

Australian Relief and Mercy Services

Aid and Development versus Other Activities Policy

Version 20.02

Note this document is under regular review – please ensure you utilise text from the latest version.



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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide Australian Mercy and our partners to differentiate and make a clear separation between aid and development and non-aid and development activities such as welfare and religious activities in our projects. This policy addresses our ACFID compliance obligations in relation to communicating the purpose of our international projects and in soliciting donations for these activities. It also addresses the relationship between project type (aid and development versus welfare) and fundraising for local (Australian) projects.

Scope

This Policy is intended to apply to all Australian Mercy activities. The policy is applicable to Australian Mercy staff and Board, project partners and management groups, and project volunteers.

Policy Statement

Australian Mercy is an Aid and Development organisation that sees Christ as the ultimate expression of God's mercy. As outlined in our Company Outline, Australian Mercy's work includes training, emergency relief, provision of medical supplies, project grants, child sponsorships, community development, disaster relief, programs to the homeless, family counselling and the provision of primary health care. Alongside this, Australian Mercy is involved in advocacy in support of vulnerable people, including, where relevant, political advocacy.

The Australian Mercy board is committed to ensuring that we accurately represent our activities to the people we work with, our donors, and the public, and that funds raised for aid and development purposes are used as they are intended. Should any Australian Mercy project involve religious activities (see definition below) or any other non-aid/development activities, these will be promoted and accounted for separately.

Definitions

Aid and development activities are undertaken in order to reduce poverty and address global justice issues, and may include community projects, emergency management, advocacy undertaken to address the causes of poverty and disadvantage, provision of technical and professional services and resources, environmental protection and restoration, and promotion and protection of human rights. Aid and development approaches are distinguished by these principles:

- Strengths based approaches which encourage people and communities to create solutions for themselves.
- Processes that seek to address the causes of poverty.
- Processes that seek to empower rights holders to claim their rights and ensure that duty bearers exercise their duties.
- Supporting systems and structures which enable people to move out of poverty.
- Emergency relief, disaster recovery and meeting the immediate needs of refugees and internally displaced people.

Non aid and development activities include welfare programs, evangelism or other religious activities. These activities are defined below.

Welfare programs provide assistance to maintain individuals in a particular condition on a long term basis. It is provided on an individual or family basis, rather than on a community basis. Examples include institutionalised care programs in orphanages and child sponsorship (where funds are provided to families versus used for development activities).

Religious activity includes evangelism (also called proselytism and missionary work) which is the practice of attempting to convert people to another religion or faith, or to persuade or develop religious beliefs or faith practices.

Political activities attempt to convert people from one political persuasion to another, or which are in support of, or in opposition to a political party, or in support of or in opposition to a candidate before or during an election period.

Principles

- All Australian Mercy projects are provided without discrimination regarding caste, creed, class, race, gender, religion or political persuasion.
- Australian Mercy has a strong focus on aid and development and the majority of Australian Mercy projects fall under this definition.
- Australian Mercy undertakes welfare programs where it is deemed appropriate within the cultural context and at the request of the front-line partner, or where it has been deemed as an appropriate response by those

Australian Mercy personnel who are working closely with the situation. Australian Mercy also undertakes welfare programs in circumstances of chronic emergencies or disaster situations.

- Wherever possible Australian Mercy will seek to refocus such responses towards an aid and development model, as soon as the external circumstances surrounding that project permit.
- Australian Mercy is a faith based organisation, and Australian Mercy projects may be undertaken in partnership with other religious organisations.
 - We recognise that religion and development are interwoven. Religious beliefs are part of daily life in many developing countries, and development by its very nature involves the transformation of values and behaviour.
 - Nevertheless, religious activities as defined above must be clearly separated in all Australian Mercy projects. For example the building of exclusive religious structures such as a church, mosque or temple is prohibited as a development activity however a general use community facility constructed as part of a development project may be used by a religious group in proportion to other community activities such as mothers club, clinic, school etc.
- Before agreeing to partner with an organisation in a new project, the Board will consider, among other things, the type of project being undertaken (aid and development versus other), and the fit of the project with the overall Mission Statement of Australian Mercy.
- Australian Mercy is required to distinguish clearly between aid and development activities and non-aid and development activities as defined above, and this requirement extends to our partners, Project Management Groups and volunteers.
- This distinction must be clearly documented with regard to:
 - Project budgets, accounts and reporting to the Australian Mercy Board.
 - Information to volunteers or potential volunteers about the project.
 - Information provided to the public about the project – for example, on the Australian Mercy or project partner's website, or information provided by volunteers about the project to stakeholders or beneficiaries.
 - Fundraising information/solicitations.
 - Annual report.
- Fundraising solicitations that are for both aid and development and non-aid and development activities will provide donors with the option of contributing to aid and development activity only.
- Funds raised through Australian Mercy for international projects attracting Deductible Gift Recipient status (DGR) are not to be used for any activity other than aid and development, as defined above, except where their use for emergency disaster relief is approved by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Funds raised through Australian Mercy for local (Australian) projects attracting Deductible Gift Recipient status are not to be used for any activity other than that those that are within the defined meaning of Australian Mercy's PBI (Public Benevolent Institution) status.
- Funds provided to Australian Mercy through AusAID are not to be used for political activities, welfare activities, evangelism or emergency relief.

Review

This policy will undergo a review at least every 3 years. Compliance with this policy will be assessed annually:

- Last review date Feb 2020
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