

Christian Aid Partnership Policy

Towards mutual partnerships



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Cover photo:

Lusungu Chinombo, Christian Aid Malawi Programme Officer, with Stan Mark, Field Facilitator for Christian Aid's partner, Eagles Relief and Development Programme in Chikwawa District, Malawi (March 2021).

Christian Aid exists to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We are a global movement of people, churches and local organisations who passionately champion dignity, equality and justice worldwide. We are the changemakers, the peacemakers, the mighty of heart.

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1. Introduction

For Christian Aid, working in partnership forms the foundation of who we are and how we believe change happens. Our partnership policy sets out our vision and approach to developing mutually transformational partnerships.

Partnerships are not just technical relationships set up to deliver a project. By joining in partnership we act in solidarity with our partners and people living in poverty to bring about transformational change. And we ourselves are transformed in this process. Our partnership policy sets out core partnership principles, which guide our approach to partnership in all areas of our work. These principles are rooted in Christian Aid's Global Strategy, **Standing Together**.

Christian Aid has a vision 'of a world where everyone has fullness of life, a life lived with dignity, free from poverty and need; where global resources are equitably shared and sustainably used; and where the voice and agency of the poor and marginalised are fully realised'. Through our 3Ps (poverty, power and prophetic voice) framework we commit to 'eradicating extreme poverty, dismantling its root causes across the world, and enabling the voice and agency of the poor and marginalised to be fully realised'. We can only achieve this together with others. 'To achieve our goals, we need to stand with all our partners and supporters throughout the world – people and organisations of all faiths and none, who share our values and a desire to act with the same courageous hope and conviction.'¹

This policy document is intended for our diverse range of Christian Aid partners, staff and volunteers, as well as supporters and donors, and anyone wishing to understand Christian Aid's approach to partnership.

Definition and scope of our partnership approach

This policy describes our commitments in our mutually transformational partnerships, and it grounds our overall partnership approach. This is a strategic document to frame and guide our partnerships and diverse external relationships rather than a description of operational processes. For that

reason, this policy is complemented by Christian Aid programme quality standards and partner cycle management processes and policies, which form part of operational discussions with all funded programme partners.

This policy and the principles guide our commitment to and external relationships with other institutions, organisations and groups. They do not directly apply to our relationships with individuals, although we recognise that some of the principles will also be relevant.

Partnership is a mutual two-way exchange of resources, knowledge and learning between two or more parties, which enables us to work and act together in a transformational way to bring about social justice and positive change. Partnerships should be based on trust, shared values and goals and draw on strengths, while recognising and responding to the limitations of each party.

Partnerships extend well beyond programmatic, operational or funded partnerships to include all those aiming to be mutually transformational, guided by a set of shared principles. This policy applies across Christian Aid to our varied organisational relationships (funded and non-funded) within our country programmes, globally and in the UK/Ireland.

Our organisational strategy and values mean that we root partnership in a set of core principles, rather than seeing it as an organisational set-up for 'implementing' purposes. These principles guide how we work and the types of relationships that we will form, focusing us on transformational partnerships. The exact way we operationalise these principles varies in different places and for different types of partners across all parts of Christian Aid (see appendix 1). In certain contexts we might complement our transformational partnerships with short-term transactional relationships, and in our global South country programmes variations in implementing models exist (see section 4 and appendix 1.1). However these always have the aim of complementing our partnerships without undermining the partnership principles.

2. Why we work in partnership

We know that we cannot end poverty through our direct actions alone. Our partnerships aim to contribute to transformational change who live in poverty and experience marginalisation. We believe our partnership approach is an integral component and enabler of Christian Aid's framework to confront extreme **poverty**, recognise and challenge unjust **power** relations within communities, structures and across societies, and enable **prophetic voice** through building new narratives and a vision of a healed just world and by supporting local and collective agency.

Tackling complex development issues often requires working with actors from a range of sectors with complementary roles and competencies. Together we co-create and innovate collaboratively to create methods and solutions. We work with communities and relevant local actors, faith leaders, churches, supporter groups, donors, global, regional and national advocacy allies, private sector actors, governments (at different levels), unions, networks, social movements, academia and others. **We see our diverse partnerships as interconnected and complementing each other so that together our different skills, knowledge and strengths allow us to achieve more to shift power and deliver change.**

We believe in the power of local agency and locally led action and responses in our humanitarian, development and peace-building work. For example, with crises becoming more complex and resistance to outside interference more common, local organisations are able to maintain access even in challenging environments, are adapted to the context, and remain in the country for the long term. However, **we believe that international actors can and should play complementary roles.** We connect the local and global levels by building strong

links between individual partnerships and wider movements. Jointly we work towards system changes that challenge unjust power relations and create transformational changes for communities and people living in poverty. In this sense partnership is both a means and an end for transforming people and systems.

The theological roots of our approach to partnership

Our choice for partner-based approaches and mutual partnerships is rooted in our relational theology,² which sets out a vision of how we are inter-related with others. This echoes the biblical image of '...one body, but it has many parts. All its many parts make up one united body.' Christian Aid's partnership approach reflects not only our co-dependence and co-responsibility to one another, but our belief that God has invited us to co-create in partnership with Him and with others. This approach sees a world that is deeply divided with relationships between people, communities, corporations and nations distorted by inequalities of power. As a result, we are confronted by the scandal of poverty and the degradation of creation. We re-envision a healed world: our relational theology bears witness to a world that can be restored and transformed.

Partnership is how we 'live out' our relational theology. Relational theology is why we put primacy on (two-way) transformation in partnership, and it causes us to focus on shifting power to southern partners and communities. But it equally has implications for our other partnerships: in the UK and Ireland and at the global level. These different partnerships complement each other to confront poverty and injustice in a broken world.

3. Partnership principles

We have identified seven partnership principles, which we commit to and strive towards. Taken together these principles enable us to develop and act in transformational partnership in line with our values of dignity, justice and equality.

1. Partnership is mutual: built on shared values and goals and mutual trust

We build partnerships with those with whom we have compatible goals and shared values around dignity, equality and justice. We build accountable and transparent relationships so that we are all clear about our roles and how they complement each other. We build trust and confidence to both challenge and be challenged by partners. There is a power imbalance, especially in funded relationships, and we work to reduce and counteract this with joint reflection and clear two-way communication.

2. Partnerships lead to collective action

Although individual and bilateral relationships are important partnerships do not work in isolation. We strengthen partnership and the possibilities of our action together as part of wider collective movements. We commit to learning and supporting regional and global movement building built on complementary capacity and knowledge. We work in solidarity with partners and affected communities and connect supporters and affected populations to wider movements through our advocacy and campaigning platforms in a shared endeavour to realise our collective vision of transformational change.

3. Partnership is transformational

We strive for transformation, not only for communities and people, but also in our partnerships themselves. We define transformation as change that is deep and lasting, which also suggests a shift in power relations. In our longer-term mutual partnerships we hope to transform our partners and ourselves, critically engaging with, challenging and shifting power imbalances between us and our southern partners. But it is also important to be honest in describing the nature of the relationship and not ascribing partnership ideals to relationships that are there for pragmatic or short-term reasons.

4. Partnership is dynamic

The nature of partnerships can and does change over time. For example, partnerships can shift between funded and non-funded and vice versa. All parties must have a shared understanding of the

existing and desired nature of the relationship. While we believe in longer-term partnerships, we recognise that partnership is time-bound. When we move on from partnerships we strive for both parties to have gained through the partnership.

5. Partnership enhances social capital and capacity, and enables learning for all involved

Co-creation in planning, strategy development and collective action can lead to joint and mutual capacity strengthening in all the varied forms of partnerships we engage in. We value and respect diverse forms of expertise and knowledge. Christian Aid is particularly intentional in building partnerships where we co-create and learn from each other and act in complementary ways. We focus on mutually agreed and defined capacity strengthening of partners, based on partners' longer-term needs rather than short-term project delivery aims. We strongly believe that our partnerships strengthen Christian Aid, through partner knowledge, expertise and practice.

6. Partnership builds on the legitimacy of all parties involved

Our own actions and those of our partners must have legitimacy in the eyes of those we seek to serve. We are accountable to the communities we work with. This includes having solid complaints and feedback mechanisms in place. Impactful transformative partnerships also require legitimacy at different levels to speak to and influence governments in varied contexts. This legitimacy is built on expertise and who we connect with and represent.

7. Partnership respects and expands the space and voice of others

We respect the space of those we seek to serve and our partners who are close to them. Yet we also commit to amplifying the voices of the communities and partners we work with, where appropriate and in agreement with them, by using Christian Aid's own platforms and power. We may jointly speak out against injustice and inequality in different contexts and in different ways, while also strengthening the capacity of and supporting others to do so. Our global advocacy is only possible because of the strong links developed between local communities and national, regional and global levels. It has legitimacy because it is based on local and national insight and evidence, and the strong ties partners have with local communities.

4. Christian Aid partnerships in a changing global context

We work in partnership with others who are committed to tackling the injustice of poverty and share Christian Aid's commitment to dignity, equality and justice for all. We enter into partnership with those, of all faiths or none, who can contribute to transformational change and where the partnership principles resonate in these relationships. However, we also recognise that in implementing these principles we need to respond to the world around us, and there are specific dynamics we need to engage with.

Flexibility: In our country programmes in the global South, we prioritise working with and through local and national organisations. Local ownership is about reshaping power balances and shifting power towards the global South, not only about stronger engagement and sustainability. However, in certain contexts our transformational partnerships might be complemented and brought to scale by short-term transactional relationships. In addition, in very limited circumstances – if the scale and complexity of a crisis exceeds the capacity or presence of local partners to meet needs effectively – we will consider 'direct implementation' (i.e. implementing projects directly ourselves – see more details in appendix 1.1). Even within direct implementation we apply our partnership principles, focusing on capacity strengthening and adjusting our roles when the context allows. This action complements our commitment to our partnership principles and values of dignity, equality and justice, while balancing the needs of people in poverty, whom we aim to serve.

Localisation: Christian Aid was instrumental in the development of the [Charter for Change](#) and the [Grand Bargain](#); and the commitments resonate strongly with our partnership approach. Our

commitment to localisation is not limited to humanitarian work. We have a long history of promoting localisation across all our programmes, including advocacy, well before it became a formalised 'agenda'. Our programme quality standards build directly on the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) and include a direct commitment to work in effective and complementary partnership with other actors to promote local agency and deliver sustainable change (Christian Aid Programme Quality Standard 6). **However, for us localisation goes beyond operational commitments and declarations.** It is about strengthening civil society as representation of society itself. This requires actively working towards changes in power dynamics, notably shifting them towards the global South.³ While some critics have suggested that localisation can lead to simply transferring risks, this can be counteracted by continuing mutual partnership journeys.

Decolonisation: We recognise that the world lives under a continued legacy of inequality that emerged as a result of colonialism and power imbalances between rich and poor countries. Christian Aid is working to further **decolonise** our programming and practice and to become an anti-racist organisation. This commitment is important in considering who we partner with and how we partner. We aim to embed the values as part of our partnerships, working with our partners to call out, confront and transform this legacy structurally at multiple levels within their own countries and organisations, while 'walking the talk' in our relationships.

5. How working in partnership benefits everyone

In a partnership, the different parties should add value to each other. Developing partnerships has a cost and requires an investment in time, energy, funds and other resources. We need to ensure that the impact of the partnerships is greater than what individual partners could achieve by themselves. Partnership involves not only recognising who contributes what (including resources, knowledge, social capital, legitimacy), but also dependencies. No entity comes to the table empty handed and each party should have the ability to influence the others.

We could achieve very little without our partners

Our partners have vast and diverse knowledge, experience and learning, which helps Christian Aid root our vision for change in practical contexts and lived realities. This deep knowledge and understanding of local context, specific (often technical and context-specific) expertise, and relationships with power holders (including government or traditional and faith leaders) allows us to co-create actions and priorities.

Partners also bring legitimacy and social capital, and they help Christian Aid link to communities living in poverty.

Our local partners are close to the communities they are serving. This strength has been highlighted all too clearly during the global Covid-19 pandemic, which has resulted in significant travel restrictions. Our partners have often served as a crucial link to communities during this time and at other moments.

Other partners bring specific expertise, experience and behaviours – such as private sector knowledge or academic research and theory building. In the UK and Ireland we also have strong partnerships that enable us to co-create approaches, share learning and create spaces to amplify and expand voices with, for example, churches or businesses wishing to be part of the change we need to see to eradicate poverty (for example the [Christian Aid SALT business network](#)).

Some of our partners are faith actors with access to large faith communities and influential faith leaders. Authentic faith partnerships across the world with those who have a shared vision add an important distinct value as we can build on a faith foundation to jointly work towards a healed and more just world. Many partners connect us with these large constituencies, such as churches and social movements, and help us connect communities in the global South and global North.

Christian Aid likewise adds value to its partners

A variety of partnership reviews, engagement with groups of partners, coalitions, country programme reviews and research⁴ identified several areas where Christian Aid contributes to and strengthens what partners can do alone. Our [Working in Partnership: value for people report](#) concludes that, 'Results are significantly bigger, deeper, more lasting, and more inclusive than would have been the case without Christian Aid's involvement'. Christian Aid's approach is authentic because of both who we work with, and how we connect people, communities and partners.

Connecting people, communities and partners

(globally and locally): Christian Aid's strength comes from being a global organisation, present in many countries, connecting partners and developing partnerships in multiple ways within and across country borders and continents. Christian Aid is distinctly positioned to connect three interconnected 'spheres':⁵

- National and local partners close to communities living in poverty (including those affected by humanitarian emergencies)
- Regional and global advocacy spheres (such as UN high-level policy and advocacy spaces – e.g. climate negotiations)
- Our supporters, churches and faith constituency, globally and in the UK and Ireland.



We co-create in networks and spaces for joint action and learning, and we help partners to access spaces that they would otherwise be unable to access. We connect communities, supporters, churches and partners in the global North and South with each other and with wider advocacy coalitions. Christian Aid brings together different organisations and groups to drive joint advocacy efforts and strengthen impact with those who share our values. This includes faith actors who have a key advocacy and influencing role across a range of diverse issues. We also create direct connections between, for example, academia, business or philanthropy actors and other partners, communities and supporter networks.

Strengthening civil society (including faith spaces): Christian Aid ensures that national and community-level civil society organisations control their own agendas and are more than channels for aid delivery. Strengthening individual organisations also strengthens wider civil society and makes it more inclusive. We support partners to drive change for marginalised people, develop technical and organisational capacity to deliver quality and accountable programming, and become strong and vocal influencers of the political and development agendas in their own countries and beyond national borders. Many partners have voiced how they value support to strengthen their own needs and priorities.⁶ Christian Aid's value in providing technical know-how was also emphasised by faith and church actors both globally and in the UK/Ireland context where we jointly form part of the civic space.

Brokering multi-stakeholder spaces: As mentioned above Christian Aid brings together partners with whom we share values and mutual trust. However, we also work with potential collaborators from different sectors who we would not consider to be partners to find new and better ways to deliver results. An example is our role as a facilitator of market system approaches in our inclusive markets work. In this role we bring together stakeholders from all parts of a market value chain, including those whose actions might be distorting the market and leading to the exclusion of our core population – people living in poverty. Also, in our advocacy work we may broker and convene spaces that include others with a shared wider aim who we are not partnered with – for example engaging with the very diverse climate change advocacy arena or convening spaces with faith leaders, which might also lead to internal reflection within faith institutions.

Leveraging resources: Christian Aid supports partners in accessing funding from new and existing donors and supporters. Where possible, Christian Aid

paves the way for connections that leverage resources to achieve continuity for more sustainable outcomes, and, where feasible, connects partners with donors directly. We have also changed internal policies to make overhead-sharing with partners the norm. This is part of Christian Aid's localisation and partnership commitment. As an organisation trusted by donors, Christian Aid commits to design and manage complex programmes funded by multiple donors, ensuring strong stewardship and accountability, which leverages funds for partners and actively engages them in the programme implementation and decision making. Our key aim is that these resources lead to change for people living in poverty and that we are accountable to the communities and our partners, as well as to donors.

Enhancing advocacy: Advocacy is one of the key strands described in [Standing Together](#), which says: 'To bring about sustainable change, we need to act as a movement of people, partners and communities with shared values and aspirations for dignity, equality and justice for all.' Christian Aid supports partners in their advocacy work by facilitating coalitions, brokering relationships at the national, regional and international levels, and providing technical support and access to advocacy platforms. Christian Aid connects supporters and affected populations to achieve greater impact from shared efforts. Christian Aid uses its own voice to advocate for the communities we work with in different ways in different contexts. We aim to do this in a way that enhances the voice of our partners and those we seek to serve, while taking a lead from them and complementing their analysis of what needs to change.⁷

Protecting partners: Christian Aid can sometimes help to protect the people it supports in situations where they may be threatened because of their work, including human rights defenders working in partner organisations and communities. This may involve promoting capacity development, sharing risk management information, enhancing the visibility of them and their work or providing safe spaces.

Sharing knowledge, good practice and innovation: We create spaces and platforms to innovate and develop new practice and share learning across global programmes and partners and the wider development sector. We recognise different forms of knowledge, ranging from technical expertise and lived experiences, especially in the global South and we create space to bring together different types of knowledge to develop new ways of engaging with issues and new types of solutions.⁸

10 Christian Aid partnership policy

Christian Aid commits to strengthen capacity to monitor and report not only partner work but also our added value in programming to donors and other stakeholders, including our supporters. The Christian Aid Programme Quality Standards support us in this task. Our commitment includes having systems and resources in place to ensure

appropriate partner relationship management, partner capacity development, monitoring, evaluation and learning, adherence to the **Core Humanitarian Standard** and inclusive programming, and programme learning and investing in Christian Aid staff capacity towards these aims.

Appendix 1: How the partnership principles apply to diverse kinds of partnerships

While we aspire and commit to the partnership principles in all our mutual transformational partnerships, we recognise that there are different kinds of partnerships. This appendix shows how the principles are applied with some varied distinct types of partnerships and contexts and how in certain contexts they will be complemented by hybrid partnership variations without taking away from our overall commitment to partnership and the partnership principles.

1.1 Country programme partnerships in the global South

While the partnership principles and overall partnership policy apply to a wide variety of partnerships across all of Christian Aid's external engagement at global, regional and UK/Ireland level, a large proportion are in countries in the global South where Christian Aid has a country programme presence.

Several partnerships for Christian Aid country programmes are built on funding, often from large back-donor restricted funded programmes (i.e. when Christian Aid receives and manages larger funds from other sources for programmes often with multiple partners) with a stipulated period. In these funded arrangements we strive towards upholding the partnership principles while achieving development, humanitarian and advocacy outcomes and impact. Partnerships need to be underpinned by operational excellence and due diligence and accountability towards each other, donors and communities. We commit to adhere to grant and project management principles and practices in which we are guided by more detailed internal policies and programme standards in line with international commitments such as the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Grand Bargain localisation commitments (see section 4).

In these funded relationships we are very conscious of the inherent power inequality created by the funds being held by Christian Aid. We aim to counter power imbalances by applying key principles of mutual respect and trust with open communication, respecting space and voice and mutually enhancing social capital and capacity. As far as possible, we aim to work 'with our partners, not just through them'. We take on funding where we feel we can play to our strengths, add value as described above, and focus on the principles.

Additionally, in many country programmes we have developed non-funded partnerships. Some examples include working closely with local government in humanitarian responses or carrying out health-related activities, or being part of networks for joint advocacy or for exchanging best practice. We consistently strive to mutually learn through robust feedback mechanisms on ways of working and maximising impact.

Implementation models vary from providing remote support, primarily in terms of planning and reflection processes and methods, to closely accompanying partners working with communities. Sometimes we might directly implement components of the work in specific conditions (see below). In other contexts we might support advocacy efforts or be part of collective advocacy actions. Yet in all countries we stand together with partners and remain guided by the partnership principles in those partnerships that from both sides strive to go beyond a short-term contractual obligation.

Context-specific direct implementation variations in country programmes

If the scale and complexity of a crisis exceeds the capacity or presence of local partners to meet local needs effectively, and only if external funds are available, Christian Aid will consider direct implementation. The decision will be based on a clear set of criteria and will include senior leadership as final decision makers. Through direct implementation, Christian Aid staff conduct activities that contribute directly to the achievement of a project results framework, either without local/national partners, or more commonly alongside them in a hybrid implementation model. Christian Aid allocates budget to these activities and is directly responsible for managing and reporting on activities and budget lines. We strive for this arrangement to be temporary.

Especially when done as a hybrid model, it is not as different from the core partnership model as it might initially seem. What is different is that we actively monitor and foreground 'added value interventions' that we have always made (see section 5 above) yet have often gone under the radar. In any model, Christian Aid always aims to complement, not replace, the work of local actors and partners. Direct implementation should include opportunities to strengthen capacities of existing partners, advance the case for localisation and engage in unfunded partnerships on joint actions, for example with local government.

Decisions on whether to pursue direct implementation must be made carefully, based on the clear guidance on when and how this approach should be adopted, and they must include a commitment to strengthening and complementing partners rather than undermining them. When we implement (part of) a project directly, Christian Aid commits to work in partnership with local actors and to enhance their capacity and agency during the project. This should not be seen as competing with but complementing our partnership approach and principles and localisation commitments.

1.2 Church partnerships in the UK and Ireland

We are the international development agency for 41 sponsoring churches and are keen to serve and work with other churches, too. We have long-term mutually transformational partnerships with a wide variety of churches in the UK and Ireland, ranging from the large denominations to smaller churches. They engage with Christian Aid's efforts to encourage supporters to give, act and pray.

With many churches there is a concerted effort from both sides to co-create, reflect and be part of the organisation's wider partnership principles. Working within a 'with, not to' approach, we actively seek to include supporters and church structures in the development of theological resources. As an example, we supported a jointly created Bible discussion toolkit on gender-based violence and theological reflections on migration, where the voice of the church is present alongside our own. Christian Aid's biannual church consultation with our sponsoring churches and with input and participation from the global South is a space for church leaders from a wide range of traditions to participate in reflection on the Christian Aid and joint plans and practices, which influences the approach we take.

We are in regular conversation with our supporting churches and churches around the world, to find new ways to include more voices in the conversations and places where our theology is shaped. For example, Christian Aid brought together a group of Black church leaders and theologians and Christian climate activists of colour to increase the visibility of their perspectives on climate and environmental justice. Involving Black church leaders, activists and theologians at the early stages of this effort enabled us to co-develop mutually beneficial ways to amplify a more diverse range of voices, experiences and actions.

Church partners say they value Christian Aid's history of convening across different church traditions and connecting voices in the global North and global

South, especially in the ecumenical space, and bringing technical expertise on international justice issues that churches may otherwise lack access to. In the words of a Black majority church leader, 'Christian Aid is the one organisation that can bring churches together on a range of social justice issues, because it can bridge the spaces between denominations, as the focus is not on the individual church theology, but fully focused on the social gospel to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly.' As an expression of mutual trust, the churches also challenge Christian Aid at times to live up to principles of mutuality reminding us to remain aware of power dynamics when collaborating with smaller entities.

In our roots as a faith-based organisation, we are anchored in thousands of church congregations and a wide network of trusted partnerships with organisations across the world who hold the same values. Working with and alongside churches, we strive to connect supporters and affected populations in a shared endeavour to realise our collective vision of transformational change.

1.3 Partnerships with the private sector

Christian Aid recognises that actively engaging the private sector can help us achieve and sustain the strategic change objectives articulated in our strategy, **Standing Together**. This engagement can take many forms ranging from philanthropists donating, to private sector actors being involved in our inclusive market development work, or Christian Aid advocacy around harmful business practices, where other private sector actors showcase best practice. We recognise that the private sector itself is very diverse leading to complex diverse relationships. We recognise that in many engagements there is no aim from either side for mutual transformational partnerships and indeed some engagements are mainly about holding private sector actors to account for their actions, in which case we would not attempt to apply partnership principles towards them.

However, there are clear cases where there is an interest in developing a mutual relationship that does aspire towards the partnership principles. These are found among country programme funded partners involved in programme implementation, such as social enterprises in Malawi, Kenya, Zimbabwe and others. This also includes private sector global consortium partners in large back-donor funded programmes where formally there might be a sub-contracting arrangement yet there is a relationship of trust built on mutuality and shared goals and values.

Lastly, some philanthropists genuinely wish to be part of a transformative journey of collective action and engagement beyond just being donors. If they are interested in a purely financial philanthropic arrangement, then there is no need to bring them under the partnership principles. But if they express interest in more direct involvement, for example strategy planning with in-country partners, connecting partners with their own wider networks, or supporting or responding to Christian Aid or partner advocacy efforts, this can be discussed and leads the way to partnerships guided by the principles. Such partnerships have been created for example via the Christian Aid SALT business network, or even in some UK supplier relationships that go beyond the contractual. Recognising the principle that partnerships are dynamic, the principles are an offer to explore and we recognise that there can be progression along them, if mutually desired.

In country programmes, the principles can help guide our work with private sector actors to create a collective action or win-win collaboration by connecting each other's strengths: the NGOs have a value-driven approach of improving livelihoods of communities while the private sector actors deliver goods and services with the aim of earning profits. In a market system, partnerships can enable communities to participate on a more equal footing with the private sector by strengthening capacity and connecting them with other actors, enhancing accountability on both sides because the market system players depend on each other for success. The private sector has a larger appetite to innovate in a very competitive environment, yet in recent times some private sector actors also strive to contribute beyond their narrow profit motives to social, environmental and economic well-being of the people, making some of them interested in potential partnerships that can be mutually beneficial.

1.4 Global policy and advocacy partnerships

We establish partnerships with funded and non-funded organisations, allies and coalitions to develop and deliver policy and advocacy to influence political processes at the global, regional and national levels on our priority issues.

As we deliver our global advocacy mainly as part of coalitions, establishing mutual and beneficial ways of working is essential for what we do, regardless of the nature of the partnership. We co-create and facilitate joint action towards global processes, sometimes by leading (including from behind) and often by joining initiatives led by others. There will be contexts where

it is appropriate for Christian Aid to speak out more directly. Christian Aid is often instrumental in creating joint campaigns like Act Now for Climate Justice or the Big Shift Global campaign: this is one of our key added values/ways of working. We are intentional in working with our southern partners to ensure they have voice and visibility and to provide the foundation for the development of their own policy and advocacy.

We have partners with different levels of knowledge and expertise. An ultimate successful transformational journey through the partnership eventually decreases Christian Aid engagement and secures strong southern leadership and voices in their own right. These can be strong advocacy allies in future, exemplifying the dynamic nature of partnerships. We are also on a journey to balance our portfolio of funded partnerships across global advocacy, global policy and UK campaigning as well as between global, regional and national levels.

We engage in authentic partnerships with partners that we can work together with on common priorities. In these partnerships, we recognise power imbalances and aim to transform these so there is a clear understanding of what we can offer each other. We also have partners who are enablers, partners who may cut across strategic areas – gender, faith based – and partners who can connect us with global targets.

1.5 Academia and research partnerships

A key pillar of our organisational offer is to facilitate access to expertise, knowledge and understanding – in relation to how poverty, development and justice are conceptualised and therefore addressed; as well as in relation to our practice in different areas (for example climate, gender etc.). Much of the work of knowledge generation focuses on alternative and often marginalised perspectives and engaging with, and at times challenging, mainstream development discourse.

Much of this knowledge is developed through our programmatic engagement, with partners and programme participants. However, we also partner with academics, researchers, activists and other intellectuals, who may operate within an institution, but whose body of knowledge and thinking is highly dependent on their own specific analysis, experience and way of viewing the world. Partnership in this context therefore needs to understand both the institutional and individual relationship and how they support and enable each other.

The partnership principles resonate strongly in this space, for example in how different types of knowledge are brought together to achieve new knowledge, linking theory, context and practice. Such partnerships also enable us to improve our own ways of evidencing, sense-making and researching, while ensuring that academic endeavour is more inclusive, diverse and useful for practitioners in the struggle to eradicate poverty and injustice. Through focusing on southern-based intellectuals we are able to better ground our thinking and understanding in analysis and insight developed in the global South – this is particularly important as we unpack (and work

towards) ideas such as decolonisation and anti-racist development practice, but is also central in influencing our thinking in key policy areas.

We also emphasise the importance of academic and research partners within our programme approaches, and where possible develop funded projects that include these actors. In these relationships it is key to ensure shared frameworks of analysis, a focus on research for impact, and shared ownership of knowledge produced, so that it can be applied in our programme thinking, understanding and practice.

End notes

- ¹ Standing Together: Christian Aid Global Strategy for 2019–2026, p.14
- ² For more background on Relational Theology, see: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/what-we-believe>
- ³ In the words of Philippines partner People's Disaster Risk Reduction Network, 'Christian Aid is one of the few organisations that is serious about working through local organisations... They have played a facilitative role to ensure that the voices of local actors can be heard at every level.'
- ⁴ Our [learning reviews published in 2020](#) share learning from decades of close collaboration with local and national organisations in Angola, Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala, South Africa and the Philippines prior to the closure of our programmes in those countries. Recent discussions with existing country partners similarly highlighted how they value Christian Aid's role in supporting organisations in clarifying their own priorities, brokering and connecting organisations, advocacy and learning and helping to leverage funding. Similar conclusions arose in earlier research [Working in Partnership: delivering value for people \(2015\)](#) and the Christian Aid Climate Justice Coalitions internal review, while 2021 UK and other church partner conversations highlighted the important role Christian Aid played in connecting, convening and providing technical expertise to specific projects. Partner quotes are from the 2020 learning reviews, 2021 partner engagement and the climate justice review.
- ⁵ An example of where Christian Aid played a role in linking these levels was in the response to the Brumadinho dam disaster in Brazil 2019, which killed 270 people and destroyed homes and farmland and was caused by irresponsible mining behaviour. Local and national partners began with immediate humanitarian support and helped ensure affected communities could participate in discussions around the emergency response and advocated for compensation from the corporation that owned the dam. Read the [Brazil learning review](#) for further information. This work informed global partners doing high-level advocacy in UN forums on business and human rights with Christian Aid, while churches connected in solidarity and in fundraising appeals, and simultaneously continued their journey of disinvestment from unethical business sectors.
- ⁶ For example, a partner from Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories said, 'Christian Aid is much more sensitive and adaptive to changing context and needs as they arise than the majority of INGOs.' A South Sudan partner Africa Development Aid (ADA) said, 'our partnership has contributed towards new cross-learnings that have strengthened institutional capacity not only to deliver humanitarian services, but to be a better organisation systemically'.
- ⁷ '(Christian Aid) spent a lot of time building trust within civil society ... and played a long game, [creating] a sense of being in this together', said a climate change advocacy global partner (from an external-led Christian Aid climate justice review).
- ⁸ As the national coordinator of a Philippines partner Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM) states, 'In a globalised situation, the struggles we are facing are local, but they are embedded in a complex global economic structure... Linking up with Christian Aid was important to understand more about the chain, and to also learn from other contexts... including south-south conversations.'

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