

Welfare, Religious, and Partisan Political Activities Policy			
Type	Program Policy	Effective	October 2016
Author	Program Performance Unit	Supersedes	Dec 2011 Policy titled Non-participation in and Funding of Welfare, Evangelical, or Partisan Political activities.
Scope	All OAU funded programs and projects	Review	October 2019
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Purpose

This policy provides a framework to ensure that Oxfam Australia’s designated development funds are used specifically for development and/or humanitarian outcomes and not for welfare, religious or partisan political activities.

OAU is an independent, non-partisan, not-for-profit, secular development organisation. Oxfam’s vision is for a just world free of poverty where people influence decisions that affect their lives, enjoy their rights, and assume their responsibilities — a world in which everyone is valued, and everyone is treated equally. In our programs and offices we embrace diversity and oppose discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual preference, disability, family status, age, and political, religious or philosophical allegiance. OAU does not seek to promote the well-being of a particular group or community because of their racial, religious, cultural or political persuasions. OAU does not seek to change the religious or political persuasions of project participants.

Scope

The policy applies to all programs/projects funded OAU including those managed by the Programs Section and Public Engagement (PE) section.

Other related documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- a. [OAU HR Policy 06 Outside Activities/Employment](#)
- b. Clause 20 Personal Leave of the [OAU Enterprise Agreement](#)

Conventions and Obligations

OAU is a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and Red Cross Codes of Conduct which guide our actions in this area:

<p>ACFID Code of Conduct (Compliance Principle B.1.5- page 10)</p>	<p>The code aims to ensure signatories’ 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”.</p> <p>The code aims to ensure signatories’ funds and other resources designated for the purpose of aid and development and states 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.</p>
<p>The Red Cross Code of Conduct (page 3&4)</p>	<p>The code states that “aid will not be used to further a political or religious standpoint; we shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy; and relief aid must strive to reduce further vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs”.</p>

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Compliance with this policy is also a requirement of DFAT which does not approve funding of welfare, religious, or partisan political activities¹. Upholding the codes we have committed to is essential to fulfilling our obligations, and achieving our vision, values and goals.

Definitions and Principles

Welfare activities

Welfare Definition	Welfare activities	Example of welfare activity	Example of development (non-welfare activity)
Providing direct assistance as care and maintenance to individuals/families because of immediate needs (other than in refugee and emergency situations), rather than address the root causes of those needs.	Welfare aims to maintain recipients in a particular condition on a longer term basis ² and do not include a strategy for integration into broader community development programs. They are implemented on either a one-off 'gift' basis or on a long-term basis with no clear exit strategy.	Provision of a water supply system to a community without community participation and providing ongoing maintenance and all water distribution/consumption costs.	In this example, the local community is trained and involved in constructing and maintaining the water supply system.

OAU staff are responsible for upholding the following key principles in their work:

- a) OAU applies a human rights framework in its work and will not fund welfare activities. OAU programs are based on the belief that people and communities around the world are active participants in their own development rather than passive recipients of welfare. OAU programs are not directed to a single family or individual in isolation and seek to develop a community's ability to sustain activities beyond the life of OAU support.
- b) OAU will ensure that if any elements of a program/project can be categorised as welfare during program design, it will be subject to close analysis. The program/project proposal must present a rationale as to why it is not a dependency-creating model and ensure a clear exit strategy in place. Any such elements must also be closely monitored over the life of the program/project to ensure compliance with this policy.
- c) Responding to emergency needs is not considered a welfare activity, since it has a clear exit strategy and may in some circumstances turn into a long-term development initiative. However even during

¹ <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/ancp-manual.pdf> pages 13,14 &15

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emergency relief, efforts shall be made to reduce dependency and increase accountability to the beneficiaries.

Religious activities

Religious activities definition	Religious activities	Example of religious activity	Example of development (non-religious activity)
OAU defines religious activities as activities that promote one religion, faith or denomination and/or attempt to convert people from one religion, faith or denomination to another	Religious activities may discriminate on the basis of belonging to a particular group or aim to persuade or develop religious beliefs and faith practices among project beneficiaries.	Building up the knowledge and faith of believers such as theological training and study, converting people to another faith and the building and maintenance of places of worship.	Support to a faith group in circumstances where the structure is specifically designed to provide relief or development outcomes, such as working through a mosque to provide emergency relief.

OAU staff are responsible for upholding the following key principles in their work:

- a) OAU is non-sectarian and will not implement or fund program/project activities that are religious in nature and are designed to promote a particular religion, faith or denomination including activities that persuade people to join a particular religion, denomination or faith.
- b) OAU will uphold the right of individuals to choose and practice their own religious or spiritual beliefs.
- c) OAU does not attempt to control or regulate staff and volunteers' personal affairs or use of leisure time including their involvement in religious activities. However it is expected that all OAU staff and volunteers are able to maintain a clear distinction between participating in such an activity and their work with OAU.

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Partisan Political activities

Partisan political definition	Partisan political activities	Example of partisan political activity	Example of development (non-partisan political activity)
Activities that align with a political party and are designed to persuade people to support a particular political party.	Supporting or aligning with a particular political party or organisation, candidate, politician or faction to gain power within a government or party political structure. ³	An activity encouraging voters to vote for a particular political party or candidate.	Straight Talk event - promoting participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to more actively engage in political institutions, decision-making and change processes.

OAU staff are responsible for upholding the following key principles in their work:

- a) OAU is non-partisan and will not implement or fund program activities that further particular party political adherence, endorse any party, candidate or organisation formally affiliated to a political party or those that involve partisanship.
- b) OAU recognises that political processes are an important part of the development process. OAU seeks to promote good governance and political participation in the communities with whom we work and will support civic and political awareness campaigns.
- c) OAU also seeks to influence policies and practices of governments and political parties to benefit poor and marginalised women and men and uphold basic human rights for all. However, this does not involve the support for or promotion of a particular political party or candidate.
- d) OAU will uphold the right of individuals to participate in political activities.
- e) OAU recognises that staff and volunteers can participate fully and constructively in political activities provided they are able to maintain a clear distinction between participating in such an activity and their work with OAU. This participation cannot be deemed to threaten the security and reputation of the staff/volunteer involved or OAU.

³ <http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/oagds-guidelines.pdf> page 11

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Responsibility and Accountability

This policy applies to all Oxfam Australia program staff. Specific responsibilities and accountabilities for ensuring implementation are as follows:

Accountable	Activity
Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold Section Directors accountable to this policy and promote policy principles, as appropriate, in the Oxfam International Confederation
Directors, Programs and Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor policy implementation and ensure OAU development, advocacy, campaigns and humanitarian programs and projects are not funding or supporting welfare, religious activities or partisan political parties
Unit Manager or Country Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share this policy with staff and partners • Promote awareness of the Policy and ensure staff and partners are held accountable to the policy
Programs and Public Engagement staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of program management systems such as the appraisal process, working agreement and regular partner reporting and monitoring to ensure that religious, political or welfare activities are not included in OAU's programs
PPU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand policy requirements, monitor OAU funded international and domestic programs/projects and/or local/national partners' activities and report any breaches of the policy
PPU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialise, review and update the policy and provide on-going technical support to units and teams to implement this policy
BDU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the policy aligns with DFAT policies affecting contracts