PO Box 1206, North Sydney, NSW 2059, Australia
P +61 2 9906 3792   **E** info@actiononpoverty.org
www.actiononpoverty.org
ABN 42 002 568 005

Welfare, Evangelism and Partisan Politics Policy

1. Background

1.1 AOP is an independent, secular, not for profit, non-governmental organisation (NGO). Founded in Australia in 1968, AOP was incorporated in the state of New South Wales in 1983. AOP works with partners and communities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. AOP's Vision: A just world through community partnerships. AOP's Mission: To be a leading agent for poverty alleviation through community based development.

1.2 AOP works to address the root causes of poverty as well as provide supportive, sustainable, strength-based structures to help people lift themselves out of poverty. We do not want our work to create a cycle of dependency or to disempower the individuals or communities that we are working with in the long term. Our work is based on meeting stated objectives that are clearly defined, and developed to meet identified needs that are assessed using selection criteria that do not discriminate.

1.3 AOP is committed to supporting work that is of a high standard, and in doing so, holds full accreditation with the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). DFAT requires all accredited NGOs to develop an evangelical, welfare and partisan political policy, and ensure that all NGO personnel implementing DFAT-funded aid activities agree to it and abide by it. The purpose of DFAT's Policy is to ensure that Australian NGOs have development philosophies that are not inconsistent with the objectives of the Australian Aid Program, and are able to demonstrate the application of these philosophies within their operations.

1.4 AOP is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct which requires high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management to be in place. The ACFID Code of Conduct (approved in 2010, effective from 2012) required members to ensure that 'Funds and other resources designated for the purpose of aid and development will be used only for those purposes and will not be used to promote a particular religious adherence or to support a political party, or to promote a candidate or organisation affiliated to a particular party' (Principle B.1.5 Non-development Activity). The 2016 revised Code obliges members to be 'accountable to our stakeholders' under Commitment 7.3, with Compliance Indicator 7.3.2 requiring that "Member development initiatives consistently demonstrate the separation of development activities from non-development activities," and that members "extend this compliance indicator and verifiers to partners through MOUs or similar."

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy provides a framework to ensure that the Action on Poverty (AOP) operates under a development philosophy that is consistent with the objectives of the Australian Aid Program and the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct. AOP is committed to ensuring that we accurately represent our activities to the people we work with, our donors, and the public, including by distinguishing between development and non-development activities. AOP understands and ensures that funds and resources that are raised for development purposes are used exclusively for such purposes, and will not be used for the purposes of promoting or supporting programs that are based on the provision of welfare, religious teaching and proselytisation, and/or partisan political activities.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all AOP activities, including:
- Programming
- Expenditure and reporting
- Fundraising
- Advocacy campaigns
- Communications
- Choice of donors
- Partnerships

3.2 This policy applies to all board members, employees, and volunteers.

3.3 This policy must cascade and apply to AOP partners and be built into AOP agreements with partners and contractors.

4. Policy

4.1 AOP recognises the distinction (as per Section 6) between development and non-development activities and will identify, monitor, manage, report on and account for non-development activities wherever they occur, including in activities implemented by way of partnership arrangements and contracts.

4.2 AOP must not fund or otherwise support:
- Evangelism and/or Evangelism, Proselytism and Missionary Work (as defined in section 6 of this policy);
- Partisan Political Activities (as defined in section 6 of this policy); and,
- Welfare-based programs (as defined in section 6 of this policy).

4.3 Partner organisations must not fund or otherwise support:
- Evangelism and/or Evangelism, Proselytism and Missionary Work;
- Partisan Political Activities; and,
- Welfare-based programs.

4.4 Board members, staff, volunteers and contractors of AOP and of its partner organisations must not, during AOP hours of work, undertake or participate in:
- Evangelism and/or Evangelism, Proselytism and Missionary Work;
- Promotion of religious or political causes or political parties;
- Partisan Political Activities; and,
- Provision of welfare activities.

4.5 If in their own time, board members, staff, volunteers and contractors of AOP undertake or participate in:
- Evangelism and/or Evangelism, Proselytism and Missionary Work;
- Promotion of religious or political causes or political parties;
- Partisan Political Activities; and,
- Provision of welfare activities.

They must ensure that their activities:
- are not perceived or viewed as being on behalf of AOP;
- are not perceived or viewed as being representative of the views of AOP;
- do not use the AOP logo, AOP funds and/or resources (e.g. computers, email systems, website, mobile phones, stationery or other office supplies);
- do not use funds and/or resources provided to implement aid and development activities funded by, or through, AOP; and,
- particular care must be taken when personal views are expressed on social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and email) that they do not undertake and/or participate in the above activities that in any way can be related to AOP's views

4.6 Funds and other resources that are raised by or provided to AOP for the purpose of aid and development (as defined in section 6 of this policy) must only be used for the purpose of aid and development.

4.7 Funds and other resources disbursed or used by AOP which were designated as being for the purpose of aid and development must only be used for the purpose of aid and development.

4.8 Partners organisations (as defined in section 6 of this policy) implementing aid and development activities, funded by, or through, AOP, must use the funds and/or resources only for (a) the purpose of aid and development, and (b) the particular aid and development activities for which the funding and/or resources were provided.

4.9 AOP does not support predominately welfare-based programs. From time to time, AOP or our partners may engage in welfare activities, but only in the case that these activities satisfy the following criteria:
- they address an immediate and pressing need;
- they are part of a larger fully-costed and approved development project;
  - they should complement the other development-based activities in the program;
  - the program they are embedded within has logical framework and an exit strategy.

4.10 Spending on welfare activities must be identified and separated for accounting and reporting purposes. This spending will not count towards Recognised Development Expenditure (RDE).

5. Policy Application

5.1 This Policy will be included in all contracts and memoranda of understanding with partner organisations.

5.2 Basic training will be provided to all AOP staff, members and Board members, volunteers, and interns, as well as partners and contractors of AOP as appropriate, about the distinction between development and non-development activities and the application of the WEPP policy.

5.2 AOP staff undertakes an initial partner capacity desk review as well as monitoring and capacity building visits and system assessments to gauge partner capacity where it comes to understanding and adhering to AOP's policies, and especially key policies like the WEPP. All activities are appraised and monitored on this basis. Issues are bought to the attention of senior management, and can be noted, addressed directly with the partner, or escalated further. All issues are noted, with supporting documentation is to be maintained in the relevant project files. Non-development activities distinguished for accounting purposes.

5.4 AOP may engage in capacity-building programs aimed at training, supporting, monitoring and backstopping partners to help them change welfare-oriented programs into development-oriented programs. This may necessitate the funding of welfare-oriented programs for a strictly limited time.

5.5 All aid and development activities funded by, or through, AOP and partner organisation; and board members, staff, volunteers and contractors will be monitored to ensure that they are not in breach of this policy. In line with this and other Key Policies, the AOP CEO will monitor the sector environment and keep Program staff alerted to organisations who are potentially high-risk. AOP will identify, monitor, follow-up on and support the rectification of issues in collaboration with partners.

5.6. AOP's Executive Management are responsible for:
- ensuring that AOP staff, board members, volunteers and contractors comply with all relevant legislation and AOP policies (including this Policy); and,
- ensuring that all partner organisations and their board members, staff, volunteers and contractors implementing aid and development activities funded by, or through, AOP, comply with all relevant legislation and AOP policies (including this Policy)

5.5 The distinction between funds and/or resources used for aid and development activities and non-development activities will be maintained at all times (including in fundraising, project management, communications, annual reports and other reports.

5.6 The application of this Policy may be difficult in some situations, and analysis and sound judgment may be necessary. It is recognised that this Policy may not be able to address every situation. AOP will ensure that the intent of this Policy is operationalised in the conduct of aid and development activities.

6. Definitions

Aid and Development Activities

Activities undertaken in order to reduce poverty and address global justice issues. In the non-government organisation sector, this may occur through a range of engagements that includes community projects, emergency management, community education, advocacy, volunteer sending, provision of technical and professional services and resources, environmental protection and restoration, and promotion and protection of human rights.

Evangelism (also called Proselytism and Missionary Work) Activities

Any activity or practice associated with attempting to convert people from one religion or faith to another. Though these words are of Christian origin, they can also refer to other religions' attempt to convert people to their religion or faith.

Non-development Activities

Activities that are not aid and development activities.

Partisan Political Activities

Activities that are political in nature, including lobbying or advocacy activities, that are carried out in support of a particular political party, candidate for public office, or organisation affiliated with a political party or candidate for public office.

Partner Organisations

Organisations implementing aid and development activities funded by, or through, AOP.

Welfare Activities

Activities which provided direct assistance to individuals because of a need (which is generally an immediate need). Welfare means assistance to maintain individuals in a particular condition on a long-term basis such as institutionalised care programs as provided by orphanages, child sponsorship (i.e. funds given directly to children or their families, and not funds drawn from child sponsorship used for wider development purposes), health or hospital care programs, hospices, and costs for the maintenance of structures for institutionalised care programs (e.g. projects that are largely related to infrastructure such as building of schools or orphanages). Welfare activities are implemented independently of other sustainable community development activities, and there is no strategy for integration into a broader community development program. Welfare activities are implemented on an ongoing, long-term basis with no clear exit strategy.

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