

NEWS



INSIDE: a special report for members on the first meeting of the new ACT Alliance governing board in February 2011

PHOTO CREDITS

This page, page 2 and 3: photos by Paul Jeffrey, taken from two series commissioned by the ACT secretariat in 2011 covering ACT's work in Haiti and Gaza.

Page 2:
John Nduna by Sonali Fernando
Cornelia Fuellkrug-Weitzel by Christoph Pueschner

Page 3:
Barbara Wetsig by Sean Hawkey
John Nduna and Becki Larson by Sonali Fernando

Page 5:
Mealtime from Chikwawa Valley series by Sonali Fernando.
Suvi Virkkunen by Sean Hawkey

Page 6: Sean Hawkey by Sean Gerald Hawkey

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<http://www.photos.actalliance.org/>



Top: John Nduna

Bottom: Cornelia Fuellkrug-Weitzel

DEAR MEMBERS OF ACT ALLIANCE,

We are very pleased to bring you this snapshot of decisions and discussions made at the first full meeting of the ACT Alliance governing board in February 3-5, 2011.

Transparency and openness are core values of the board. Following an SCHR review last year, the board has now decided that, following each meeting, a summary of the most important issues and decisions should be shared with all members of the alliance.

The names of the board members will be posted to the ACT website, presented according to region.

If you'd like to contact any member of the board, please do so through the Secretariat. The agenda of upcoming meetings will similarly be circulated to members so you may give input through the board or executive committee member of your region.

With warm wishes

Cornelia Fuellkrug-Weitzel
ACT Alliance Moderator

John Nduna
ACT Alliance General Secretary



Members of the new ACT Alliance governing board, from left to right. Back row: Dr Bernard Sabella, Liv Hukset Wang, Paul Valentin, Peter Schirmer, John Nduna, Francisco de Assis da Silva, Dean Triantafyllou, Dragan Makojevic, Eberhard Hitzler, Henrik Stubkjaer. Front/middle row: Susie Ibutu, Sushant Agrawal, Rev Masimango Katanda, Hielke Wolters, Arshintu, Rev Victoria Cortez, Donna Derr, Qiu Zhinghui, Monijinjir Byapari, Lorenzo Mota King, Penina Reveta (ExCom), Suzanne Matala, Elsa Tesfay. Not present: Rose Kumwenda-Ng'oma and Humberto Shikiya.

Joint assembly with the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea in 2013

The big news of the board meeting is that the WCC and ACT will hold their general assemblies in conjunction with each other at Busan, Korea, in October 2013, six months before the next ACT general assembly was due. As ACT Alliance is an integral part of the ecumenical movement, close cooperation with other ecumenical groups such as the WCC and LWF is essential. The board welcomes the invitation by the WCC to have a joint assembly but still needs to consider the practicalities. Cooperation between ACT and WCC was discussed at the meeting of the ACT interim board in September 2010 and at the ACT Assembly the following month, with the conclusion that cooperation between the two organisations needed to be strengthened in the coming years. The WCC's recent Central Committee further affirmed the necessity of a joint assembly.

Board Orientation

Before our board meeting, we had a day-long orientation for the board members on the workings of ACT and the secretariat, looking at the role and responsibilities of the board, the executive committee and the general assembly. The orientation, led by Barbara Wetsig (pictured right) in her role as ACT's acting deputy general secretary, also covered attributes of members of ACT Alliance's governance bodies, and the legal and governing documents to which the board must adhere.



Mission Organisations

The long-standing issue on the status of mission organisations in ACT was discussed. Some mission organisations challenge the policy that they cannot apply for membership but only observer status. The former governing board, after a thorough investigation of this issue, concluded that the current membership criteria were satisfactory and therefore that they would not make any changes to it. But they informed the incoming board that, should they want to continue discussing the issue, they could. The new board asked to be furnished with the work done by the previous board so that they could be properly informed of what had ensued.

Draft new Cooperation Agreement

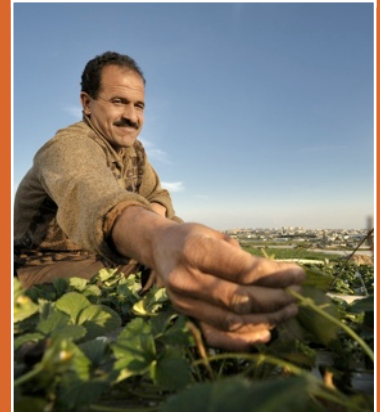
ACT Alliance is in the process of defining a new Cooperation Agreement. A document was presented to the board as a first draft for discussion. The board raised a number of points that are to be considered when re-writing the documents. Comments ranged from language issues to the secretariat and special initiatives, co-branding to policy.

The secretariat will take these comments and bring the final draft for approval to the next board meeting in September.

New ACT deputy general secretary

The board extended a warm welcome to Rebecca (Becki) Larson, ACT's new deputy general secretary, who attended the board meeting and started work at the secretariat in March 2011.

Becki Larson, ACT's new deputy general secretary, with general secretary John Nduna



Above: Three photographs from Paul Jeffrey's series for ACT on life in Gaza three years after the Incursion.

NEW MEMBERS

The board welcomes five new organisations to the alliance: Koinonia, Bangladesh; Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh; Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus; Angola Council of Christian Churches (CICA); and Lutheran Development Service, Liberia. Five other applications are pending.



ACT ALLIANCE POLICY COMMITMENTS

Two new ACT policies

The board approved two overarching policies for the alliance following a presentation by policy officer Marian Casey-Maslen: the ACT Code of Conduct and the ACT Code of Good Practice.

Below: Marian Casey-Maslen



The Code of Good Practice for the ACT Alliance is a new code for the alliance and is an organisational-level commitment to aspire to best practice. It provides four sets of principles for ACT member organisations:

Overarching principles - the fundamental principles that guide our work as an alliance.

Organisational principles – the principles that promote professional management, leadership and support in ACT member

organisations to guide how we work. They provide the foundations for effective and accountable programming.

Programmatic principles – the principles that guide our actions in ACT member programmes addressing capacities and promoting justice and equality in line with ACT policies and guidance.

Relational Principles – the principles that support ACT members working together and promote collaboration, cooperation and partnership among alliance members.

New ACT Code of Good Practice

The ACT Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Fraud and Corruption and Abuse of Power is a revision of the 2002 Code of Conduct. The code serves as a guide for individual behaviour for the staff of ACT members and the ACT secretariat. It is designed to assist staff to understand better the obligations placed on their conduct, and geared to preventing of the following: sexual exploitation

and abuse (SEA), all forms of harassment, fraud and corruption, security breaches, and unethical business practices. A section on child protection will be added in the coming months. The code should be signed by all staff of ACT members and the ACT secretariat. The ACT Code of Conduct has supporting guidelines on the prevention of SEA for implementation by ACT members. These guidelines were developed in 2009 and will be revised in 2011 to reflect changes to the revised Code.

New ACT Code of Conduct

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic Plan 2011-2014

ACT's direction for the years ahead - set out in the draft plan "Working for justice, investing in quality" - expands upon the strategic aims created at the general assembly.

The board came up with useful comments and additions to improve the plan, including that the tone should reflect ACT as a church-based alliance and discussion around how ACT's strategy relates to strategic plans of members. The secretariat will revise the plan accordingly before putting it to the board for approval in its April conference call. It will then go out to the alliance for comment.



Communication Strategy

Head of Communications, Sonali Fernando, opened discussions with a paper outlining ACT's significant communications achievements over the last six months, but nevertheless warned that ACT communications cannot continue with 'business as usual', outlining the reasons why a new drive to reach external audiences and media and a new plan for staffing in the secretariat is needed immediately.

Board members were enthusiastic about the draft communications strategy she presented and welcomed its direction, making a number of positive contributions.

Among these, they said that ACT needed to clarify the relative communications roles and responsibilities of ACT members and the ACT secretariat, how the forums fit into the overarching communications scheme, who can speak for ACT and at what level, how we shape and define the unique and distinctive qualities of the ACT brand, and the staffing capacity of the communications department.

The board concluded that the draft strategy had taken the right direction and that ACT had to invest seriously in communications if it wanted to move forward. A final strategy on the basis of this with timeline and budgetary needs will be prepared. The board supported moves to set up a Communicators' Working Group this year.

Advocacy Strategy

The board had a lively debate at the work and role of ACT in the field of advocacy. The ACT general assembly in Arusha in October 2010 decided to work on up to three areas of advocacy, including climate change, and the governing board discussed both whether the direction was right, and the speed and timing of choosing which three advocacy topics ACT should prioritise.

The discussion covered whether three global priorities was too much for ACT, with the moderator advising the board to be realistic about what ACT could achieve in its first strategic period.

The board decided to emphasise the 'up to three global topics' formulation agreed at the general assembly. Advocacy officer Suvi Virkkunen said it was a four-year process and that it was advisable for ACT to name its priority advocacy topics in the Strategic Plan so that even if it does not pursue advocacy in its first year it will have a template on which to follow up in the next three years; she felt this would help ACT's stakeholders to engage with us.

The board agreed that it would discuss this again at its meeting in September, and approved the terms of reference for an advisory group on advocacy to support the secretariat in preparing for the September discussion.

Left: Sonali Fernando (top) and Suvi Virkkunen

Below: Two full days' food for the four-member Mkweza family in Chikwawa, Malawi.



ACT Safety and Security Policy Guidance/ACT Security week

The board also approved policy guidance on Staff Safety and Security Principles for the ACT Alliance, a revision of a 2007 document. The guidance outlines the key principles of the Alliance's approach to staff safety and security. The principles encourage the management of each member of the alliance and the ACT secretariat to take responsibility and hold themselves accountable for ensuring the safety and security of its staff. They equally encourage each staff person to take personal responsibility for her/his own safety and security. The board highlighted the need to adapt the guidance to the country and programme context. It also noted that ACT members should endeavour to do joint country risk analyses facilitated at the forum level so that they can jointly plan for better protection of staff. The board also welcomed the upcoming ACT Safety and Security Awareness Week that is scheduled for 23-27 May 2011, an initiative of the ACT Security Working Group. The meeting noted that a resource pack will be shared with members in April to support their efforts during the awareness week.

ACT Complaints Advisory Group

The board discussed the appointment of an ACT Complaints Advisory Committee in support of the roll-out of the ACT Complaints Policy and Disciplinary Procedures, which was approved as a one-year pilot in 2010. The group will provide advice and support on complaints received by the secretariat and governing board. It will be composed of five persons, drawn from the following: The ACT general secretary/and or deputy general secretary; three persons from ACT member organisations who may or may not be part of the ACT governing board; and one independent person who is not an employee of any ACT member or the secretariat. Additionally, external consultants with specific expertise may be required for specialised investigations. The board agreed that it will nominate two people – one male and one female – from the board for the group. It also agreed that the secretariat would seek a further representative of ACT member organisations with experience of handling complaints. The board asked the secretariat to set up a dedicated email address "complaints@actalliance.org" for all complaints rather than having individuals named as complaints focal persons.

Finance

The unaudited final accounts for 2010 were presented as the audit had not yet been conducted. The audit was scheduled for after the governing board meeting at the end of February and the final audited accounts will be presented to the board for approval in a teleconference meeting in April.

A meeting has been planned for the 13th April 2011 to bring together a number of ACT donor members to discuss and review the current ACT funding mechanism with an aim to improve it.

Regarding appointment of new auditors for ACT, the board requested the secretariat to invite a number of audit firms to tender to be the auditors of the ACT Alliance.

ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

ACT and WCC agreement on the UNLO Office in New York.

Discussions took place on the status of the mooted ACT/WCC office in New York. The proposed office will be strengthened and enlarged to serve the wider ecumenical family and used as an embassy of the ecumenical movement. The office will work on WCC topics, such as climate, peace, human rights and regional issues (e.g. Sudan and the Middle East), as well as ACT topics. It will not create the content but rely on member organisations to do so. It will be placed under the aegis of the general secretary of the WCC, in close cooperation with the general secretary of ACT Alliance. A vision for the office is to have a coordinator, a programme executive from the global south and a programme executive from ACT. Two members of the board and the general secretary will have discussions with WCC on the arrangements for the joint office. A document will go to the board for decision later, and to the executive committee in June.

Cooperation between APRODEV and ACT Alliance

Over the last two years, discussions have taken place within ACT and APRODEV about the possibility of APRODEV becoming an ACT liaison office to the EU. The ACT board and APRODEV general assembly came up with a MoU on how the two entities would work together. The document elaborates the relationship between the two organisations and some principles and steps forward. Some members of the board wanted more engagement and discussion on the APRODEV – ACT relationships before signing the MoU. The board agreed to sign the MoU to guide cooperation and to move forward in clarifying the relationship. It now needs to be ratified by the APRODEV general assembly.

GOVERNANCE

A matter on the elections of the new executive committee at the general assembly by the new governing board was brought up. There was an anomaly in the election procedure of the executive committee and the board agreed to follow up the matter so that the anomaly could be rectified before the executive committee holds its first meeting in June this year.



Sean Hawkey

We wish to thank Sean Hawkey (right), communications officer at the ACT secretariat, for his committed work for ACT over the years. Sean, who is leaving ACT and moving to Nicaragua with his family in April, has been a vital member of the communications team since the start of ACT Development. His contributions to the alliance on branding, photography and the website have been crucial to building ACT's identity. We wish him all health and happiness in his new home.

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