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Code of Good Practice For the ACT Alliance

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Code of Good Practice

For the

ACT Alliance

05 February 2011

This document was approved by the ACT Alliance Governing Board on 05 February 2011.

1. Introduction

The ACT Alliance as a membership-based organisation is 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 group of members.

ACT Alliance members are bound together by several core values that are grounded in our Christian faith and which guide our work. We have a responsibility to be accountable to those individuals and communities with whom we work, to those who support us and to each other.

2. Purpose and scope

The *ACT Code of Good Practice* is an organisational level commitment to continuous improvement and movement toward best practice principles. It complements the *ACT Code of Conduct* [2] which serves as a guide for individual ACT staff to make ethical decisions in their professional lives and at times in their private lives.

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.

The Code of Good Practice provides principles for all ACT members focusing in four key areas:

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. They provide the foundations for effective and accountable programming.

iii. *Programmatic principles*[3] – 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. *Relational Principles* – the principles that support ACT members working together and promote collaboration, cooperation and partnership among alliance members

[1] ACT Alliance Founding Document, February 2009
[2] ACT Code of Conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power: http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/codes-of-conduct
[3] The programmatic principles will be reviewed every three-five years to embrace new developments and in some cases, new scientific evidence, so that the Code becomes established as a credible and accurate reflection of sound programmatic practice for the ACT Alliance.

3. ACT Alliance Principles

i. Overarching Principles

Each member of the ACT Alliance commits to…

1. Acting in ways that respect, empower and protect the dignity, uniqueness, and the intrinsic worth and human rights of every woman, man, girl and boy;
2. Working 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 targeting those who suffer discrimination and those who are most vulnerable;
3. Speaking out and acting against those conditions, structures and systems which increase vulnerability and perpetuate poverty, injustice, humanitarian rights violations and the destruction of the environment;
4. Working in ways that respect, strengthen and enable local and national-level capacity;
5. Not using humanitarian or development assistance to further a particular religious or political partisan standpoint;
6. Upholding the highest professional, ethical and moral standards of accountability, recognising our accountability to those with whom we work, to those who support us, to each other, and ultimately to God;
7. Meeting the highest standards of truthfulness and integrity in all of our work; and
8. Endeavouring not to act as instruments of government foreign policy.

ii. Organisational Principles

1. Commit to responsible and transparent governance and management including upholding the highest ethical standards and being accountable to all stakeholders
2. Develop and maintain the organisational capacity necessary to support development and humanitarian programmes in terms of mobilisation of resources[4] and creating management conditions to achieve strategic objectives;
3. Commit to act in ways that will protect God's creation, restore the environment and respect human rights;
4. Promote gender equality as a common value and gender mainstreaming as a method of work;
5. Take responsibility and hold ourselves accountable for ensuring the safety, dignity and security of our staff and volunteers;

[4] Such as: staffing, infrastructure, technology, and finances.

6. Make a 'core commitment' to mainstream protection in all work, at a minimum, ensuring mechanisms are in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of gender-based violence;
7. Make a concerted effort to engage with churches and their local ministries, recognizing their role in providing religious and 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.

iii. Programmatic Principles

1. Uphold high ethical, human rights and programmatic standards in all of our work (as relevant) such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[5], Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief[6], Sphere Standards[7], the Principles of Partnership,[8] the ACT Code of Conduct[9], and all other ACT Alliance policies and codes[10].
2. Listen to, and incorporate into all stages of programmatic work, the perspectives of those women and men whose lives are affected by crises, poverty, exclusion, rights deprivation and injustice and support them as they claim their human rights and work to improve their situation and overall wellbeing.
3. Address the root causes of poverty, rights deprivation, injustice, and exclusion in appropriate ways, including working for relevant changes within both formal and informal institutions.
4. Work to ensure that appropriate and timely support reaches the most deprived men and women within communities.
5. Proactively seek equal and meaningful participation of women and men from the communities with whom we work in initiatives and decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods, making a concerted effort to include those who are disproportionately excluded in their society.
6. Promote an integrated, community-based approach to our work, creating a link between development and humanitarian assistance and related advocacy work, recovery, reconstruction, and disaster risk reduction.
7. Use work approaches that develop community capacity, strengthening existing community capacity and prioritise the use of local resources (human, material, cultural etc).
8. Enable the active participation of communities in determining appropriate self-protection and risk reduction measures.

[5] See: http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml
[6] See http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/codes-of-conduct
[7] See Sphere Standards 2011 version http://www.sphereproject.org/
[8] See http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/partnership
[9] See the "ACT Code of Conduct for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption and abuse of power", revised January 2011 at http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/codes-of-conduct
[10] For all ACT policies and guidelines see: http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines

9. Work to foresee and understand the impact of our work on existing and potential conflicts and inequalities, incorporating "Do no harm" principles in our work and where appropriate, grasping opportunities to support peace.
10. Ensure the people that we work with have access to information about ACT, our programmes, our budget, funding sources, how they can give feedback or complain, and participate in our work.
11. Ensure rigorous, high quality standards in all our work, having effective systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating.
12. Use moral and ethical business practices when relating and cooperating within ACT and with external actors such as other NGO, UN agencies, the private sector and the military.
13. Work in a complementary and collaborative manner with other national and international development and humanitarian institutions and agencies.

iv. Relational Principles

1. Nurture and sustain partnerships to support more effective, fair and satisfying 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 in order to improve the quality of our work and draw on the rich diversity of our alliance.
3. Build relationships, strengthen effectiveness and work collaboratively, adopting complementary strategies in our work.
4. Recognise and value the unique gifts that each of us has been given.
5. Build and sustain transparent and accountability-based relationships to support coordinated and effective humanitarian, development and advocacy responses.
6. Strengthen the capacity of churches who are responding to the developmental needs of their communities, paying particular attention to enhancing the capacity of ecumenical organisations and to support programmes undertaken by multi-faith groups.

4. Implementation

Implementation of the principles is the responsibility of each ACT member signatory and as such, each member organisation should institute a system to self-evaluate its efforts and progress towards each principle.

An ACT Peer Review system will be facilitated by the ACT Secretariat to assess the level of implementation of the principles and to serve as a shared learning experience for alliance members. The ACT Secretariat will provide assistance to help implement parts of the Code where possible and as appropriate, supported by ACT's Global Working Groups.

5. Compliance and sanctions

All ACT Alliance members must adhere to the Code of Good Practice. It is expected that all ACT members will see the mutual benefits of following the good practices set out in this Code, and will attempt to resolve any compliance issues among and between each other especially if members are working in a partner relationship. Alternatively, such complaints can be addressed at the ACT forum level, if forum members have agreed to a common complaints mechanism.

If the issue cannot be resolved at the country level, formal complaints from one (or more) ACT member organization(s) about the conduct of other ACT member organization(s) can be submitted to the ACT General Secretary. S/he will refer such complaints to the ACT Complaints Advisory Group which reports to the Governing Board. The group will present the findings and conclusions of any investigation to the Governing Board. The Governing Board will then decide on the necessary disciplinary action (if any) based on the defined ACT disciplinary procedures outlined in the ACT Complaints Policy and Disciplinary Procedures.[11]

6. Organisational commitment

An ACT member organisation endorsement of the Code means that the ACT member supports ALL principles, even if the organisation is not involved in all areas of sectoral work.

The representative of the ACT member organisation, whose signature appears below, has read, understood and is in agreement with the content of this Code of Good Practice. The member organisation also accepts the consequences of non-adherence of any of the above provisions under this Code.

Full name of Organisation:

Name of Signatory:

Position: Signature:

Date: **Place:**

[11] For details of the policy and supporting complaints and investigation guidelines please refer to http://www.actalliance.org/resources/policies-and-guidelines/complaints-mechanism