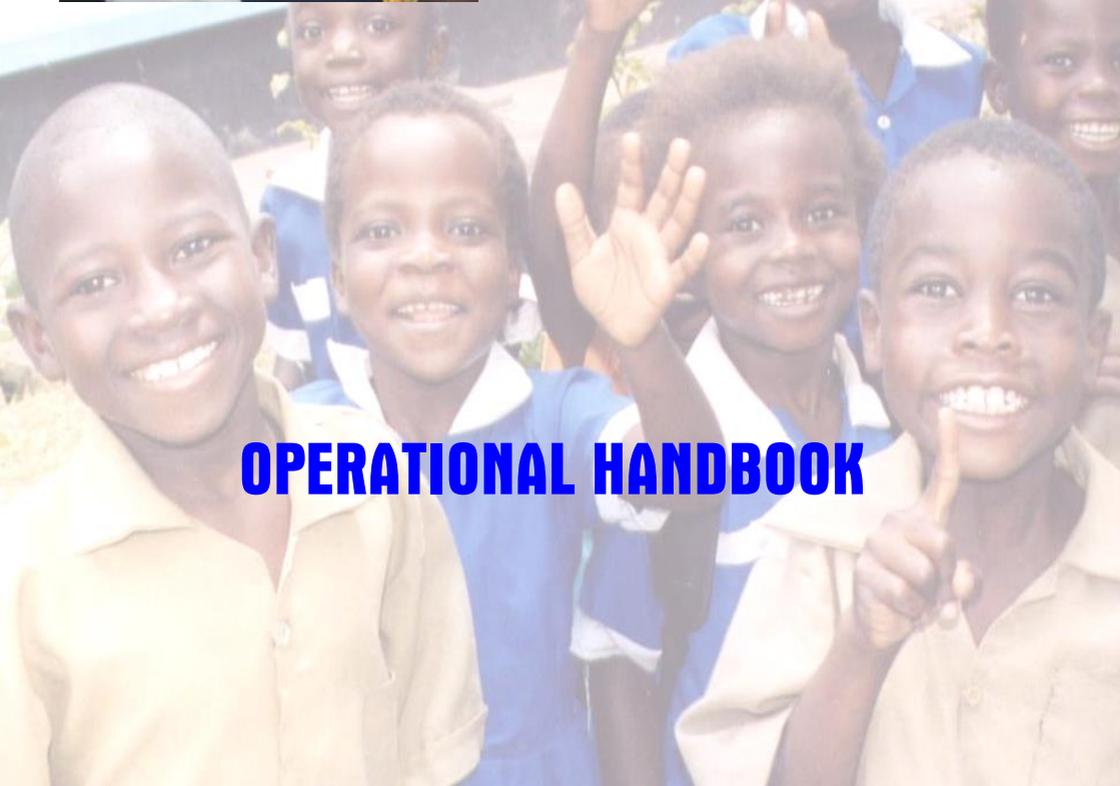
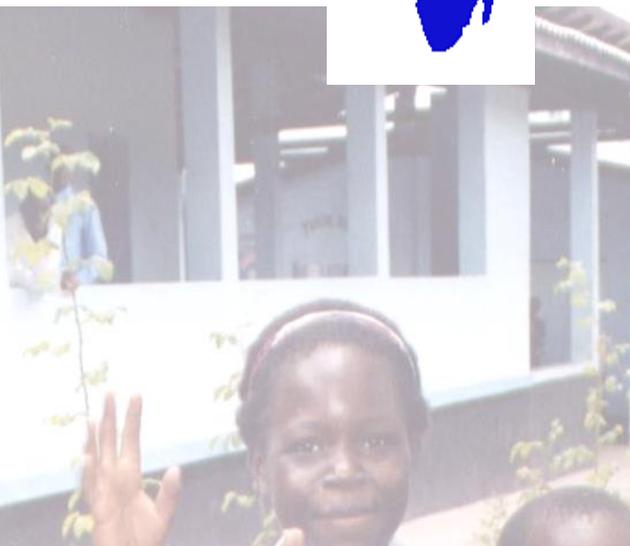


African Child Trust



OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK

Foreword

The Operational Handbook provides information about the management structure of ACT and sets out the underlying principles that guides how we carry out the work we do.

It defines the responsibilities of Trustees as it applies to our sponsors, partners and the beneficiaries of our work in Africa. Beneficiaries are the orphans, fatherless children and widows that we support, including communities that benefit from projects that we carry out in the locality.

This manual also defines the roles and responsibilities of our operational partners in Africa and the basis for our co-operation and how we work together to serve the beneficiaries in their communities.

The Operational Manual is a toolkit that partners, potential partners and supporters can reference in order to understand how the work ACT is doing is implemented.

ACT is a registered UK charity (No.1158266) which is subjected to statutory controls and regulations.

Details of the rules by which the trust operates are provided in our constitution (ACT governing document). This is a public document available on the register of UK charities on the Charity Commission website.

We can also provide a copy of our governing document on request.

ACT Trustees

December 2017

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1. About ACT

1.1 Summary

The African Child Trust (ACT) is a UK-registered charity No. 1158266. ACT was first registered as a Charitable Trust with the UK Charity Commission on 29 March 1999. On 18 August 2014, the charitable status was changed to a charity incorporated organisation.

ACT is currently working in the following African countries; Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Our aim is to relieve poverty and advance development in Africa by educating disadvantaged fatherless children and orphans so that they achieve their full potential in life and empowering needy widows through counselling, training in business skills and equipping them with necessary skills to generate income in a sustainable way so that they can support their families.

We work mainly in rural communities where the need to support vulnerable, weak and the poor people is greatest. We work in partnership with well-established community-based organisations, mainly Christian Churches and schools, that share the vision of supporting people in need and who have the capacity to operate well managed and comprehensively monitored projects.

1.2. Vision

Our vision is to relieve poverty and advance development in Africa by educating disadvantaged children and orphans and supporting needy widows through training so that they can generate income to sustain their families.

1.3 Mission

Our mission is to provide education for disadvantaged children and support needy widows. The focus is on the welfare of orphans and children of needy widows in Africa to enable them achieve their full potential in life and to assist widows to achieve a secure livelihood within the community in which they live.

1.4 Activities

Our activities are summarised in the acronym **SEED** as follows:

Sending Volunteers - ACT sends out skilled volunteers to work with our partners in Africa to support ACT projects in the communities.

Educating Children - ACT provides educational scholarships and welfare support for disadvantaged children of single mothers /widows and orphans in Africa.

Empowering Widows - ACT empowers widows in Africa by encouraging the formation of a network that brings together widows in the communities where we operate. ACT supports the widows by educating their children, providing them with the training to help their existing businesses or to start up new ones, and to form cooperatives and saving schemes through which their projects can be funded.

Developing Communities - ACT enriches local communities in Africa through a variety of projects centred on education (school support), sanitation and health.

1.5 Our Core values

We are committed to the following 5 core values to drive our vision and organisational strategies;

- Love
- Empowerment

- Justice
- Integrity
- Purpose

“Love is Empowerment for the orphans and widows we are serving and with Justice and Integrity, give Purpose to our work and fulfils the scriptures” (LEJIP)

1.6 The Needs

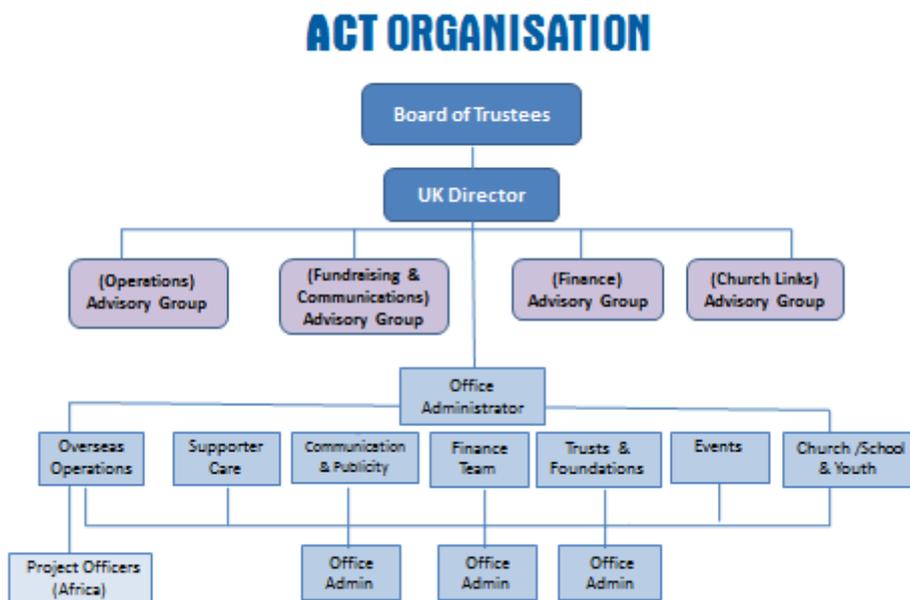
In traditional rural African societies, the majority of women marry when they are very young and then stay at home to look after their children. The husband is the sole bread-winner whose earnings provide financial support for the family. The death of a husband is traumatic for the family unit. With no State support, this means that the widow has to find some form of paid employment to maintain her family that consists usually of many children. Typically the job, if she found one, would be of very low pay. The level of hardship can be such that young children, particularly girls, who should be attending school, are instead required to take up some form of underage employment to supplement their mother’s income.

An added problem is that in many African countries education, even at the Primary School level, is not accessible to all, and can be prohibitively expensive for the poor and disadvantaged. We believe that lack of education is directly linked to the vicious cycle of poverty and difficulty of access to employment. Hence ACT’s vision is to tackle poverty through access to high quality education for orphaned children and training in business and life skills for widows. With the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, these problems have been exacerbated with the result that there are now large numbers of widows and children in Africa who face great need.

2. Authority and Accountability

2.1. Organisation

The board of trustees provides oversight of the management and direction of the charity. The trustees are non-salaried and carry out their duties on a voluntary basis. Trustees serve a three year term which can be renewed. It is a requirement that ACT trustees are Christians (in this context as defined in *Appendix 3*). ACT organisational structure is shown below.



2.2 Board of Trustees

The current board of trustees consists of the following:

Pauline Edwards (*Chair*) is the founder of Annie's Orphans, a charity that was founded in Bangor in 1987 and has a number of charity shops all around the UK. She trained as a teacher, has MA degree in theology and is a minister of the Wales AOG, Bangor. She joined the board of trustees in January 2008.

Chima Amiaka studied law and has MA degree in politics. He worked as adviser in policy development in local government for more than fifteen years and was head of the Mayor's office, Southwark Council, London. He has been on the management team since 2000. He joined the board of Trustees in 2006.

Gwen Howes Gwen's background is in IT, where she started in software development before moving to IT project and contract management. Following retirement, she joined ACT as a volunteer in 2011 working on book keeping and now oversees the accounting and financial functions of the charity..

Abby Olufeyimi is parish minister at Builders House (RCCG) Croydon, Surrey. In this role she heads the church's social responsibility programme. She is a member of the Chaplaincy Team of the Croydon University Teaching Hospital, Surrey. She joined the board of Trustees in June 2015

Kunle Onabolu (UK Director) is the founder of ACT and served as volunteer Director until 2007 when he took on the role full time. He is a chartered engineer and has a doctorate degree in engineering from Imperial College, London. He has held senior management positions with international engineering and R&D organisations and served on the board and trustee of a number of organisations. He has been a Trustee of ACT since it was formed in 1999.

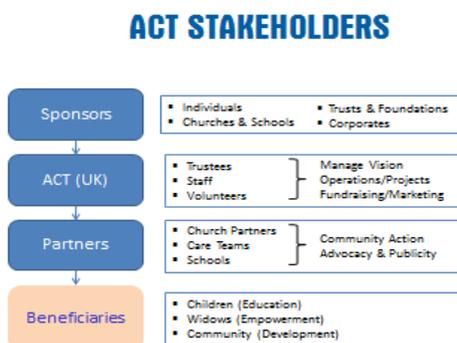
2.3 Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees

The statutory regulations governing the eligibility, selection and appointment of trustees and the roles of trustees are described in detail in the Deeds of Trust. The trustees are responsible for the overall management and administration of the charity and this is done through Sub-Committees all of which include at least one Trustee.

2.4 Stakeholders

As a charity, ACT has a number of stakeholders. These range from sponsors, beneficiaries, partners and ACT (UK). Beneficiaries consist of disadvantaged fatherless children and orphans, the widows and other members of the community in Africa. Partners consist of local churches, schools and other organisations in the UK and in Africa who work in partnership with ACT. Sponsors and Donors include Individuals who provide financial assistance through child sponsorship, UK Churches, Trusts and Corporate organisations and institutions. ACT (UK) consists of Trustees, Staff, Volunteers and Friends of ACT (FoACT).

The diagram below shows ACT stakeholders.



2.5 Accountability of Funds

ACT believes in proper management and accountability of the funds it receives from its sponsors and donors. From its support partners ACT demands receipts showing how the funds have been used. In the UK, ACT is subject to UK charitable laws and is required to submit audited annual accounts to the UK Charity Commission.

3. Programmes

Currently ACT is engaged in four main activities namely:

3.1 Children: Education Sponsorship

Educational scholarships are provided for disadvantaged, fatherless children and orphans up to the completion of secondary school education. The scholarship covers tuition fees, books, uniforms and other necessary requirements to ensure a successful education. Scholarships to continue to a higher education (university) are available for gifted and talented young people, who have completed secondary school successfully. (See *Appendix 1.5* on Supporting Children after Secondary School).

3.2 Women: Counselling and Business Skills

ACT is committed to improving the welfare of women and particularly needy widows in rural communities in Africa. ACT provides counselling, citizenship and business skills training for widows who are single and women who are parents or guardians of sponsored children.

Counselling and Citizenship

ACT provides counselling and citizenship education sessions on legal and inheritance rights; health education on the

awareness, prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS to the widows. The hope is that such spiritual and personal counselling helps widowed women overcome any psychological barriers and stress that may come due to the loss of a husband. Citizenship education provides access to information which helps them to handle legal and inheritance issues and to know more about HIV and AIDS pandemic issues.

Business Skills Training

ACT provides training in business development skills for unemployed widows and micro-finance to kick-start their own business projects. So far a number of skills training sessions for widows have been conducted in Burkina Faso but have been limited to widows whose children ACT is already sponsoring. Plans are in progress to carry out the programme in the other countries where ACT is working and to expand it to other needy women in the communities besides the widows.

3.3. Community Projects

In addition to supporting widows and children, ACT also works with schools and community-based groups in line with the objective of supporting communities. So far ACT has been actively involved with some community projects in Zambia and Tanzania. In these two countries ACT works with schools helping to set up Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities and holding IT/computing workshops whereby teachers are trained so that they can impart the knowledge to the pupils in schools. ACT also promotes and supports extra curricular activities within schools through organisation of some inter-school competitions, for instance, chess competitions have been held with the assistance of ACT

3.4. International Volunteering

ACT is a volunteer-led organisation with the UK volunteer base being drawn mainly from professional people from within the

local Community. Since 2002 ACT has been sending volunteers on short term placements to support projects in Africa. The main focus of these volunteers has been to work with the local partners in organisational development and capacity building and in initiating projects to develop the children. ACT send out volunteers with different professional backgrounds to support our projects and activities.

With the aim of expanding the volunteering aspect of our work, ACT signed a partnership agreement with the VSO in February 2007.

4. Partners

4.1. Partnerships

ACT realises the importance of incorporating and involving partners in its activities. Our partners are community based organisations, including faith based, churches and schools. On recommendation, ACT is willing to establish partnership with organisations that are well established in their community and known for their integrity. A database is maintained of the churches, schools and organisations in Africa with whom contact has been established or with whom co-operation is sought. ACT is also open to contact from other organisations interested in partnering with ACT

The basis of co-operation with our partners is the shared vision to support the education of disadvantaged children, to empower needy widows and to work together towards helping these children fulfil their potential in life. When establishing partnerships we require general information with evidence and assurance from our potential partners regarding their capacity, commitment and availability.

4.2. Responsibilities of Partners

Our partners have various responsibilities depending on the programmes in which they are working with us. ACT provides each partner with a copy of this Handbook, which sets out the guiding principles and the detailed procedures used in the administration of the ACT objectives. Each partner is required to sign a partnership covenant, which indicates their agreement with the principles set out in this document.

ACT partners are responsible for selecting the children to be considered for sponsorship and also provide support directly to the supported families. They identify the widows (who are usually parents of the sponsored children) who need support, counselling and training to start their own businesses.

Our partners also provide the infrastructure for the administration of the work and act as guardians to the

sponsored children and families. The trustees believe that in this way the local partners, especially the churches, are able to have a long-term impact on the community, thereby opening up opportunities for outreach. ACT benefits immensely from these partnerships as these partners act on behalf of ACT to execute our objectives.

4.3 Requirements for establishing new partnership

ACT has developed partnerships with local Christian churches and other organisations that are well established in local communities. To establish new partnerships, will be looking at organisations with the following attributes:

- a care team or similar ministry team which is recognised within the local church or organisation;
- guarantee that this ministry team will work with the organisation or church leadership to take responsibility for the education and development of the sponsored children;
- that members of the care team (ministry team) are Christians of high integrity to whom we can entrust the guardianship of the sponsored children;
- that partners will under no circumstances take advantage of the widowed mother of the sponsored children or use their position to obtain any advantages for themselves;
- provide examples of previous work carried out by the care team (ministry team) in the church or within the community;
- provide background information about the economic condition of the region in which they are based, including the percentage of widows and orphans within the partner's area of concentration;
- information about the education system, including whether it is free and/or affordable;
- Recognised in the community for their integrity.

4.4 Monitoring and Accountability

The aim of ACT trustees is to ensure that support is regular and uninterrupted throughout the period of sponsorship, except in cases where sponsorship has been discontinued (See *Appendix I-4*). Funds are sent directly to our local partners who are responsible for the management and disbursement. In turn, our partners must provide regular accounts to ACT with receipts and an explanation of how the funds have been utilised.

The following is the accountability process:

- ACT requires the local partner to set up a dedicated bank account in their own name for the exclusive use of ACT funds;
- ACT transfers funds on a periodical basis to the account of the local partner to be used for specific purposes in line with agreed objectives, including support of the named children, widows and projects funded by ACT;
- The local partner disburses the funds to the family of the sponsored child to cover the specific items of provision for the child, the child's family and to cover necessary expenses of the partner in the administration of this task on behalf of ACT
- Our partners provide periodic accounts of expenditure with receipts as appropriate.

Further details are provided in Appendix IV.

Appendices

Appendix I: Guidance on Child Sponsorship

Appendix II: Community Projects and International Volunteering

Appendix III: Our Christian Value

Appendix IV: Financial Controls

Appendix I: Guidance on Child Sponsorship

1.1 Background to Child Sponsorship

Although the local church leadership is entrusted with the selection of the children and widows to be supported, Trustees however require that partners follow guidelines laid down by ACT as follows:

- that the child be the son or daughter of a widow or completely orphaned and the mother is willing to accept sponsorship on the terms and conditions established by ACT;
- that the child is already of school going age, demonstrates good behaviour and shows interest and ability if already in school. The teachers and head of the school should confirm that financial support will be of benefit and would not be wasted if used on this child;
- that the child should not be younger than 6 years old when support starts and is normally expected to have completed their education by the age of 21 (although this can be extended in certain circumstances);
- that the child resides at home with the mother and her family or with other close relatives or guardians and is living within the community;
- that support should be provide on basis of need irrespective or religion or gender;
- that it is not a requirement that the child or their families are Christians, but we expect that the mother is leading an upright life and raising her children in a disciplined and responsible way.

Once children who are in need of support have been identified by our partners, they are required to complete an application form which is available from ACT upon request. This form provides all the information required by ACT to make a decision on sponsoring a child.

1.2 Provisions covered in Child Sponsorship

Child Sponsorship covers provision of the following items:

- school fees, including any exceptional fees;
- School books;
- Consumables, including stationery, pens, etc.; school uniforms, coats, sweaters and shoes;
- School bag or satchel;
- Special school trips or other events as organised by the school.

Additionally, ACT will consider providing in exceptional circumstances:

- Food
- Health care
- Games kit and equipment

ACT expects that the partner, mother/guardian and child will take every care to ensure that all the above items are not lost, stolen or misused. Should these occur due to lack of proper care leading to loss or damage of any item, replacement by ACT should not be expected.**

* ACT reserves the rights to request that books and school uniforms should be purchased second hand, if these are available in good quality and at a price which is cost effective. ACT also reserves the rights to re-allocate these items from one child who no longer has use for them to another, where both children are under the guardianship of the same local partner.

1.3 Implication for other Children

The aim of the trustees is that the entire family benefit from this process. To this end:

- our partners will explain the sponsorship process and conditions to members of the family prior to the start of the sponsorship programme;
- efforts are made to ensure that the sponsored child is not treated preferentially in comparison to other siblings and, the funds provided must be used, first to meet all items relating to the sponsored child's education as a priority;
- any extra funds can be used for the well being of the entire family;
- it is possible to sponsor more than one child from the same family.

1.4 End of Support

ACT will end child financial support

- on completion of secondary school education or technical training, i.e., when the child is then capable of obtaining gainful employment;
- on reaching the age of 21, except if already in final stages of secondary school education or technical training, in which case support will be extended beyond the age limits;
- if the mother re-marries and together with the husband are able to support the family;
- if child is withdrawn from the school without good reasons;
- if there is misuse of ACT funds or facilities;

- if pregnancy occurs but the circumstances of each case shall be considered by ACT before support can be terminated;
- Other situations as may be raised by our partners.

In special circumstances ACT will consider special requests for extension of support, but only on the recommendations by the local partner.

1.5 Supporting Children after Secondary School

ACT support had initially been limited to educating children up to completion of secondary school. In 2006, this position was reviewed as increasing numbers of children were completing secondary school and obtaining places in universities and other tertiary institutions. Nearly all were unable to afford the costs of further studies. This posed an unprecedented challenge given that the objective of ACT is to help children achieve their *full potential in life*.

ACT has put in place policy and procedures for providing assistance to ACT sponsored children who have obtained admission to university and tertiary institutions but are unable to afford the costs. Eligibility, application procedures and application forms are available and can be requested from ACT.

Appendix II: Community Projects and International Volunteering

ACT is a volunteer led charity. In order to realise this goal ACT has developed and extended its volunteering base by working collaboratively with organizations such as the VSO through the Diaspora volunteer initiative (DVI). Volunteers both in the UK and Africa in this context are individuals who offer their skill and know-how as a means to help in the fight against poverty and disadvantage in rural African communities. Thus, ACT supports entire communities in Africa by working along side local and municipal government departments to effect poverty reduction in a collaborative manner.

ACTIVE

ACT volunteer programme is known as ACTIVE or African Child Trust International Volunteering Effort

ACTIVE is the mobilisation of skilled professional volunteers who are passionate about Africa and are willing to use their experience, knowledge and resources in poverty alleviation.

ACTIVE international volunteering policy and procedures document is available from ACT.

Appendix III:

Our Christian Values

Our mission is grounded in Christian values. In this context, we consider that a Christian is one who believes as follows:

- in the sovereignty of the living God and of his son Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and who recognises that the three are one;
- that Jesus Christ is the son of God and was born of a virgin, that he died for the salvation of mankind by taking upon himself the sins of mankind, and that he arose from death on the third day;
- in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and actively seeks to live a life guided by the Holy Spirit;
- in the whole Bible as the word of God and is guided by the teachings in both the old and new testaments.

Appendix IV: Financial Controls

Background

This document describes the ACT Financial Controls and Procedures for submitting the accounting returns for fund received from ACT.

You should already have read the 'ACT Handbook'.

ACT Trustees require that our partners provide regular account of how funds transferred to them from the UK or received in ACT partner's local account in-country have been utilised. Under UK Charity laws, ACT Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records, which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and put into place reasonable steps for the prevention and also detection of fraud and irregularities. The Trustees have to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonable steps to assure compliance with the requirements of the UK Charity law.

This document provides guidance to our partners to ensure that there are checks and balances over operation of bank accounts and payments; ensure that payments and withdrawals from the bank account are approved and are for valid transactions to or for the benefit of widows and their children or any other projects upon which the charity is engaged; ensure that monies and goods reach their rightful destination such as the widows, supported children and other projects.

Bank Accounts

1. Our partners are required to open a bank account dedicated exclusively to the work of ACT.
2. Withdrawals and deposits should only be the responsibility of the Co-ordinating ACT Partner, for example a Pastor / CEO /Director (or in his/her

absence, a designated Senior Officer/ such as a Church Elder or Deacon or Care Team leader) and another responsible officer (ie. another Church Elder, Deacon, Care Team leader, Accountant or Treasurer).

3. Authority should be given to Bank only to allow withdrawals with a minimum of two (2) signatories.
4. Before a withdrawal is made, the Care Team should present a withdrawal request to the Co-ordinating ACT Partner (or a designated senior official), stating the purpose of the withdrawal. The withdrawal request should be signed by a minimum of 2 Care Team Members.
5. Withdrawal requests should be authorised and approved (signed) by the Co-ordinating ACT Partner (or their designated representative as stated above), after checking the purpose of the withdrawal. (A separate file should be maintained for Withdrawal requests).
6. Care Team members other than those designated as above should not to be allowed access to Bank Accounts.

A Cash Book should be maintained to record transactions on the bank account

Payments /Purchases

1. Payments and purchases of goods should be arranged by a minimum of 2 Care Team members, together. As much as possible obtain receipts if this is possible.
2. Cash given to widows should be done in the presence of a minimum of 2 Care Team Members.
3. If a widow/guardian is not available to receive her money, the money should be deposited to the bank account, without undue delay.
4. Widows /guardians should sign the Sponsorship book (or use thumb print) to confirm or acknowledge receipt of funds

(see attached Appendix 1). Alternatively, forms can be designed locally with the same purpose in mind. Under no circumstances should Care Team Members sign on behalf of widows.

5. The Co-ordinating ACT Partner should be in regular contact with Widows and Schools to confirm receipt of funds and goods.
6. Payments should be supported by valid receipts or invoices where possible.

Care Team Members

Consider allowing Care Team members to serve on a rotationary basis i.e. say rotate them every 2 to 3 years (this is not a specific requirement).

Accounting Returns

The following is guidance for forwarding accounting information and report to UK to enable new funds to be transferred to partners for the following school term:

1. Partners must forward a '**Summary Statement of Funds Utilisation**' at the end of each term, before subsequent funds are transferred. This is an account as to how funds received have been utilised. This should be signed by Pastor /Co-ordinating ACT Partner (see Attached);
2. Partners should maintain a '**Sponsorship Book**' which records monies given to widows or guardians and signed by them (see Appendix 1);
3. Copies of bank statements should be provided;
4. All other costs can be recorded as Appendices (see Appendices 2 and 3).
5. Receipts, invoices and other supporting documents backing up expenditure should be obtained where practicable. They should be maintained in a separate file,

available for inspection at any time. As we may ask you to forward photocopies of these to us.

6. Co-ordinating ACT Partner should always check and be satisfied that all the above have been met before signing off the accounts.

Finally, partners should inform the UK immediately of any issues arising, such as detected errors, fraud or any other concerns affecting proper running of the system of internal controls and accounting procedures.

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FUNDS UTILISATION			
PERIOD			
(A) Balance of Funds brought forward from last statement			
(B) Funds Transferred from UK:			
	£ Sterling	Exchange Rate	Local Currency
(C) Summary of Expenditure			
	Items	Total spent	Remarks
	Child sponsorship money given directly to mothers		see App. 1
	School Fees Paid		see App. 1
	Purchases for the children		see App. 1
	Administration Costs		see App. 2
	Others		see App. 3
	Total Expenditure		(C)
Balance of funds remaining (at bank and in hand)			(A + B - C)
Notes:			
	Please note that receipts, invoices and other supporting documents should be obtained and maintained in a separate file. UK may request to see the receipts.		
PREPARED BY:			
	(Name)		
Signature			
Date			
Co-ordinating Partner			
Date			
	Co-ordinating ACT Partner		

Notes:
This is the period covered (e.g Jan - April 2007)

This would normally be the balance (A+B+C) from the last accounting report sent to UK partners.

Amount sent from the UK, the bank exchange rate and equivalent local currency.

Money given to each mother and signature. Details in Appendix 1
Total of school fees paid. Details in Appendix 1
Other items bought for the children . Details in Appendix 1
Summary of Administration costs. See Appendix 2
Summary of Other costs. See Appendix 3