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Evangelism

Definition

Evangelism refers to any activity that seeks to convert people from one religious faith or denomination to another¹.

The Need for a policy on evangelism:

- a) The development of a clear policy on evangelism was a recommendation from the 2004 accreditation review.
- b) Results of investigation into one complaint made in relation to tsunami relief being implemented on a faith-related basis by an ACFID member also increased the need to ensure that all agencies, their officers and partners do not discriminate on the basis of faith in matters of providing aid ².
- c) A policy on evangelism will clarify what Reledev is, the nature of Reledev's operations and its position on evangelism to the rest in the sector and to succeeding accreditation teams. It will also clarify procedural guidelines that need to be covered on a project-by-project basis regardless of the funding source.

Reledev's position on evangelism:

Reledev is an independent company limited by guarantee. It is comprised of members and supporters who are professionals in their chosen careers. Reledev's mission is to provide relief, education and development in Australia and overseas. Its activities seek to: (1) strengthen the development capacity of partner organizations that are actively seeking to improve the socio-economic situation of people in their

¹ Notes to ANCP Guidelines: "Australian Aid and NGOs recognise and agree that Australian Aid funds are not to be used for programming that is designed to convert people from one religious faith or denomination to another or from one political persuasion to another. Nor should Australian Aid funds be used to build up church, ecclesiastical or political structures except in circumstances where those structures are specifically designed to provide relief and/or development assistance. In this context, church, ecclesiastical and political structures include not just infrastructure, but could also extend to training or organisational activities."¹

² Notes to ANCP Guidelines: "Development assistance must be provided on a non-discriminatory basis. The acceptance of specific religious or political beliefs or membership in a particular religious or political group must not be a condition for receiving assistance or participating in development programs on an equal basis."

respective developing countries and (2) facilitate opportunities whereby Australians can participate in activities that improve social and living conditions, or improve access to/enable services to happen in developing communities (education, health, business, water, etc.). Reledev enters into agreements with its partners for the implementation of projects.

Reledev is not a church, is not a church organization, is not part of a systemic church-based aid system, is not part of a non-church systemic aid system and is not a faith-based organisation. As such:

- Reledev Australia Limited is not evangelical, has no evangelical mandate, nor mandate to engage in evangelical activities of its own or in conjunction with other agencies. Therefore, Reledev activities are not evangelical in nature or purpose. Reledev does not use funds (public or otherwise) for evangelical purposes.
- Reledev activities operate within a Christian environment by preference. Activities have been held in non-Christian countries.
- Project participants are predominantly Christian but can be of any denomination or creed.
- **Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT - Australian Aid):** Reledev collaborates with overseas partners in the management and implementation of DFAT funded projects that seek to reduce or alleviate poverty by improving the socio-economic situation of project beneficiaries. The activities that comprise these projects are detailed and well documented. DFAT projects do not include activities of an evangelistic type. The use of funds (both DFAT and Reledev) is well detailed in project documents. **No DFAT or Reledev funds are used for evangelical activities.**
- **Other Partners:** Reledev enters into agreements with Australian partners and overseas agencies for the implementation of project activities other than those funded by DFAT. The obligations of partners are detailed in the agreements. Reledev acknowledges that **partner entities may have other activities** of their own (these may include activities **of an evangelistic type**). **Those activities are not part of Reledev projects and are not funded by Reledev or DFAT.**

Impact on procedures:

- Monitoring information sought from partners comprise the scope pertaining to Reledev projects only.
- Agreements between Reledev and partners should state that activities and funds are not used for the purposes of evangelism and that funds should be applied only for the purposes of projects as agreed³.
- The appraisal of infrastructure projects distinguish whether the activities are considered development: in most developing countries, faith based

³ An amendment to the Agreements will be required in Agreements where this is not stated. Appropriate wording for Agreements is needed.

- infrastructure is used by the community for purposes other than solely the practice of a particular faith.⁴
- Interventions in developing countries may make some impact on the property or asset stock of a particular faith based institution (a church or school linked to a church).
 - (1) Where the intervention improves the conditions for and/or enables access to services (i.e. health, education, training, commerce, community organising, etc.) for the people of the community without regard to their faith, these interventions are classified as development. For example:
 - (a) Improving a community hall used for multiple purposes
 - (b) Improving school buildings
 - (c) Setting up a computer training facility maintained by a school
 - (2) Where interventions aim at solely improving or repairing church buildings used specifically for faith-based activities only, such interventions would be classified as welfare.
 - Funds raised and applied for welfare purposes are not included in Recognised Development Expenditure (RDE).

⁴ Australian Aid guidelines on buildings refer to constructions and specifically to their eligibility for Australian Aid funding. Reledev never uses Australian Aid funds for infrastructure projects. Notes to ANCP Guidelines:

“Any building must be an integral part of an acceptable overall development plan. One-off constructions not connected with a broader activity, whether for schools, health facilities, housing or other purposes, will not be eligible for Australian Aid funding. Any building must serve development rather than political religious, sporting, welfare or factional needs”.

“When any building is added to the plant stock of a religious organization, some very important issues arise. Will it serve the development needs of the total community without regard to their faith? Will the building and the growing size of the plant be divisive in that community or change the dynamics of the society? Who will own the building when it is completed?”