



# ACFID CODE OF CONDUCT – A QUICK GUIDE

Integrity. Accountability. Impact.



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

# About ACFID

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) is the peak body for Australian non-government organisations involved in international development and humanitarian action.

## ACFID'S VISION

- A world where all people are free from extreme poverty, injustice and inequality
- A world where the earth's finite resources are managed sustainably
- A compassionate Australia acting for a just and sustainable world

ACFID's vision will only be realised through the collective efforts of civil society actors, governments, businesses and people concerned for our common humanity.

## ACFID'S PURPOSE

We lead and unite our members in action for a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Founded in 1965, ACFID has over 130 members working in 90 developing countries and supported by over 1.6 million Australians.

With our members and partners, ACFID seeks to be an influential policy voice, a catalyst for change and a standard bearer for good practice in the international development and humanitarian world.

# Foreword

ACFID's members choose to be accountable to the communities we support overseas, the communities who support us at home and the partners we collaborate with. Recognised as best practice in Australia and around the world, the ACFID Code of Conduct (the Code) is the means by which we build integrity, accountability and impact.

## For the communities we support

**overseas**, our members not only commit to protecting human rights through the Code, but aim to create a world where all individuals can enjoy their rights fully. Through setting and maintaining standards of good practice in local empowerment, the Code helps to ensure that those directly affected by a disaster or circumstance are at the heart of decision-making and development activities that create sustainable and lasting change.

## For the communities who support us

**at home**, building and maintaining trust in our work is crucial. A commitment to truthful communications which accurately describe the nature and scope of members' development work plays a critical role in accountability and transparency. ACFID's Fundraising Charter brings together fundraising standards from across states and territories to provide guidance on the suitable use of images and materials which are consistent with our values. During humanitarian appeals, our

members must communicate specifically what funds will be used for, offering clarity and reassurance to the public about where their donation is going. The Code's governance standards ensure donors can choose the initiatives they wish to support, and find information about how their donations have been used.

## For the partners we collaborate with,

our members' staff and volunteers are key to building effective relationships. Working for an ACFID member means staff and volunteers can expect human rights principles of fairness, equity, and respect for social and cultural diversity are deeply embedded in policies, practices and organisational culture. Under the Code, ACFID's members have the responsibility to promote legal and ethical behaviour, as well as demonstrating they have a comprehensive understanding of legal and compliance obligations and actions that are needed to be taken to meet those obligations.

# Foreword

ACFID's independent complaints-handling process is essential to the credibility of the Code. As part of their compliance ACFID's members are required to have a public complaints mechanism which can then be escalated to a complaint which is investigated by ACFID's Code of Conduct Committee. ACFID supports our members to remain compliant through tailored advice and learning and development opportunities, but following the complaints process, a member's signatory status can be suspended or revoked.

ACFID's Code of Conduct is deliberately aspirational. It goes beyond the minimum standards required by government regulation and focuses on good practice. Through the Code we encourage our members to learn, adapt, innovate, improve and evolve. In applying the Code, our members strive to improve their accountability, strengthen their effectiveness and ultimately create an environment where the best results are possible.

In studying this quick guide, we hope to show you how being accountable to those we support, who support us and who work with us is fundamental to everything we do.



Marc Purcell,  
CEO of ACFID



Clare Petre, Chair of  
the ACFID Code of  
Conduct Committee

# Introduction to this Quick Guide

This quick guide has been developed to provide a brief overview of the key elements that make up the ACFID Code of Conduct, the compliance requirements for ACFID's members, the Code's governance and accountability mechanisms, and how to make a complaint under the Code of Conduct.

This quick guide is an explanatory tool, it is not the Code of Conduct. To read the Code of Conduct or the associated Quality Assurance Framework, visit the 'read the Code' section of ACFID's website.

For further support in using the Code, ACFID's Good Practice Toolkit provides examples of good practice as well as tools, templates and resources. ACFID's Code e-learning module also offers members an introduction to the ACFID Code of Conduct. To access these resources and for further guidance visit ACFID's website.

This guide indicates where excerpts from the Code of Conduct have been used.



# Code of Conduct

The ACFID Code of Conduct is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice. It was developed in 1997 and comprehensively revised in 2010 and 2016.

The Code aims to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of ACFID's members. In conjunction with other aspects of ACFID's work, the effective delivery of the Code will contribute to the realisation of human rights and the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Code sets standards for practice rather than standards for results. It goes beyond the minimum standards required by government regulation and focuses on good practice. It articulates ACFID's members' understanding of good organisational and development practice for NGOs involved in international development and humanitarian action. This articulation is informed by members' experiences, the Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness, the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), the Global Standard for Civil Society Organisations (GS), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ACFID's vision, purpose and values.

The Code applies equally to organisations working in development responses and humanitarian responses. While it does not replace the need for members engaged in humanitarian responses to adopt and be assessed against the Core Humanitarian Standard, the Code is aligned with the

approaches and style of the CHS and the GS. This enables interoperability and ease of interpretation across these other codes.

The Code provides assurance to all ACFID's members' stakeholders by enabling high standards of practice. A suite of compliance mechanisms is designed to ensure that all Code signatories are compliant with its requirements. It also contributes to continuous improvement through guidance for good practice and a range of professional development opportunities.

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Code is to improve international development and humanitarian action outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of ACFID's members.

### Code Objectives

- To enable high standards of practice by ACFID's members.
- To provide assurance to the stakeholders of ACFID's members.
- To enable self-regulation and influence external regulation of the sector.
- To champion standards of good practice for a broad range of development organisations.

*Preamble, purpose, and objectives taken from the ACFID Code of Conduct*

# Our Values

Collectively agreed by ACFID's members, seven shared values represent the foundations on which the Code is built.



*Values taken from the ACFID Code of Conduct*

# Compliance

The Code puts the shared values into practice through nine Quality Principles.

They describe high level principles of practice that, taken together, contribute to quality development and humanitarian action outcomes and increased stakeholder trust.

The nine Quality Principles are organised into three clusters as shown below.



**■** The organisational systems of ACFID's members which provide the enabling environment for processes and approaches.

**■** The processes carried out by ACFID's members that support their approaches.

**■** The approaches carried out by ACFID's members to achieve effective development and humanitarian outcomes

Figure 1 taken from the ACFID Code of Conduct – Architecture of the Code

# The Code's Quality Principles and Commitments

The nine Quality Principles each have a set of associated commitments which apply directly to ACFID's members and reflects the behaviours they are expected to adhere to.

## QUALITY PRINCIPLES



### 1. Rights, Protection & Inclusion

Development and humanitarian responses respect and protect human rights and advance inclusion.



### 2. Participation, Empowerment & Local Ownership

Development and humanitarian responses enable sustainable change through the empowerment of local actors and systems.

## COMMITMENTS

- 1.1 We respect and protect human rights.
- 1.2 We respect and respond to the needs, rights and inclusion of those who are vulnerable and those who are affected by marginalisation and exclusion.
- 1.3 We support people affected by crisis.
- 1.4 We advance the safeguarding of children.

- 2.1 We promote the participation of primary stakeholders.
- 2.2 We promote the empowerment of primary stakeholders.
- 2.3 We promote gender equality and equity.
- 2.4 We promote the empowerment of people with disabilities.
- 2.5 We promote the participation of children.

 <p><b>3. Sustainable Change</b> Development and humanitarian responses contribute to the realisation of sustainable development.</p>	<p>3.1 We seek durable and lasting improvements in the circumstances and capacities of primary stakeholders.</p> <p>3.2 We contribute to systemic change.</p> <p>3.3 We promote environmental stewardship and sustainability.</p>
 <p><b>4. Quality And Effectiveness</b> Development and humanitarian organisations and responses are informed by evidence, planning, assessment and learning.</p>	<p>4.1 We articulate clear strategic goals for our work.</p> <p>4.2 We analyse and understand the contexts in which we work.</p> <p>4.3 We invest in quality assessment of our work.</p> <p>4.4 We reflect on, share and apply results and lessons with stakeholders.</p>
 <p><b>5. Collaboration</b> Development and humanitarian responses are optimised through effective coordination, collaboration and partnership.</p>	<p>5.1 We respect and understand those with whom we collaborate.</p> <p>5.2 We have a shared understanding of respective contributions, expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities of all parties.</p> <p>5.3 We invest in the effectiveness of our collaborations and partnerships.</p>
 <p><b>6. Communication</b> Development and humanitarian organisations communicate truthfully and ethically.</p>	<p>6.1 We are truthful in our communications.</p> <p>6.2 We collect and use information ethically.</p>

 <p><b>7. Governance</b> Development and humanitarian organisations are governed in an accountable, transparent and responsible way.</p>	<p>7.1 We are not-for-profit and formed for a defined public benefit.</p> <p>7.2 We meet our legal and compliance obligations.</p> <p>7.3 We are accountable to our stakeholders.</p> <p>7.4 We have responsible and independent governance mechanisms.</p>
 <p><b>8. Resource Management</b> Development and humanitarian organisations acquire, manage and report on resources ethically and responsibly.</p>	<p>8.1 We source our resources ethically.</p> <p>8.2 We ensure that funds and resources entrusted to us are properly controlled and managed.</p> <p>8.3 We report on the acquisition and use of our resources.</p>
 <p><b>9. People And Culture</b> Development and humanitarian organisations manage and support their people fairly and effectively.</p>	<p>9.1 We have the human resource capacity and capability to deliver our work.</p> <p>9.2 We protect, value and support our people.</p> <p>9.3 We manage our people effectively and fairly.</p> <p>9.4 We enable our people to conduct themselves professionally and according to our stated values.</p>
<p><i>Quality Principles and Commitments taken from the ACFID Code of Conduct</i></p>	

# What are the requirements for ACFID's members?

Each Commitment has associated Compliance and Good Practice Indicators. They provide the basis for assessing compliance and continuous improvement.

Members must meet the Compliance Indicators and adhere to the Code's compliance mechanisms in order to be considered compliant with the Code. Each Compliance Indicator includes Verifiers which provide the evidence of Code implementation. For example, this could be a policy, procedure or guidance implemented by the member.

The Good Practice Indicators describe a higher standard of practice compared to the Compliance Indicators. Members work towards achieving the Good Practice Indicators over time but do not need to meet them to be considered compliant.

This example taken from the Code's Quality Assurance Framework shows

how members are required to meet each Quality Principle.

*The Compliance Indicators, Compliance Verifiers, Good Practice Indicators and associated definitions form part of the Code's Quality Assurance Framework. To study the Verifiers and Good Practice Indicators in detail consult the Framework. Visit ACFID's website to download a copy or contact ACFID to request a copy.*

 <h2>2. Participation, Empowerment &amp; Local Ownership</h2>		
Development and humanitarian responses enable sustainable change through the empowerment of local actors and systems.		
Commitments	Compliance Indicators	To demonstrate compliance, members will have the following verifiers, commensurate with their size and the nature of their work:
<b>2.1</b> We promote the participation of primary stakeholders.	<b>2.1.1</b> Members demonstrate an organisational commitment to advancing the participation of primary stakeholders.	Policy, statement or guidance document that commits the member to enabling the participation and contribution of primary stakeholders.
	<b>2.1.2</b> Members' planning process includes the participation of primary stakeholders.	Design or planning framework, tools, templates that require or approaches which consistently show evidence of the participation of primary stakeholders.
	<b>2.1.3</b> Members monitor and evaluate their progress in the participation of primary stakeholders.	Monitoring and evaluation framework, tools, templates that require or approaches which consistently show evidence of the assessment of the participation of primary stakeholders.
	Good Practice Indicators	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members translate program and organisational information into relevant local languages and in appropriate forms.</li> <li>Members' planning cycles have realistic time frames to enable authentic participation of communities and individuals.</li> <li>Appraisal/selection process that includes strategies to enable the participation of primary stakeholders.</li> <li>Members use structured mechanisms such as surveys, focus groups and community panels to enable full and authentic participation of primary stakeholders in governance and decision-making relating to activities that affect their lives.</li> <li>Members have a process in place that is clearly communicated and available to seek feedback from local people.</li> </ul>	

Set of high-level commitments under each Quality Principle

Members must adhere to compliance indicators which correspond to each Commitment

Quality Principle translated from collective values

Members demonstrate compliance, for example through policy implementation, evidence of practice and staff training and guidance

This provides members with a checklist of good practice to follow and monitor their progress



Photo: Jim Holmes / AusAID

## Who oversees the Code?

The Code is independently governed by the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee (the CCC).

The CCC determines whether new members are code compliant; monitors compliance of existing members; and handles complaints made against ACFID's members. Only the CCC can grant, suspend and revoke Code signatory status.

### Compliance with the Code

The ACFID Code of Conduct is voluntary and self-regulatory. ACFID's members commit to being compliant with all aspects of the Code, and to continuously monitor their compliance.

Responsibility for compliance with the Code rests primarily with ACFID's members who self-assess against the Compliance Indicators. The governing body of each ACFID member has primary responsibility for verifying compliance with all Compliance Indicators. ACFID undertakes relatively limited external verification in line with the principle of self-regulation.

The Code applies to all ACFID's members and their international development and humanitarian programs. Members are expected to use all reasonable efforts to support their implementing partners to operate in a manner consistent with the Code of Conduct when delivering aspects of a member-supported initiative. Further, there are some requirements which members must extend to partners

through MOUs or similar including those relating to child safeguarding, separation of development and non-development activity, financial wrongdoing and complaints handling.

Compliance is assured through a suite of mechanisms by which ACFID's members are bound. These include:

- Assessment of Code compliance on application for membership;
- A public commitment to the Code and links to the Code complaints handling process on member websites;
- Submission of a triennial Code Self-Assessment (CSA), which is reviewed by ACFID;
- Submission of annual and financial reports, together with an exceptions report, which notes exceptions to compliance that have occurred during the previous year, and corrective action taken;
- Spot checks carried out by ACFID on any areas of potential non-compliance, including checks of websites undertaken; and
- An independent complaints handling process



### Non-Compliance

If a member is found to be non-compliant with the Code at any time, the member is required to submit a plan of corrective action which will return them to compliance.

If a member does not achieve compliance within an agreed period, a set of sanctions will be implemented which extends to suspension and revocation of code signatory status. ACFID will publicise suspensions or revocation.

### Complaints about an ACFID member

All ACFID members have their own mechanisms to handle complaints and this information can be found on their websites. All complaints should first be raised with the relevant ACFID member.

If you are not satisfied with the member's response or believe it is not appropriate to refer the matter to the member's own complaints-handling process, a complaint can be lodged directly with the Code of Conduct Committee.

### Code of Conduct Committee Complaints Handling

The CCC provides an independent mechanism to address any complaints made against an ACFID member which is believed to have breached the Code.

ACFID's members agree to be bound by the independent, accessible, fair and confidential complaints handling process by:

- Complying with the complaints process as set out in the Code Good Practice Toolkit;
- Complying with CCC requests for information within all reasonable time limits set; and
- Where a breach of the Code is identified, complying with the corrective or disciplinary action agreed to with the CCC.

Further details about the complaints process and how to make a complaint to one of ACFID's members or via the CCC can be found on ACFID's website – [www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au).

# List of ACFID's Members

### FULL ACFID MEMBERS

- ACC International Relief
- Act for Peace – NCCA
- ActionAid Australia
- Action on Poverty
- Adara Development Australia
- ADRA Australia
- Afghan Australian Development Organisation
- Anglican Aid
- Anglican Board of Mission
- Anglican Overseas Aid
- Anglican Relief and Development Fund Australia
- Asia Pacific Journalism Centre
- Asian Aid Organisation
- Assisi Aid Projects
- Australasian Society for HIV Medicine
- Australia for UNHCR
- Australia Hope International Inc.
- Australian Business Volunteers

- Australian Doctors for Africa
- Australian Doctors International
- Australian Himalayan Foundation
- Australian Lutheran World Service
- Australian Marist Solidarity Ltd
- Australian Medical Aid Foundation
- Australian Mercy
- Australian Red Cross
- Australian Respiratory Council
- AVI
- Beyond the Orphanage
- Birthing Kit Foundation (Australia)
- Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation
- Bright Futures Child Aid and Development Fund (Australia)
- Burnet Institute
- Business for Millennium Development
- CARE Australia

- Caritas Australia
- CBM Australia
- ChildFund Australia
- CLAN (Caring and Living as Neighbours)
- Credit Union Foundation Australia
- Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Overseas Aid Fund
- Diaspora Action Australia
- Diplomacy Training Program
- Door of Hope Australia Inc.
- Edmund Rice Foundation (Australia)
- EDO NSW
- Engineers without Borders
- Every Home Global Concern
- Family Planning New South Wales
- Fairtrade Australia New Zealand
- Food Water Shelter
- Foresight (Overseas Aid and Prevention of Blindness)

## LIST OF ACFID'S MEMBERS

Fred Hollows Foundation, The  
 Global Development Group  
 Global Mission Partners  
 Good Return  
 Good Shepherd Services  
 Grameen Foundation Australia  
 Habitat for Humanity Australia  
 Hagar Australia  
 HealthServe Australia  
 Heilala  
 Hope Global  
 The Hunger Project Australia  
 International Children's Care (Australia)  
 International Christian Aid and Relief Enterprises  
 International Needs Australia  
 International Nepal Fellowship (Aust) Ltd  
 International RiverFoundation  
 International Women's Development Agency  
 Interplast Australia & New Zealand

Islamic Relief Australia  
 KTF (Kokoda Track Foundation)  
 Kyeema Foundation  
 Lasallian Foundation  
 Leprosy Mission Australia, The  
 Live & Learn Environmental Education  
 Love Mercy Foundation  
 Mahboba's Promise Australia  
 Marie Stopes International Australia  
 Marist Mission Centre  
 Mary MacKillop International  
 Mary Ward International Australia  
 Mercy Works Ltd.  
 Mission World Aid Inc.  
 MIT Group Foundation  
 Motivation Australia  
 Murdoch Children's Research Institute  
 MAA International  
 Nusa Tenggara Association Inc.  
 Oaktree Foundation  
 Opportunity International Australia

Oxfam Australia  
 Palmera Projects  
 Partner Housing  
 Partners in Aid  
 Partners Relief and Development Australia  
 People with Disability Australia  
 PLAN International Australia  
 Quaker Service Australia  
 RedR Australia  
 Reledev Australia  
 RESULTS International (Australia)  
 Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists  
 Royal Australasian College of Surgeons  
 Salesian Missions  
 Salvation Army (NSW Property Trust)  
 Save the Children Australia  
 Service Fellowship International Inc.  
 School for Life Foundation  
 SeeBeyondBorders  
 Sight For All  
 So They Can  
 Sport Matters

Surf Aid International  
 Tamils Rehabilitation Organisation Australia  
 TEAR Australia  
 Transform Aid International (incorporating Baptist World Aid)  
 UNICEF Australia  
 Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA  
 UnitingWorld  
 Volunteers in Community Engagement (VOICE)  
 WaterAid Australia  
 World Vision Australia  
 WWF-Australia  
 YWAM Medical Ships

### AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations  
 Australian National University – School of Archaeology and Anthropology, College of Arts and Social Sciences  
 Deakin University – Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation

La Trobe University – Institute of Human Security and Social Change  
 Murdoch University – School of Management and Governance  
 Refugee Council of Australia  
 RMIT – Centre for Global Research  
 Swinburne University of Technology Centre for Design Innovation  
 Transparency International Australia  
 University of New South Wales – International  
 University of Melbourne – School of Social and Political Sciences  
 University of Queensland – Institute for Social Science Research  
 University of Sydney – Office of Global Engagement  
 University of the Sunshine Coast – USC International Development  
 University of Technology, Sydney – Institute for Sustainable Futures  
 Vision 2020

## LIST OF ACFID'S MEMBERS

University of Western Australia – School of Social Sciences  
 Western Sydney University – School of Social Sciences and Psychology



AUSTRALIAN  
COUNCIL  
FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT





## UNITED AGAINST POVERTY


ACFID unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty

## THE ACFID CODE OF CONDUCT

First developed in 1997, the ACFID Code of Conduct is a self-regulatory code of good practice for Australia's aid and international development non-governmental organisations. The Code strengthens international development and humanitarian action by enhancing the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of ACFID's members.

 <https://acfid.asn.au/>

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 02 6285 1816

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 [www.facebook.com/acfid](http://www.facebook.com/acfid)

 ACFID, 14 Napier Close, Deakin, ACT 2600