



ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE **actalliance**

The international aid agency of the
National Council of Churches in Australia
ABN 32808957850

ACT FOR PEACE REPORT TO THE 2016 NCCA FORUM

Ecumenical
action in in
Coffs Harbour
in support of the
Christmas Bowl



Karen McGrath/Act for Peace

INTRODUCTION

In the gospels, time and again, Christ calls us to protect one another, to show mercy, to rescue, to welcome the stranger to prevent violence and to thirst for justice. Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan to emphasize our responsibility to stop, care for and journey with those facing great suffering and injustice.

The role of Act for Peace is to enable people to work together to achieve safety, justice and dignity in communities threatened by conflict and disaster. **Thank you to all churches who are part of this and acting for peace!**

It is more important than ever that our focus is on *conflict and disaster threatened communities*. These are the communities increasingly being left behind as more stable countries escape extreme poverty and suffering. As highlighted at the last NCCA Forum: *'There is a principle running throughout modern ecumenism that must be highlighted because it seems so often overlooked: The unity of the church is itself crucial to the Christian witness for peace'*.

We are called to do *as much as is possible on our part* (Romans 12:18) and we are conscious that we are tasked to pursue peace in this way by the risen Jesus. As a task, we must always be seeking to help more, until all share in His peace. Accordingly, Act for Peace must increase by as much as is possible the impact it is able to have on peace, safety, justice and dignity.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Our Vision:

A peaceful world where all people share a safe, just and dignified life.

Our Mission:

The NCCA, responding to the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ, through Act for Peace seek to enable people to work together to achieve safety, justice and dignity in communities threatened by conflict and disaster.



Janet Consens/Act for Peace



Shahzad A. Fayyaz/Act for Peace

Khalid no longer lives in fear of losing the people he loves most - thanks to the maternal health program we support in rural Pakistan.

OUR PURPOSE AND GOAL



Passionate people in Palestine and Adelaide working together for change through Act for Peace.

Our Purpose:

We empower passionate people to work together to achieve safety, justice and dignity in communities threatened by conflict and disaster.

Our Goal:

Increase our impact in achieving safety, justice and dignity in communities threatened by conflict and disaster.

ACHIEVING OUR GOAL

Our Goal is to *increase our impact in achieving safety, justice and dignity in communities threatened by conflict and disaster* and we are seeking to double our impact in less than six years.

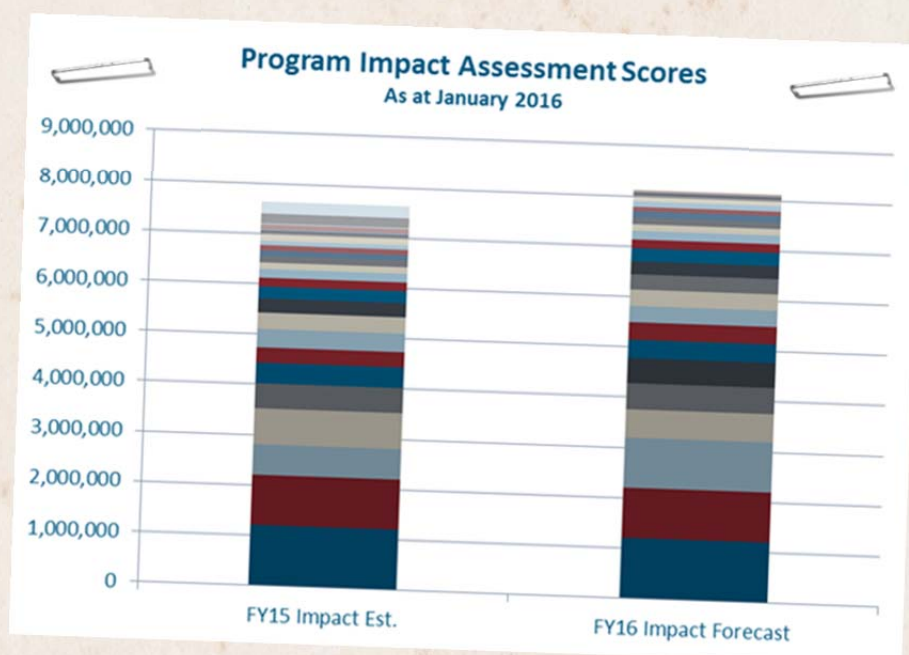
Impact is the difference between what would happen with a program and what would happen without it. Our baseline level of impact is the total we achieved in 2014/15 through our program and campaign support. Impact is measured by multiplying the amount of impact per person by the number of people impacted by a program. Doubling our impact will require us assisting ecumenical partners to both reach more people and assist them in a deeper way. As an indication of what we are seeking to more than double, in 2014 through partners:

- **407** communities highly threatened by conflict or disaster directly benefitting from AfP-supported programs per year;
- **495,410** community members directly impacted by AfP supported multi-year programs, plus over 250,000 benefiting from AfP-supported emergency response programs per year; and
- the **majority of communities** involved in AfP-supported programs were recognised as important actors in addressing conflicts and disasters and protecting their members.

As per our strategic plan and budget, we are currently assisting as best we can ecumenical partners working with and for:

- Conflict threatened communities from **Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka** – in those countries, neighbouring countries, across the Asia-Pacific region and in Australia; and
- Natural disaster affected communities in some of the world's most at-risk countries: **Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Pacific regional, Indonesia, the Philippines and Zimbabwe**.

While we are still in the first year of pursuing this goal and gathering evidence of the impact from each of the programs we are supporting, we believe we are currently on track. While our first assessment of program impact for 2015/16 (graph below) showed an estimated increase this year of just over 10%, our program expenditure has since been able to increase and so our next estimate for 2015/16 is expected to show a higher than 10% result.



SEEK AND PURSUE PROGRAM STRATEGIES

Seek peace and pursue it.

Psalm 34; 1 Peter 3:11

Our strategy to achieve our goal is based upon:

1. continuously **seeking** and developing the best program strategies;
2. assessing them fairly and transparently and deciding which are most likely to enable us to achieve our **goal**;
3. **pursuing** agreed strategies with unfaltering passion, high skill and adequate resources; and
4. being **accountable, sustainable** and aware about our progress towards the goal, ready to make necessary **changes** as required.

We are a small agency based in a country far from many of the threatened communities, so to be most useful we must continuously learn, adapt and provide opportunities that others are not. The AfP Commission ensures that progress against the goal is presented and reviewed regularly and that we stay on track to achieve it. Our three program strategies for communities threatened by conflict and disaster are titled: **Community-based protection; Emergencies and disasters; and Sustainable development.**

1. COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION STRATEGY

Every day, 32,000 people have to abandon their homes to seek protection and the number of people newly displaced has tripled since 2010. We now live with the shocking reality that more people are displaced today than at any time since WWII.

While the global humanitarian system's responses are often slow and cumbersome, local communities, faith and community based organisations are usually the main first responders and continue to shoulder the burden well after emergency response agencies have moved on and funding has dwindled. We are:

1. Jointly developing innovative community-based protection programs with local partners that empower affected communities to address their own protection risks. This involves utilising: our protection programming methods, tools, training resources and technical expertise in program design; local partner capacity; the protection potential of local communities; and assisting partners to obtain additional resources to grow the work. Over the past four years, we have been developing, piloting and scaling our community-based protection resources with a range of local ecumenical partners and ACT members while leading a complementary evidence-based global learning and practice initiative.

2. Maximising the protection impact of partner programs. This involves AfP providing training, technical expertise and support to help partners adapt their humanitarian and development programs; ensure child protection and do no harm obligations; and ensure program participants have safe and dignified access to the programs.

3. Persuasive evidence-based advocacy in Australia, within the region, and globally. Under this refugee-focused part of the strategy, we will continue to support the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and regionally we will continue to work with key regional stakeholders (civil society, NGOs, UNHCR and governments) to advance the Vision for Regional Protection and Plan of Action. We will also continue to expand the reach of our refugee campaigns such as through expanding participation in the Ration Challenge.

EXAMPLE: REFUGEE PROTECTION

Kamala, pictured here, returned with her husband and daughter from years in a Tamil Nadu refugee to re-start their lives in Sri Lanka. Her story is one of many thousands of examples of how combining short-term, long-term and advocacy work can create sustainable improvements in a person's life.

Whilst in the refugee camp, we helped meet Kamala and her family's immediate humanitarian needs through a health services program, delivered by our partner, the Organisation for Eelam Refugees' Rehabilitation (OfERR). Kamala's long-term development prospects were improved when she joined a women's self-help group in the camp and learnt valuable protection skills. When she decided to return to her homeland, we supported her transition by ensuring the family's health records were transferred, and by providing assistance with obtaining birth certificates and other documentation the family would require to obtain services and find work in Sri Lanka.

In addition to providing funds and capacity building support for the programs OfERR run, we engage in advocacy initiatives aiming to ensure that a safe process for refugee reintegration for refugees like Kamala is agreed to by the Governments of both India and Sri Lanka, and supported by UNHCR. We have been advocating with the Australian Government to continue to provide support to Sri Lankan refugees able to return to Sri Lanka and those in need of protection in Australia and to ensure that perpetrators of war crimes are held to account.



Our programs are helping refugees like Kamala to return home safely to Sri Lanka.

2. EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

Natural disasters result in extreme harm to vulnerable communities, including conflict affected communities. More and more people will be affected in the future as the frequency and intensity of natural disasters increases.

This strategy expands our community safety and resilience strategy with ecumenical partners in our region over the past seven years both within the region (Indo-Pacific) and to other highly threatened countries, such as displaced Syrians. We seek to work ecumenically in Australia, not just overseas, which is why we are active participants in the Church Agency Humanitarian Alliance, made up of 8 Australian church agencies.

One community resilience model we have developed has been specifically designed to be easily adaptable for different contexts in terms of: reach; depth of impact; risk focus (from narrow - such as disaster risk resilience, climate change adaptation or violence against women - to wide multiple natural hazards and human-generated protection risks); and multi-dimensional (meaning significant advocacy and policy development, not just service delivery).

Regional governments we've worked with have highly valued our ability to build both the capacity of local communities and government agencies to prevent, mitigate and respond to disaster-related risks, primarily through integrated preparedness efforts, which has helped mobilise government support for communities, helping multiply and sustain our impact.

EXAMPLE: DISASTER RESILIENCE AND RESPONSE IN VANUATU

We began assisting the Vanuatu Christian Council (VCC) and other Pacific ecumenical councils on disaster resilience work in 2008. For the first five years, we were able to assist 544 communities and 113 schools and did extensive capacity building with VCC and the other partners.

We then moved to working more deeply with communities and over the past two years have enabled many of the most remote communities in the world's two most disaster vulnerable countries to become more disaster & climate resilient including: improved access to clean drinking water, food security, economic stability, social benefits and health benefits for an estimated 6,520 people. These programs also have significant capacity building achievements and benefits for our local ecumenical partners.

When Cyclone Pam struck Vanuatu, we responded fast - providing urgently needed shelter, water and food.



Julia Loersch/Act for Peace

3. COMMUNITY-LED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

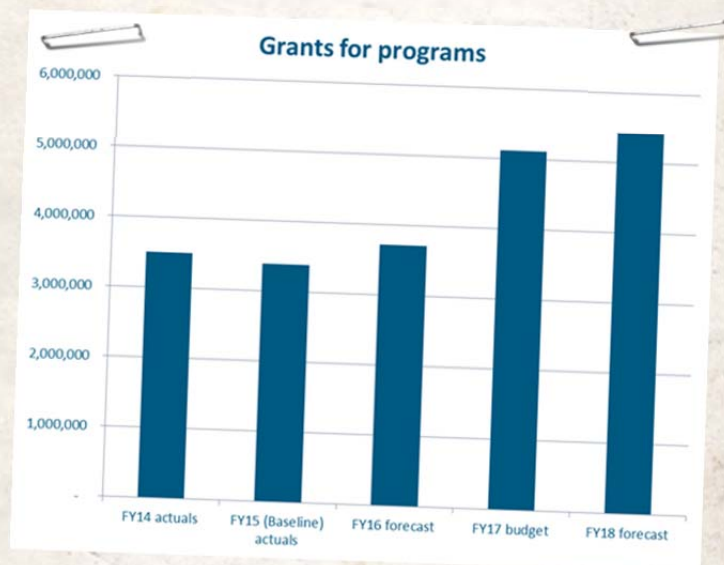
Over the past decade the share of the world's poorest in the conflict affected states has gone from 20% to now 50%. In the decade ahead it is projected by some to increase to around 80%.

As other poor countries have developed in recent years, lifting people out of poverty, many conflict-affected countries have been left behind. Conflict not only kills directly, it also forces people from their land so they can't harvest their crops. It destroys businesses, schools and hospitals. It pushes people into vulnerable situations, and it often means that government or other social safety nets are no longer there to support people.

With conflicts and displacement situations reversing hard-won development gains, and a series of new conflicts and forced displacements overwhelming the coping capacity of states and the humanitarian system, AfP is seeking to expand and develop its long-term program partnerships to deliver sustainable development programs, and humanitarian assistance and protection in a sustainable manner that empowers local communities, supports program partners and builds local capacity.

In working to achieve sustainable change in fragile situations, protracted conflicts and displacement contexts, our strategy seeks to further develop our situation-specific partnerships for sustainable development. These program partnerships – usually with long-standing local ecumenical partners - are designed to empower local partners to develop and implement a variety of livelihoods, health, education and other programs that are appropriate to the local context and empower local communities, ensuring effective utilisation of resources and community ownership and, in turn, sustained developmental benefits.

We are strengthening our grant capacity across our three program strategies, with 70% of our 2016/17 grant target either already secured or at least past initial approval hurdles:



EXAMPLE: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EAST AFRICA

Fred, pictured right, is an ambulance driver for our local partner in Ethiopia. He believes that we all have a responsibility to help those less fortunate and is doing his part to support refugees who have been forced to flee their homes.

Ethiopia is home to half a million refugees predominantly from neighbouring South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. Critically ill refugees are extremely at risk. Our local partner in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church- Development and Interchurch Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC), provides the urgently needed emergency medical assistance for refugees in the camps. Critically vulnerable refugees are referred from different camps to Addis Ababa where they are able to receive often life-saving treatment and ongoing specialist care.



EMPOWERING ECUMENICAL PARTNERS

Compared to other foreign aid agencies, who may only work in an area for a few months or years, local ecumenical partners are often better able to win the trust of the community because they are part of the community and their programs are more often designed with and owned by the communities.

Other than the impact of advocacy by our supporters or direct lobbying, our role is to support ecumenical partners to increase their impact in achieving safety, justice and dignity in communities threatened by conflict and disaster. Our programs strategies with ecumenical partners are based on:

1. our comparative advantages as an ecumenical aid agency;
2. strong solutions-oriented dialogue and evidence-based advocacy initiatives aimed at changing systems, structures, policy, practice and behaviour while mobilising resources and support;
3. working with partners to realise mutual goals while seeking to increase the resources that our partners can access to enable them to significantly increase their impact;
4. working through long-term partnerships, recognising that our local partners are best placed to respond to the challenges and opportunities they face in their own local context and that supporting, empowering and accompanying local partners and the communities they serve results in more sustainable development; and
5. strengthening systems and structures for protection and accountability; changing attitudes and behaviours, developing solutions, and; strengthening local protection systems through a rights-based approach; and

There are many ecumenical partnership opportunities in Australia to make a significant difference for conflict and disaster threatened communities. A highly impactful ecumenical initiative on this over the past decade has been the Micah Challenge coalition of around 20 churches and agencies which played a significant role in enabling more than \$5b of additional Australian aid to fragile and conflict affected situations (as part of growing all Australian aid).

We do not have the influence or supporter-base to achieve significant policy change on our own. Important ecumenical opportunities and partners in Australia include working with:

- Member Churches, especially those with close connections to conflict-affected communities, such as the Assyrian, Coptic and other Orthodox Churches.
- State Ecumenical Councils on issues of mutual interest, such as the NSWEC Commission on the Middle East.
- Ecumenical campaigns and coalitions with potential to enhance peace and security, such as Micah Challenge, the Church Agency Network and various ecumenical country or issue initiatives such as on Syria, Palestine or refugees with the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce.

EXAMPLES OF THE DIFFERENCE THAT ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS CAN MAKE

In Zimbabwe, **Zimbabwe Council of Churches** has partnered with several NGOs, embassies and ACT Alliance members for systematic advocacy to ensure politically motivated violence does not happen. In the West Bank, Palestine, the **Ecumenical Accompaniers** deployed in the field report directly to the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) central office in Jerusalem. The central office in turn shares information with relevant protection networks on a national and international level under World Council of Churches coordination. The local churches in Jerusalem are engaged as members of the EAPPI Steering Committee providing guidance and input into the direction of the program.

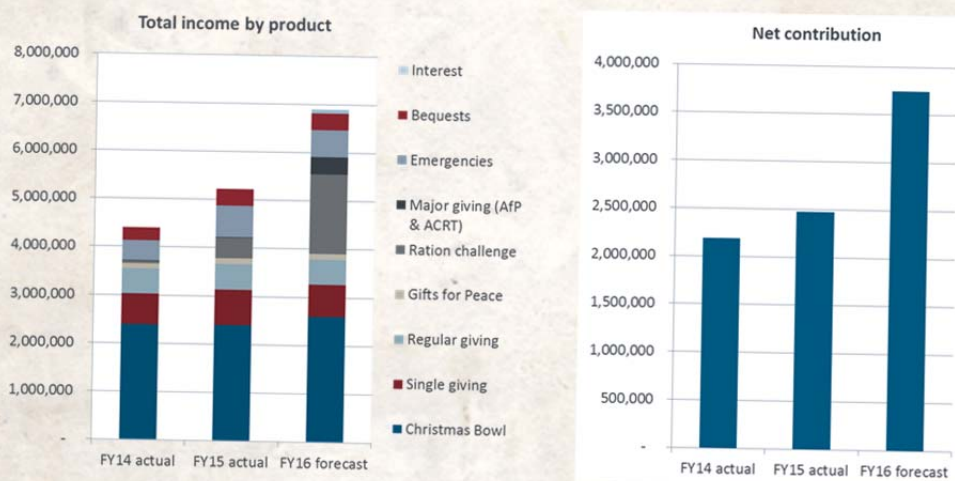
EMPOWERING SUPPORTERS

We are seeking to empower passionate people in Australia – within churches and beyond – to work together to fulfil our mission by giving, fundraising, volunteering and campaigning.

Thank you to all churches who are acting for peace! We are extremely grateful and keen to hear at the NCCA Forum and through other means how we can improve our services for you.

Through a range of inspiring fundraising and communication activities, we aim to both widen our supporter base and deepen supporters' engagement in seeking and pursuing peace; doubling the funds available for the program work of our ecumenical partners within 6 years and growing our advocacy impact.

Total net supporter funds for programs (fundraising income less costs) are forecast to be **\$1.3m higher this year** than last year and \$644k above target for this year. We are currently forecasting that we may be able to achieve our target of doubling net fundraising for partners within four years – two years earlier than our goal.



Prior to 2015, we had 2013 churches on our supporter-base and we were only able to give talks at and phone a small proportion. **Under our current Strategic Plan, our engagement with churches is growing considerably.** With the exception of a small number of highly engaged churches, most of our communication with churches had been the same for all, regardless of their level of interests and length of involvement. Under our current strategy, we are developing a more tailored approach, seeking to provide the right communication and services to the different church groups at the right time and better identify where the most engaged groups of supporters are.

New ideas are in the testing pipeline and we always welcome new ideas to be considered for testing. In addition to reaching out to new and old churches, we are engaging with potential individual supporters who don't currently attend church.

A service in aid of the Christmas Bowl at St. James Anglican Church in Sydney. The Christmas Bowl remains Act for Peace's single most important appeal raising over \$2.5m this year for the first time.



ACT FOR PEACE NCCA COMMISSIONERS

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Commission over the past triennium.

During this period, the Commissioners have been:

Sieneke (G.H.A.) Martin, Chair (Religious Society of Friends)

Bishop Philip Huggins, Deputy Chair (Anglican Church of Australia)

The Reverend John Gilmore, Commission Treasurer (Churches of Christ)

Elizabeth Stone, AfP Standing Committee member (Catholic Church)

The Reverend Elenie Poulos (Uniting Church in Australia)

Lieutenant Colonel Ray Wilson (The Salvation Army)

Alison Preston (Anglican Church of Australia)

Carmen Lazar OAM (Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East)

Chey Mattner (Lutheran Church of Australia)

Patricia Ryan (Catholic Church)

Dr William Bector (Coptic Orthodox Church of Australia)

Rev'd Fr Constantine Varipatis (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia)

Juliana Nkrumah AM (Uniting Church in Australia)

Captain Dr Kathy Crombie (Salvation Army): to 2014

Heather Saville (Quakers): since 2016

We wish to especially express our gratitude to those who have served for more than two triennia: Ray Wilson, John Gilmore, +Philip Huggins and Elenie Poulos.

Ex-officio Commission members:

General Secretary of the NCCA: Sr Elizabeth Delaney sgs, since 2015; Rev. Tara Curlewis to 2014.

AfP Executive Director: Alistair Gee. After 11 years in this position, Alistair is leaving shortly after the NCCA Forum. He wishes to express his immeasurable gratitude to the Churches of the NCCA for the opportunity to serve them and act for peace. He is sad to leave though believes it is the right time for Act for Peace and so has accepted another peace role.