

AfP Advocacy Policy

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April 2017

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1. Introduction and Statement of Commitment

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 and equal dignity and worth. This calls us as members of the ecumenical family to express our solidarity with and accountability to the most vulnerable and not merely to seek to assuage and bear silent witness to their suffering and the world's injustices.

Act for Peace (AfP) 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 conflict and disaster.

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

- Reform the systems, structures, policies, practices and attitudes which generate, enable and perpetuate injustice and inequality.
- Hold duty bearers to account.
- Mobilise constituencies for change.
- Stand with those experiencing oppression and injustice.
- Strengthen vulnerable communities' capacities for self-protection and self-advocacy, and
- Provide moral and practical leadership.

AfP understands that advocacy activities may entail significant risks and undertakes to weigh and manage any such risks assiduously and inclusively. While we commit to upholding the principle of 'do no harm', we do not regard the existence of risks per se as a justification for inaction or 'silent witnessing'.

There is no universally accepted definition of 'advocacy', however common approaches and core elements are espoused by leading actors in the humanitarian and development sectors, most of which have crafted definitions to reflect the specificities of their mandate and approaches.²

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

² The definition of advocacy adopted by AfP draws heavily upon that of the ACT Alliance (as set out in its Advocacy Policy and Procedures), and also draws upon that of Save the Children (as reflected on its website <https://www.savethechildren.net/advocacy>)

For AfP, 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 in order to strengthen sustainably 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, 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 is informed by the insights derived from our programmatic work with ecumenical partners around the world. And 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 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.

We understand advocacy to mean a set of strategic, coordinated activities which may include research, policy engagement and lobbying, public awareness-raising and campaigning. 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.

AfP understands the three modes of humanitarian advocacy as follows:

1. *'Persuasion', when successful, encourages authorities and/or perpetrators to change their behaviour through private negotiations or dialogue.*
2. *'Denunciation' 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' can take on many forms and may be used in conjunction with advocacy campaigns that focus on persuasion or denunciation, by building supportive community networks and humanitarian alliances, among others.³*

2. Scope and Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to affirm the centrality of advocacy to the work of AfP, to highlight our obligations in this regard and to provide guidance in relation to applicable standards to AfP personnel engaging in or supporting advocacy initiatives.

This policy applies to all advocacy work with which AfP is engaged and is to be adhered to by all AfP personnel involved in the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, risk management,

³ ACT Alliance Humanitarian Protection Policy (2010), p.17

supervision or other support of advocacy initiatives. It is further offered as guidance to AfP's ecumenical partners.

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

3. Applicable Standards & Guidance

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 (2014), the ACT Alliance Humanitarian Protection Policy (2010), the Core Humanitarian Standard (2014) and our current DFAT Head of Agreement (2016) and its two amendments. 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 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 steps to protect the safety and rights of affected local people and AfP partners and personnel both during and following an advocacy initiative.
- To ensure that our advocacy is evidence-based, transparent in its foundations (without jeopardy to affected individuals' and communities' privacy and safety) and informed by the perspectives of those affected.
- To utilise personal information for advocacy purposes only 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 clearly established.
- To aim to empower those most affected by the issue 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 ACT Alliance, engage in continuous mutual learning, and strive to strengthen the quality, accountability and impact of our advocacy work, both individually and collectively.
- To apply the ACT Alliance co-branding policy.
- 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.⁴

⁴ DFAT Head of Agreement.

4. AfP Policy Objectives

The objective of this policy is to ensure that AfP 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.

5. AfP Approach

This policy sets out principles which guide AfP's advocacy work. These principles are as follows:

- Advocacy is a critical and fully integrated aspect of AfP'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.
- AfP's advocacy is rights-based and solutions-oriented.
- Advocacy crucially 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 AfP's input into these policy arenas ought always to be informed by insights derived from our field operations and evidenced experiences of our partners and networks.
- AfP 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.
- AfP recognises the three internationally accepted modes of action for humanitarian advocacy, namely, persuasion, denunciation and mobilisation⁵, 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. 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 AfP will undertake advocacy outside of the public domain, in recognition that on occasion this may be required in order for 'persuasion' to be effective. At other times our advocacy work will also be public-facing. Such decisions are made and reviewed strategically, with regard to the specific circumstances of each initiative.
- AfP 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 at all times 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.

⁵ ALNAP, Protection: an ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies (2005), pp.84-7.

Advocacy can entail serious risks, including jeopardizing humanitarian access, relations with authorities, life-saving assistance programmes and the security of affected communities and personnel. As such, AfP undertakes to assess, weigh and manage any such risks assiduously 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. We understand that in some instances, risks that may arise in a targeted advocacy strategy led by AfP might be effectively ameliorated in a joint advocacy strategy involving multiple organisations or networks.

6. Reporting, review and relevance to other AfP guidelines and policies

This is intended to be an interim policy that is reviewed in April 2017. This status and short review cycle is recommended in light of the fact that AfP will be undertaking further consultations on advocacy and developing an Advocacy Framework. It is proposed that, following this initial review, and endorsement as AfP policy, it revert to a bi- or triennial review cycle.

This policy supports, and should be read in conjunction with, the following AfP documents; AfP's vision, mission and values, AfP's Humanitarian Protection Policy, AfP's Human Rights Policy. Campaigns, marketing and communications policies and procedures will be aligned with this policy once approved. Tools and procedures to accompany this policy are under development.

7. Conclusion

The present policy represents AfP's current overall organisational understanding of advocacy and outlines strategic decisions made by AfP in order to guide our advocacy work.

Annex 1. AfP Objectives and Indicator table

OBJECTIVES	INDICATORS
<p>AfP 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A comprehensive risk assessment and risk management strategy are in place for all advocacy initiatives, complying with 'do no harm' principles.• Advocacy initiatives are evidence-based.• Advocacy initiatives endeavour to be participatory and empower communities to advocate on their own behalf.• Advocacy initiatives are fully integrated into program cycle management.

Annex 2. Resource and Reference List

- [ACFID Code of Conduct \(2014\)](#)
- [ACT Alliance Advocacy Policy and Procedures \(2011\)](#)
- [ACT Alliance Humanitarian Protection Policy \(2010\)](#)
- [ALNAP, Protection: an ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies \(2005\)](#)
- [ARC 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](#)