# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

**November 2021**

| Board Ratification Date: | May 2020 | This Policy represents a merging of our previous Disability Inclusivity Policy, our Age and Diversity Policy, and our Gender Policy, as there was a lot of overlap between these policies, and the higher level principles apply to all three of these policies. Our Gender Policy was adopted in 1996, and revised in 2004, 2005, 2010 and 2016. Our Disability Inclusivity Policy which was adopted in 2010 and revised in 2012 and 2016. Our Diversity and Age Policy was adopted in 2013, and revised in 2016. As of November 2021 the HIV/AIDS Policy has also been incorporated into this Policy. The HIV/AIDS policy was first adopted in February 2016. |
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| Reaffirmation Date: | | |
| Revision Date: | Oct 2020 | This merged policy has also been revised to: reflect ACFID's revised Code of Conduct; make policy commitments to advocacy and other initiatives more explicit, and; to confirm that whilst 'equality' is the desired outcome, our approach is to focus on 'equity'. |
| | November 2021 | HIV/AIDS Policy incorporated into this Policy, and stronger language to confirm framing of the policy statement as one that recognises power structures, and the rights afforded through law. Confirms that the Policy applies to HR including recruitment. |
| Next Review: | Nov 2024 | Review Cycle: every 3-years or when required by DFAT or other other regulatory bodies |

## 1. Policy statement

As an agency committed to improving the safety, dignity and rights of all people, and most specifically those affected by forced displacement related to conflict, disaster.  Act for Peace values diversity and equity and promotes inclusion of all people in our work. Act for Peace understands that inclusion relates to power constructs which include privilege, oppression and discrimination, which must be proactively addressed. Our commitment to inclusion applies to all aspects of our identity, our culture, and practice.

Act for Peace confirms a strong commitment to the inclusion and representation of those who are vulnerable, at risk or affected by the intersecting drivers of marginalisation and exclusion, including and not restricted to race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, disability, age, displacement, caste, gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class, or socio-economic status. This commitment includes recognition that interpersonal and systemic discrimination must be proactively addressed.

Our committment is founded on:
- Our belief as a Christian organisation that all persons are created in the image of God and are thus equals with the same rights and human dignity.
- Our recognition and respect for international law (human rights, humanitarian and refugee law) as reflected in our foundational human rights and protection policies.
- Our recognition that affected communities have the right, the capacity, and the desire to be active analysts and agents of change.
- Our recognition that diversity and the active participation and leadership by affected communities brings valued and diverse perspectives, richer context and risk analysis, understanding of how to strengthen existing community protection mechanisms, poignant insights into untapped capacity, and scope for new approaches and innovation.
- Our commitment to uphold humanitarian principles, particularly impartiality, our rights-based commitment to non-discrimination, and our protection principles.

Act for Peace aims to apply this Policy by:
- Active promotion of inclusion and respect for diversity within our agency, within our partnerships and the programs we support, and in the way we communicate our work.
- Ensuring that exclusion of any individual or group within a target group or community on discriminatory grounds is recognised as discrimination and is proscribed.
- Integrating 'do-no-harm' criteria through our programs as they relate to vulnerable groups.
- Ensuring the meaningful participation and leadership of affected communities.
- Taking an inclusive approach to our work that seeks to identify and address barriers that prevent vulnerable and marginalised people from participating in and benefiting from program and advocacy outcomes, thereby ensuring safe, dignified and meaningful access to initiatives hosted by Act for Peace and our Partners.
- Assessing how structural and institutionalised forms of discrimination create and perpetuate disadvantage, and taking action to address these root causes through our partnerships, programs and advocacy.

Our specific commitments include:

*Discrimination and diversity*
- Recognising the role that intersecting factors - such as race, religion, ethnicity, indigeneity, displacement, caste,  gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual orientation, poverty, class or socio-economic status, political opinion, and membership of a social group -  play in creating and perpetuating identity-based discrimination is critical in addressing exclusion, and fostering inclusion. Act for Peace will take active meansures to prevent and respond to discrimination –

particularly where it leads to serious harm, becomes insitutionalised, and leads to systemic human rights abuses and dispalcement.

*Gender equality and equity relates to:*
- The prevention of. and response to. sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and all forms of gender based violence.
- Promoting greater participation of women and girls in decision making that affect their lives, including offering leadership opportunities.
- Active involvement of men and boys in promoting gender equality.
- Targeted protection and assistance to reduce threats and vulnerabilities, increase capacity and address structural gender inequalities.
- Striving for all initiatives - ranging from emergency assistance, recovery, reconstruction through to long-term development - to utilise and benefit from a thorough social analysis, including gender-sensitive and disability-sensitive analytical tools and approaches.

*Inclusion of people living with disabilities*
- Promoting participation for people living with disabilities in making decisions which affect their lives.
- The prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of people living with disabilities.
- Recognising the multi-level discrimination often experienced by people living with disabilities, and offer targeted protection and assistance to reduce threats and vulnerabilities, increase capacity and address barriers to participation.

*Age sensitive and inclusive actions*
- Understanding age is an important consideration in our work, as elderly people and young people face different risks, social pressures and obstacles, and have differing abilities and strengths.
- The prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of all age groups, including children, youth and elderly people.
- Promoting participation for different age groups in decisions which affect their lives.
- Reduce at risk behaviour amongst young people by intentionally building resilience and support networks.

*HIV/AIDS*
- Promote HIV/AIDS awareness amongst staff, partners and project participants, and mainstreaming and integrating HIV/AIDS awareness across our humanitarian and development programs, as appropriate.
- Maximise the positive impact of AfP's work with partners to reduce the effects of HIV/AIDS and tackling stigma, discrimination and denial.
- Act for Peace and partners' capacity is strengthened to apply best practice in organisational and program approaches to HIV/AIDS, as appropriate to context.
- Act for Peace acknowledges that the understanding of, and capacity to directly address HIV/AIDS as a health issue, differs between countries and partners, therefore our approach will be tailored to the cultural, legal and environmental context.

## 2. Objectives
The core objective of this policy is:
- To promote and actively practice inclusion of diversity within our Agency, partnerships, programs and communications.

- Empower communities to transform power relationships in order to build just, equitable and inclusive societies that enhance and sustain peace.
- Ensure inclusion and active participation of vunerable and marginalised people within any Act for Peace programming or initiatives.
- Ensure decisions about programming and other initiatives are based on evidence that considers impact for people who may be marginalised due to their identity.

*Approaches*

Act for Peace's rights-based approach recognises all people as 'rights holders'. As rights-holders, all people at risk or affected by conflict, disasters or displacement have the right to request and receive assistance and protection. Promoting the application of a rights-based approach ensures that our support is targeted at the most vulnerable and those most at risk of discrimination, exclusion, marginalisation and other human rights abuses.

All program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes will seek to expose direct and indirect discrimination and social exclusion that may occur as a consequence of the way people are treated in society and a combination of identities and intersection of age, gender and other diversities. It aims to identify assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices, and address them.

Act for Peace will seek to draw on strengths and capacities of all people to enable inclusive and strengths-based approaches. It is recognised that programming and advocacy often require a combination of approaches, and Act for Peace will choose these carefully according to contexts, alignment with our values and principles, and evidence-based social and behavioural change research.

Act for Peace is committed to promoting equality and equity as common values as well as promoting gender, disability, diversity and age mainstreaming and targeted action to address associated inequalities.

## 3. Principles and standards

*Act for Peace is commited to the following standards and principles:*
- International human rights, humanitarian, and refugee law
- ACT Code of Good practice
- The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief
- The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability
- ACFID Code of Conduct
- The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action
- The Sphere Project – Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response and the The Sphere Handbook.
- DFAT's ANCP Guidance Manual, and relevant policies
- UN Security Council Resolutions on protection of civilians.

As a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, Act for Peace is committed to upholding the values and meeting the following standards within that Code, including:
- "Respect: we recognise the value and diversity of every person and are committed to treating others with due regard for their rights, dignity and integrity." (Value 4)
- "Equity: we are committed to overcoming prejudices and disadvantage and promoting fair and just access to resources and opportunities." (Value 6)

- "Rights, Protection and Inclusion: development and humanitarian responses respect and protect human rights and advance inclusion."  (Quality Principle 1)
- "Participation, Empowerment and Local Ownership: development and humanitarian responses enable sustainable change through the empowerment of local actors and systems." (Quality Principle 2)

## 4. Scope

The commitments made in this Policy apply to all of Act for Peace's work, including, our advocacy, capacity building, the way we communicate our work, and the partnerships, programs and initiatives we support.

The commitments confirmed in this Policy are in line with Act for Peace's Code of Conduct, Human Rights Policy, Humanitarian Protection Policy, Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harrassment Policy, and the ACT Alliance Code of Conduct.

The Policy is to be read in conjunction with Act for Peace's Human Rights Policy and our Humanitarian Protection Policy, Code of Conduct and Code of Good Practice.  Act for Peace will endevour to apply this policy to its own human resource management, provided that it does not conflict with Australian employment and anti-dicrimination laws (see Act for Peace's Human Resource Policies).

## 5. Definitions

**Disability:** Act for Peace applies the definition of disability from the Minimum Standards for Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Aid:[1]

> *People with disabilities include women, men, girls and boys with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (see Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). An illness can develop into an impairment or disability because of its duration or chronic nature. In the context of a humanitarian crisis, an injury or other impairment might be considered a disability if it hinders a person's access to, and participation in, humanitarian assistance. It is important to recognise not only individuals' impairments, but also the environmental and attitudinal barriers that limit their participation.*

In agreement with DFAT, our definition of disability includes "episodic" impairments,[2] in line with the "evolving concept of disability".[3]

**Disability Inclusion:** a term used by people with disabilities and other disability rights advocates for the idea that all people should freely, openly and without pity accommodate any person with a disability without restrictions or limitations of any kind.

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[1] This definition comes from the Minimum Standards for Age and Disability Inclusion in Humanitarian Action www.helpage.org/what-we-do/emergencies/adcap-age-and-disability-capacity-building-programme/

[2] "*Episodic disabilities are characterised by fluctuating periods and degrees of illness and wellness, or in the language of the social model of disability, impairment and non-impairment. Episodic disabilities are typically unpredictable.*" , page 7 of "Episodic Disabilities and Post-secondary Education in Canada. A Review of the Literature"  at www.hivandrehab.ca/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_Lit_Review.pdf

[3] See page 9, footnote 11 of  DFAT's "Development for All 2015- 2020"  http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/development-for-all-2015-2020.aspx

**Discrimination:** Discrimination includes the exclusion of, mistreatment of, or action against an individual based on social status, race, ethnicity, caste, indigeneity, colour, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, marital status, national origin, displacement, political affiliation, disability or other personal characteristics

**Diversity:** Diversity refers to the variety of visible and invisible differences between people within a community, target group or work place environment.

**Ethnicity**: the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.

**Exclusion**: the process of excluding or the state of being excluded.

**Gender:** Refers to differences between females and males throughout the lifecycle that are learned, deeply rooted in every culture, and are changeable over time. Socially constructed differences and relations, evidenced in the identities, roles, responsibilities and attributes assigned to boys, girls, women and men in society.

**Gender equality:** Gender equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys, and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Based on internationally acknowledged and agreed human right commitments, women and men are entitled to equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, civil, economic, social and cultural fields of life[4]

**Gender equity:** "Gender equity" is the means through which gender equality is reached. It refers to the fair treatment of women, girls, boys, and men according to their respective needs and perspectives. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical as well as current social disadvantages that prevent equal acces to rights, freedoms, opportunities, resources and rewards[5].

**Gender identity** refers to self-identification and one's own view of oneself and self-expression. It is about what it means to be a boy or girl, man or woman. It is also all of the attributes and characteristics that our culture expects to go along with as part of belonging to one or the other of the sexes. Non binary genders may be referred to as transgender, intersex and/or third sex.

**Gender mainstreaming:** A strategy for attaining gender equality. A process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action. It is a strategy for making the concerns and the experiences of women and men an integral part of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all economic, political and social spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (ECOSOC).

**Gender analysis:** Examines the power and relationship between women and men and their access to and control over resources and benefits, their roles and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated into the humanitarian needs assessment and in all sector assessments or situation analysis.

**Gender group:** A gender group is a category used by people within that group, or outside that group, to define a certain gender identity, for example an adult woman, a boy child etc.

**Gender sensitivity:** The proper awareness of the different needs, roles, and responsibilities of women and men in design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policy and programs in all spheres.

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[4] Based on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and especially the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) 1966; Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) 1966; the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979; and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989.

[5] Adapted from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) definition of gender equity.

**Gender policy principles:** a framework that explains the basic principles on which an organisation's gender policy is based, and thus gives direction to achieve gender equality.

**Gender disaggregated data:** the qualitative and quantitative analysis of sex-disaggregated statistical information.

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences, like power inequalities, between females and males. Acts of GBV violate a number of universal human rights. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, rape, forced prostitution, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage, harmful traditional practices, honor killing and widow inheritance.

**HIV/AIDS Integration:** Integrating of HIV/AIDS-specific interventions refers to direct HIV targeted work that could be included into other wider programs, i.e. broadening of health and nutrition programming to include HIV specific health and nutritional concerns. (Ref. Code of Good Practice for NGOs Responding to HIV).

**HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming:** Mainstreaming HIV is a cross cutting policy, an indirect approach to responding to HIV, meaning taking HIV into consideration when planning emergency (and development) programs and adapting these programs to ensure they address the underlying causes of vulnerability to HIV infection and the consequences. The focus of such programs remains the original goal (for example, providing food and shelter to the disaster affected populations).

**Non-discrimination:** ensuring that all of the affected population including older women and men, and women, men, girls and boys with disabilities can access assistance and benefit from humanitarian response on an equal basis with others. Meaningful access: ensuring that any barriers affecting the access and participation of people with disabilities and older people in humanitarian assistance and protection are addressed.

**Protection:** All activities aimed at securing full respect for the rights of individuals in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. Protection activities aim to create an environment in which human dignity is respected, specific patterns of abuse are prevented or their immediate effects alleviated, and dignified conditions of life are restored through reparation, restitution and rehabilitation. Protection aims to reduce the risk of violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation of rights through reducing threats and vulnerabilities, and increasing capacity to address risks.

**Sex:** Refers specifically to the biological and physiological reality of being male or female, or natural variations thereof.

**Sex-disaggregated data:** The quantitative statistical or numerical information on the difference between men, women, boys and girls.