase staffing and expertise with the aim of attracting greater and more diverse funding, holds potential for enabling swift, locally led responses to crises. Building up this potential underlines ACT’s commitment to locally led response.
- **Community and Locally Led Response:** Emphasizing and working towards more localization in our humanitarian and development work ensures sustainability, ownership and agency by local actors. ACT’s justice-centred ethos and our structure and culture being flatter than most civil society families creates opportunities to model a more equitable, decolonised approach, drawing also on the insights of the joint WCC/ACT document *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia*. **Visibility and Communication:** Increasing the visibility of ACT’s collective humanitarian efforts requires clarification on responsibilities for more improved reporting and communication on the Total ACT Response.
- **Coordinated Advocacy and Thematic Collaboration:** There is potential for more coherent advocacy efforts. By aligning our advocacy initiatives on themes (e.g. climate justice, gender justice, and tax justice) and vis-à-vis key institutions (e.g. for humanitarian field OCHA, UNHCR), we can amplify our impact on global, regional, and national policies. Our diversity needs to be a strength that can benefit the ACT family.

Commitments & Recommendations

As ACT Alliance and its members, we commit to:

- **Work towards changes to shift power to local actors in our humanitarian and development work and to be accountable to people affected by crisis and vulnerability**, as also highlighted in the joint WCC/ACT document *Called to Transformation: Ecumenical Diakonia*, which highlights the contribution of faith actors who “keep building resilient and prepared communities and play a key role in strengthening capacity at the local level”.
- **Strengthen and expand the ACT Rapid Response Mechanism** with the aim of attracting greater and more diverse funding, to amplify swift, locally led responses to crises.
- **Strive for more coherent advocacy efforts** and actively ensure that our diversity is a strength in our coordinated advocacy and thematic collaboration.
- **Prioritize and strengthen our cooperation**, in order to pursue common opportunities and increased visibility.

A majority of the assembly has declared itself in agreement with the opinions expressed in this statement. While many ACT members agree with the public statement, there are members who have expressed differing perspectives on the content or tone. Their decision reflects the diverse viewpoints within our alliance, and we respect their choice to abstain or vote against. As always, we value the collective dialogue and encourage continued discussions on the matter at hand, recognizing the strength of our unity in diversity.