



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency  
Australia for UNHCR

## Religious and Political Activity Policy

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<b>Responsible Officer</b>	National Director		
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Head of Governance and Operations		
<b>Superseded Documents</b>	Non-Development Activity Policy V1.0		
<b>Review</b>	Three years		
<b>Associated Documents</b>			
<b>Policy Status</b>	This policy may be amended or revoked by A4U at any time and at its discretion		
<b>Version</b>	<b>Authorisation</b>	<b>Approval Date</b>	<b>Effective Date</b>
1.0 Non-Development Activity	Board	2014	
1.2	Board	27/02/2020	March 2020

## Introduction

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Australia for UNHCR (A4U) is a non-religious and apolitical organisation that aims to provide relief to refugees or other persons of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This is outlined in the organisation's Constitution.

Under its Framework Partnership Agreement and Annual Project Partnership Agreement with UNHCR, A4U is required to operate "in accordance with the principles of the humanitarian and non-political mandate of UNHCR" with its main purpose "to raise funds to benefit UNHCR Projects around the world".

The A4U Constitution states:

“Item 25 Objects

The exclusive purpose for which the Company is established is to provide relief to refugees or other persons of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in a country declared by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to be a developing country in accordance with sub-section 30-85(2)(b) of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997 and, in fulfilling this purpose:

- a) The Company will raise public awareness of the plight of refugees and other persons of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees...

Item 26 Non-profit

The income and property of the Company must be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Company as set out in this Constitution and the Company shall pursue charitable purposes only...”

## The Policy

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In accordance with its constitution A4U is committed to ensuring the funds are applied to provide relief to refugees or other persons of concern to UNHCR.

As part of its compliance with the ACFID Code of Conduct, A4U has committed to ensure that funds and other resources designated for the purpose of aid and development, providing emergency relief and assistance, will be used only for those purposes and will not be used to promote religious adherence or to support a political party, or to promote a candidate or organisation affiliated to a political party.

## Definition of Aid & Development Activities

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Aid and development refers to the activities undertaken in order to reduce poverty and address global justice issues via direct engagement through 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.

## Definition of Non-Development Activities

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Non-development activities are all that fall outside the definition of aid and development activities. According to commonly used definition by ACFID and DFAT these primarily include:

### **Religious, Evangelical and Proselytism activities**

These activities are defined by DFAT as ‘supporting or promoting a particular religious adherence’. (DFAT, 2016) A4U does not provide support for any religious-based activities, including the promotion of religious adherence.

In the course of its work, A4U and UNHCR (implementation partner) may work with religious-based organisations in order to further the work of A4U.

### **Partisan Political Activities**

This policy utilises the DFAT definition of partisan political activities as ‘supporting a political party, candidate or organisation affiliated to a political party’. (DFAT, 2016)

A4U does not provide support to a political party, or promote a candidate or organisation affiliated to a particular party. This does not include advocacy which is aimed at raising public awareness about the plight of refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR, and is not aimed at promoting partisan political objectives.

## Compliance

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This policy provides a framework for A4Us compliance with indicator 7.3 .2 of the ACFID Code of Conduct. This principle outlines that to be compliant with this indicator, Members are required to have in place:

- Policy, statement or guidance document that addresses the separation of development activities from non-development activities in:
  - Programming, expenditure reporting, fundraising, advocacy campaigns, communications, choice of donors, and partners.
- Development initiatives that consistently show evidence of the separation of development and non-development activities
- Members are required to extend this requirement for separation of development and non-development activities to partners through agreements or similar.

## Guiding Principles

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A4U supports and is committed to abiding by the following principles:

- to ensure accurate representation of our activities to the people we work with, donors and the public.
- to ensure that funds raised for aid and development purposes are not used to exploit people and communities who are vulnerable and do not place any conditions or obligations on recipients in terms of non-development, religious or political outcomes that would affect their access to services being offered.
- to respect the cultures and religions of all the people we help.

Where there are components of our partner programs which involve evangelical or partisan political activities, these must be promoted and accounted for separately using the following Control Procedures:

### **Control Procedures**

- projects will be appraised and only development or humanitarian activities will be funded by Australia for UNHCR.
- partner capacity assessment processes will identify if the partner is engaged in non-development activities, and if so, how it is able to manage and account for them separately to aid and development activities to determine whether non-development components have been included
- the partner agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) or equivalent, will include definitions of development and non-development activity.
- the partner agreement, MOU or equivalent, will require the partner to agree that the A4U or UNHCR funds designated for development and humanitarian purposes will not be used to fund any non-development activity

### **Resources**

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- ACFID Code of Conduct Principle 7.3.2 <https://acfid.asn.au/content/commitment-73-we-are-accountable-our-stakeholders>
- Statute of the Office of UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c39e1.html>
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016 Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme: Guidelines <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/oagds-guidelines.pdf>