

Advocacy Policy

January 2024

Board Ratification Date:	March 2021 2016 2014 2011	
Reaffirmation Date:		
Revision Date:	January 2021	Update of review cycle date
	January 2021	Revised to remove redundant or superfluous wording. References to our work were further nuanced to ensure against over stating our role and contribution to advocacy and partner programs. References to ‘vulnerable communities’ were replaced with ‘at risk and affected communities’ to ensure against treating communities as objects of charity or implying whole communities were vulnerable. Greater focus on locally led advocacy and mobilising supporters to take action. Added note on the need to review, learn, and identify and address gaps in competencies and organisational capacity. Reformatted and minor grammatical changes made.
	February 2016 2014 2011	
Review cycle:	March 2026	Every 5-years or when required by DFAT or other regulatory bodies.

1. Policy statement

Act for Peace's advocacy work is grounded in our Christian faith. We believe that all persons are created in the image of God and therefore have inherent dignity and equal worth. This recognition calls upon us as members of the ecumenical family to express our solidarity with, and accountability to, the most vulnerable and not merely to seek to ease their suffering or bear silent witness to the world's injustices.

Act for Peace recognises advocacy as a core component of rights-based humanitarian, development, and protection programming and as essential to the achievement of sustainable, transformative change resulting in strengthened safety, justice and dignity for communities threatened by conflicts, disasters, and ongoing displacement.

Act for Peace is committed to the use of advocacy as a critical tool for the realisation of our vision, mission, purpose, and goals, and as a requirement for the fulfilment of our mandate.¹ Act for Peace regards strategic, evidence-based advocacy as integral to our efforts to:

- Contribute to the reform of the systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes that generate, enable, and perpetuate injustice and inequality.
- Hold those with responsibilities (duty bearers) to account.
- Mobilise constituencies for change.
- Stand with those experiencing oppression and injustice.
- Strengthen the capacity of communities, and other at risk and affected groups, to engage in their own advocacy, and local civil society organisations seeking to help them.
- Provide moral and practical leadership.

Act for Peace understands that advocacy activities may entail significant risks and undertakes to continuously assess and manage any such risks with care and in consultation with key stakeholders. We commit to upholding the principle of 'do no harm,' we seek ways to manage risk, rather than refrain from taking action.

For Act for Peace, advocacy is the work we do to influence the policies, practices and attitudes of governments, intergovernmental organisations, multilateral structures and processes, other powerful actors (and those who influence them), and public behaviour and attitudes, in order to bring about the change required to improve the safety, dignity and justice experienced by communities threatened by conflict and disaster. It may include building community and partner capacity for advocacy, joint-advocacy with partners and other agencies, public campaigns and awareness raising, solutions-orientated dialogues with government and key stakeholders, government lobbying, stand-alone advocacy programs on specific issues, and engagement in humanitarian, development, and protection practice dialogues.

Our advocacy positions are informed by research and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly discussions with local partners, and by insights derived from the programmatic and advocacy work conducted by those partners. It is driven by our understanding that we can only sustain the positive impact of our programs, and take that impact to scale, by persuading and/or challenging governments and other institutions with power and resources to change the systems they control, which includes changing their policies, practices, and attitudes. This involves creating an enabling environment for reform, which can be supported through changes in public attitudes and understanding. While our advocacy may have short-term objectives, these are always contextualised within a broader positive change goal.

¹ AFP Vision, Mission, Purpose, and Goal 2015-2021 (2015) p.11

We understand advocacy to mean a set of strategic, coordinated activities which may include research, policy engagement and lobbying, public awareness-raising, and campaigning to mobilise support for collective purpose. Policy engagement and lobbying involve working with decision makers who have the power to change policy and practice and/or with those who influence them. This area of advocacy is often done with little or no public visibility and seeks to bring about change by offering analysis, insights, technical expertise, and evidence-based recommendations and/or policy alternatives. It may be long-term, deal with great complexity, involve quiet diplomacy and require relationship building, personal contacts, and flexibility. Other forms of advocacy are likely to be more public, and may include publication of research, public awareness raising, media engagement and campaigns. Policy engagement and lobbying may be complemented and buttressed by public-facing advocacy activities.

Act for Peace understands the three modes of advocacy² as follows:

1. 'Persuasion,' which when successful, encourages authorities and/or perpetrators to change their behaviour through private negotiations or dialogue.
2. 'Denunciation,' which aims to halt or deter abuses by bringing public attention and influence to bear on authorities or perpetrators of abuses (for example, by naming and shaming a state in a public forum). While denunciation does alter the cost-benefit calculations of an actor, it is usually employed as a 'last resort' after persuasion fails, as it aims to force compliance, which can make future cooperation far more difficult.
3. 'Mobilisation,' which can take on many forms and may be used in conjunction with advocacy campaigns that focus on persuasion or denunciation or changing behaviours and attitudes, by building supportive community networks and humanitarian alliances, among others.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to affirm the centrality of advocacy to the work of Act for Peace, to highlight our obligations in this regard and to provide guidance for staff on applicable standards when engaging in or supporting advocacy initiatives. The policy aims to ensure that Act for Peace leads and supports strategic, evidence-based advocacy, routinely, as appropriate and in compliance with mandatory standards, as a fully integrated aspect of our work and as a critical means of achieving sustainable, positive change resulting in strengthened safety, justice and dignity for communities threatened by conflict and disaster.

3. Principles and Standards

This policy complies with the ACT Alliance Advocacy Policy (2011) and further incorporates all applicable standards and requirements contained within our Code of Good Practice and Code of Conduct, the ACFID Code of Conduct, the ACT Alliance Humanitarian Protection Policy (2010), the Core Humanitarian Standard (2014). It is also informed by global good practice as set out in toolkits, reports, policies, and guidelines developed by leading humanitarian and development actors. Our key obligations under this policy are:

- To ensure that our advocacy work complies with the principle of 'do no harm', including undertaking a risk-benefit analysis and, if needed, developing a risk management strategy informed [as closely as possible] by the perspectives of affected communities prior to commencement of any advocacy activities and, where advocacy proceeds, taking all reasonable

² These three forms of advocacy, part of 5-types of rights-based action recognised by Act for Peace, should be considered along with the two forms of service delivery ('support' for state implementation that enables it to meet its responsibilities, and direct provision of services that 'substitute' for a state's responsibility, during emergencies or when the state is either unwilling or unable to meet its responsibilities). The most appropriate type or modes of action should be considered when developing an intervention strategy.

steps to protect the safety, dignity and rights of affected local people and Act for Peace partners and personnel both during and following an advocacy initiative.

- To ensure that our advocacy is evidence-based, transparent in its foundations (provided it does not jeopardise the protection of and privacy of affected individuals) and informed by the perspectives of those affected.
- To only use personal information for advocacy with the informed consent of affected persons who have been made aware of the purpose of collection of the information and, to the extent possible, to keep them informed of the actions taken on their behalf and the ensuing results.
- To claim that our advocacy is representative only when that authority has been established.
- To aim to empower those most affected in local communities to advocate for themselves.
- To work collaboratively with organisations representing people most affected by the issue, where possible and appropriate.
- To disclose any conflicts of interest arising in our advocacy.
- To leverage the knowledge, experience and relationships of the alliances, networks, and consortia we are a part of, and engage in continuous mutual learning, policy development and advocacy.
- To strengthen the quality, accountability, and impact of our advocacy work, both individually and collectively, by ensuring we regularly review and learn from our work, identify gaps in competencies and areas for organisational capacity development and promote learning and adaptation.
- To ensure that the Australian Government is not expressly or by implication associated with any adverse comment made about other governments within the scope of our advocacy work, and to appraise the Australian Government of any express or implied criticism to be made publicly of the Australian Government within the scope of our advocacy work, wherever such advocacy is subject to our current DFAT Head Agreement.³

This policy also supports, and should be read in conjunction with, the following Act for Peace documents: Act for Peace's vision, mission and values, Act for Peace's Humanitarian Protection Policy, Act for Peace's Human Rights Policy, Act for Peace's Marketing and Communications Policy, and the guidelines for advocacy in Act for Peace's Operations Manual.

Act for Peace Approach

This policy sets out principles which guide our advocacy work. These principles are as follows:

- Advocacy is a critical and fully integrated aspect of Act for Peace's work. Advocacy is a 'whole of agency' endeavour, which is integrated within our program cycle management and requires both inter- and intra-departmental coordination and collaboration.
- Advocacy is understood as an inclusive and participatory process, in which the perspectives and agency of affected persons and communities are considered central; and in which such community concerns and perspectives may beneficially be amplified and projected into new arenas subject to strategic considerations including risk to affected parties.
- Act for Peace's advocacy is rights-based and solutions-oriented.
- Advocacy establishes and strengthens links between experiences and occurrences at the local level and policy decisions and dialogues at the national, regional, and global levels; and Act for Peace's input into these policy arenas always to be informed by insights derived from our field operations and the experiences of our partners and networks.
- Act for Peace may advocate in reaction to particular events and circumstances, yet understands that advocacy is generally proactive in nature, complex and focussed upon the achievement of sustainable, systemic positive change, requiring persistence, astute timing and targeting, strategic planning, ongoing review, strong partnerships, a long-term perspective, and commitment.

³ DFAT Head of Agreement. Note that this would most likely occur in a DFAT-funded program.

- Act for Peace recognises the three internationally accepted modes of action for humanitarian advocacy, namely, persuasion, denunciation, and mobilisation,⁴ and is conscious of risks and benefits associated with each. In our experience, persuasive advocacy, along with advocacy aimed at mobilising stakeholders, results in more sustained and transformative change as duty-bearers, and those we mobilise in support, subsequently act of their own accord, having been convinced of the need to act. Denouncing or public naming and shaming of duty-bearers tends to generate short-term pressure for change, but often has serious risks to staff, partners, affected communities and constructive relationships, and does not always result in lasting change. In our advocacy work, persuasion and mobilisation are preferred over denunciation, which will only be contemplated where other modes of action have proven ineffectual or are deemed inexpedient.
- At times, Act for Peace will undertake advocacy outside of the public domain, in recognition that on occasion this may be required for ‘persuasion’ to be effective. At other times, our advocacy work will be public facing. Such decisions are made and reviewed strategically with regard to the specific circumstances of each initiative.
- Act for Peace has built a reputation as a credible advocate in domestic, regional, and global arenas and will pursue its ongoing advocacy agenda in a manner which always consolidates and further strengthens this reputation. This requires a steadfast commitment to truthfulness, integrity, inclusivity, and continual learning in our work as well as a honed advocacy agenda (prioritising niche opportunities for catalytic change, and a solutions orientation) and investment in the establishment and maintenance of sound, strategic relationships.

Advocacy can entail serious risks, including jeopardising humanitarian access, relations with authorities, life-saving assistance programmes and the security of affected communities and personnel. As such, Act for Peace undertakes to assess and manage any such risks carefully and inclusively, in keeping with standard procedures. We recognise that this may result in a decision not to proceed with an advocacy strategy. However, we do not regard the existence of risks per se as a justification for inaction or ‘silent witnessing,’ recognising that this inadvertently allows for the perpetuation of abuses. Accordingly, the risks of inaction should also be carefully considered.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all advocacy work with which Act for Peace is engaged and is to be adhered to by all Act for Peace staff involved in the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, risk management, supervision, or other support of advocacy initiatives, including campaigns. It is further offered as guidance to Act for Peace’s ecumenical partners.

This policy applies to all Act for Peace-led and supported advocacy work undertaken at the field level, in the Australian context, and in regional and global arenas, including joint advocacy initiatives with which Act for Peace is involved.

⁴ ALNAP, Protection: an ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies (2005), pp.84-7.

5. Definitions

Advocacy – understood by Act for Peace to mean a set of strategic, coordinated activities which may include research, policy engagement and lobbying, public awareness-raising, and campaigning to mobilise support for collective purpose. Policy engagement and lobbying involve working with decision makers who have the power to change policy and practice and/or with those who influence them. This area of advocacy is often done with little or no public visibility and seeks to bring about change by offering analysis, insights, technical expertise, and evidence-based recommendations and/or policy alternatives. It may be long-term, deal with great complexity, involve quiet diplomacy and require relationship building, personal contacts, and flexibility. Other forms of advocacy are likely to be more public, and may include publication of research, public awareness raising, media engagement and campaigns.

Annex 2. Resource and Reference List

- [ACFID Code of Conduct \(2019\)](#)
- [ACT Alliance Advocacy Policy and Procedures \(2011\)](#)
- [ACT Alliance Humanitarian Protection Policy \(2010\)](#)
- [ALNAP, Protection: an ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies \(2005\)](#)
- [Australian Red Cross Policy Statement on Advocacy \(2011\)](#)
- [Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability \(2014\)](#)
- [ICCO Guidelines on Lobby and Advocacy \(2010\)](#)
- [ODI Working paper 395: Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy Influence and Advocacy \(2014\)](#)
- [Save the Children Toolkits: A Practical Guide to Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment \(2003\), Tool 13: Frameworks to help analyse the advocacy process](#)
- [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit: A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives \(2010\)](#)
- [UNICEF Monitoring and Evaluating Advocacy: Companion to the Advocacy Toolkit](#)