# AERDO Principles of Practice
Guidelines for the Development of Agency Standards*

This document represents the efforts of members of the Association of Evangelical Relief and Development Organizations to state what they believe to be biblically sound,** professionally effective principles of practice.

The attempt to write, collect, and organize these statements has stimulated productive discussion among AERDO members. For some this statement will serve as a statement of goals. For some it will suggest important innovations needed within their organization. To all it is offered as a useful tool for review of operations and activities.

**Our Identity as Evangelicals**
We affirm our identity as evangelicals, as put forward in "An Evangelical Manifesto."

In part:
"We gratefully appreciate that our spiritual and historical roots lie outside this country, that the great majority of our fellow Evangelicals are in the Global South rather than the North, and that we have recently had a fresh infusion of Evangelicals from Latin America, Africa, and Asia. We are, therefore, a small part of a far greater worldwide movement that is both forward looking and outward reaching. Together with them, we are committed to being true to our faith and thoughtful about our calling in today's world."

1. **Program Staff**
   The member organization will conduct activities in member/staff care that are guided by the standards outlined by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in order to:

   a) Make sure that expatriate staff is oriented in required language skills, cultural understanding, and job expertise.

   b) Fill available field positions with all applicable legal regulations and with qualified national staff whenever possible.

   c) Develop national staff to ultimately fill positions currently held by expatriates.

   d) Compensate national staff fairly with sensitivity to local scales.

   e) Delegate maximum responsibility and authority to qualified national staff at all levels wherever possible.

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*Empowering the Christian community to end poverty*

f)  Provide for the spiritual nurture of staff with opportunities for regular corporate worship and prayer and individual counseling as needed.

g)  Provide appropriate training and professional support for staff.

h)  Articulate and provide realistic work expectations, personal renewal, and endurance strategies.

i)  Accept responsibility for staff extending beyond field service to include re-entry, retirement, and redeployment where necessary.

j)  Ensure that procedures are in place and resources provided to help staff in a variety of contingencies.

k)  Create a work environment and culture that support integrity and transparency.


## 2. Donor Relations

When communicating with donors the member organization will:

a)  Use communication media to accurately portray, without exaggeration, the nature and scope of the problem it seeks to solve and the methods required for an effective solution.

b)  Eschew fundraising and public education methods that are exploitative or denigrating in portraying beneficiary problems.

c)  Provide to donors, on request, an annual report with an explicit narrative description of major program activities.

d)  Seek to be "transparent" in all communications with donor public constituencies.

e)  Implement an effective education program designed to increase public awareness of issues and facts related to poverty.


## 3. Finance

The member organization will comply with the standards of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) or the standards of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC).

## 4. Priorities for Development Projects

Member organizations, in providing development assistance, will strive to support projects that:

a)  Do no harm to the long-term well-being of local populations.

b)  Aim to assist the most needy groups in society; e.g., the poor, oppressed, underprivileged, or unemployed.

c)  As far as possible, seek to address the basic causes of deprivation, not merely the effects.

d)  Demonstrate genuine local participation of the community in the identification of needs, project preparation, implementation management, and evaluation.

e)  Encourage  the development of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to facilitate desirable change in the community.

f)   Are relevant to the socioeconomic situation of the communities concerned, employ technologies that are appropriate to it, and are compatible with locally available resources.

g)  Are consistent with its statement of purpose.

h)  Employ a program strategy and activities that appropriately and sensitively share the good news of Jesus Christ.

## 5. Priorities for Relief Projects

When responding to disasters the member organization will:

a)  Conduct a needs assessment prior to designing or implementing a relief program. Relief projects should fill gaps in services caused by the disaster that the host country is unable to fill.

b)  Have a plan for dealing with recurring or high-probability disasters affecting beneficiaries of development projects. Beneficiaries contribute to design of the relief plan. They also will consider having disaster risk reduction projects.

c)  Base the response on the best available information about the situation.

d)  Ensure that any assistance given is appropriate for the context.

e) Ensure that as affected parties become able to depend on themselves and their community, outside assistance will be reduced.

f) Seek to avoid duplication of effort by channeling resources through or in cooperation with national and international agencies whose operations are compatible with the member's purpose and philosophy, as well as with local government agencies.

g) Advocate for the most vulnerable.

## 6. Cooperation
The member organization will:

a) Seek to empower indigenous partners to tackle local problems.

b) Aim to foster effective links with government and other agencies operating in the project area.

c) Seek to complement, rather than duplicate, project assistance by other agencies.

d) Where possible, engage the local Christian church as a program partner that can employ its human, material, and spiritual resources in achieving program goals.

e) Develop programs that are compatible with national, regional, and local development priorities, provided that these relate to the needs of the member organization's intended beneficiaries.

## 7. Program Management
The member organization will:

a) Have stated program objectives and standards.

b) Use a formal evaluation system, at least annually, to measure:
   - project accomplishments against objectives.
   - changes in the level of needs upon which the program is based.
   - management    effectiveness.

c) Ensure the effective management of field offices.

d) Implement  only those programs that are within the management capacity of the responsible agency or institution.

e) Develop project plans that are sufficiently flexible to allow a review of priorities, objectives, and operational details as new problems and opportunities arise.

f) Implement programs that are cost effective in relation to the number of intended beneficiaries, the size of the area, and the objectives set.

## 8. Host Governments

As a principle of Christian courtesy the member organization and its staff will:

a) Recognize their responsibilities as "guests" of the host government and will respect and comply with national and local laws that apply to them.

b) Not abuse any special legal exemptions enjoyed as a foreign organization or citizen.

c) Cultivate amicable relationships with the host government and be available as an information resource and offer its program expertise.

d) Respect local due process, but raise a prophetic voice to challenge systematic injustices.

## 9. Minimum Operating Security Standards

The member organization will:

a) Have policies addressing the key security issues and formal plans at both the field and headquarter levels to address these issues.

b) Make available appropriate resources to meet these minimum operating security standards.

c) Implement reasonable hiring policies and personnel procedures to prepare staff to cope with the security issues at their posts of assignment, support them during their service, and address post-assignment issues.

d) Incorporate accountability for security into their management systems at both the field and headquarters level.

e) Work in a collaborative manner with other members of the humanitarian and development community to advance their common security interests.

## 10. Gifts-In-Kind (GIK)

If the member is actively engaged in a "Gifts-In-Kind" product donation program, the member organization will abide by the AERDO Gifts-In-Kind Standards, as adopted in 1999

The member organization will:

a) Use GIK donations in furtherance of the tax-exempt mission, purpose, and program objectives of the recipient nonprofit and its affiliates.

b) Have established written policies and procedures for screening GIK prior to acceptance from the donor and utilization to ensure cultural, social, and programmatic appropriateness. No outdated products manufactured for human consumption should be accepted or shipped. Dating on products should be sufficient to secure, accept, value, distribute, and dispense to intended individual recipients prior to the expiration date.

c) Value GIK donations at their fair value as of the date of donation.

d) When recording GIK as revenue by a nonprofit organization, have proper documentation relating to product value, inventory, verification of receipt, and record of end-use or transfer.

e) Properly recognize revenue and expense.

f) Base service fees related to GIK donations not on the value of those gifts but rather on the administrative, warehousing, or other similar costs incurred in the receipt and distribution of GIK.

g) Disclose information about the valuation, source, and use of GIK.


## 11. Short-Term Trips Utilizing Volunteers

The member organization will be informed by the seven U.S. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission. According to these standards, an excellent short-term mission:

a) Seeks first God's glory and his kingdom.

b) Establishes healthy, interdependent, ongoing relationships between sending and receiving partners.

c) Collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants.

d) Exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants.

e) Screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants.

f) Prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach.

g) Assures debriefing and appropriate follow-up for all participants.

In addition to this, member agencies will:

- Work in such a way as to do no harm to the long-term well-being of local populations.

- Promote sustainability of relationships, community enhancement, and spiritual growth for hosts and visitors.

**Footnotes:**

\* Several of these statements originated with other organizations. Some statements appear as originally published; others have been reworded. Among the sources: National Charities Information Bureau; World Vision International; Tear Fund; Canadian Council of Christian Charities; and InterAction.

\*\* AERDO members accept the National Association of Evangelicals' statement of faith, thus affirming a historic Christian faith.