

actalliance eu



Annual Report 2020

Abbreviations

ABPREBES	Association for Plant Breeding for the Benefit of Society
ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific
CAN	Climate Action Network
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
CS	Civil Society
CSOs	Civil society organisations
EBA	Everything but Arms
EC	European Commission
EFSD	European Fund for Sustainable Development
EDFI	European Development Finance Institutions
EIB	European Investment Bank
EOI-I	Ecological Organic Agriculture Initiative
EP	European Parliament
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FPC	Food Policy Coalition
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
HRDN	Human Rights and Democracy Network
IDS	Institute for Development Studies
IPES	International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
JAES SG	Joint EU-Africa Strategy
MEWG	Middle East Working Group
MFF	Multi-annual Financial Framework
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OACPS	Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States
RBA	Rights-based approach
SCLR	Survivor and Community-Led Response
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies

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Left: Keith Woko. Centre: Karolina Grabowska. Right: Khirbet Humsa, B'Tselem

Annual Report 2020

4 Introduction

7 Highlights from our 2020

9 Development policy and practice

15 Humanitarian policy and practice

19 Climate justice

22 Food security

28 Middle East

32 Migration and displacement

36 2020 finances

38 Board, secretariat and advisory groups

Introduction

Dear Reader

2020 changed our office and our team in many different ways. The most obvious were caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions and security measures we needed to introduce to keep our staff safe.

Lockdown has changed the way we do advocacy — at least for now. There were both positives and negatives to this change. On a positive front, virtual doors were opened. This facilitated the inclusion of many of our partners from the global south and increased participation in important conversations.

Virtual communication facilitated access to high-level officials, especially in the new Commissioners' cabinets. We had the opportunity to exchange with officials and bring voices from different countries to the conversation. On the negative, rushed EU processes meant that at times, normal transparent democratic scrutiny was not adhered to. Civil society has had to fight for meaningful consultations, for access to information and for creative ways to lobby the institutions effectively. It is our impression that many networking opportunities were lost due to the limited opportunities for side conversations — an important advocacy tool!

Learning to embrace working virtually was a great leveller and common experience for all involved in the processes and dialogues around the EU institutions. Throughout the year, we were grateful to have close and active cooperation as well as regular calls with our members, not least regarding the reaction of our sector to Covid-19.

Staff changes and special projects

This year we faced considerable changes in our staff and special projects.

Climate justice

The departure of Climate Justice Policy Officer, Leia Achampong, came with the agreement that

the position would not be replaced due to a lack of longer-term funding for the special project. The importance of climate justice is recognised by the working group, secretariat, membership and the Board, and it remains a key component of the global ACT Alliance strategy. We continue to look for new and innovative ways to engage with the work on climate change without dedicated secretariat staff. The working group has continued to meet online, with secretariat staff joining when needed. Encouragingly we have seen a recent success in the launch of the 2020 ACT Alliance EU climate finance report, highlighted on page 19.

Migration and displacement

Following the departure of Policy Officer, Fanni Bihari, we mainstreamed some elements of the Migration and Displacement agenda into our work on Development Policy and Practice. Migration and displacement will remain a key driver of EU policy and external action and will certainly remain important in our work. Aspects of the work, such as climate-induced migration and resilience and protection, are being incorporated within our workstreams and will be included as appropriate in the coming year.

Food security

The end of 2020 will conclude our longstanding work on Food Security. In 2020 only three remaining member organisations supported the Special Project on Food Security. Mid-year it became known that members were not able to commit funding for 2021 leaving the special project no longer viable. This resulted in the departure of our long-standing colleague, Senior Policy Officer, Karin Ulmer. Elements of the Food Security portfolio will be absorbed by other workstreams as appropriate in the next year.

We acknowledge with gratitude the dedicated contribution of Policy Officers in their respective areas.

Even though we must recognise these losses in 2020, we also must acknowledge the magnificent work done by our team and the outstanding cooperation between the secretariat and the membership in these challenging times.

Let me highlight a few key achievements from 2020:

- ▶ Our experience with locally-led responses and our engagement with faith actors attracted keen interest among civil society and EU stakeholders. We developed a Toolkit for EU country offices providing practical considerations for engagement and faith sensitive action. # i s led to a virtual conference and as a result we have pursued country level discussions with EU delegations to establish priorities for collaboration.
- ▶ We jointly organised a workshop with 300 participants on the 'Our Land is Our Life' platform addressing issues of food identity and land. # e platform has become a powerful space of connection for community-led development approaches.
- ▶ We spoke out in numerous high-level online meetings with the European Commission on the MFF, on EU-Africa, on the external dimensions of the Green Deal.
- ▶ We published the ACT Alliance EU position on a transformative and people-centred EU-Africa partnership and made sure our members spread our views at national level and were kept informed with the ongoing policy developments on the EU level.
- ▶ Our work made sure that the new EU-ACP agreement included strong provisions on civil society space and participation

- ▶ We leveraged our contacts in the EU institutions to put pressure on the Union for more principled action and straightforward communication regarding the loPT region. We mobilised policy makers for common action despite the physical distance requirements.

- ▶ We made sure the New Pact on Asylum and Migration was not further diminishing the already low standards when it comes to related EU action. Our networks in the European Institutions and among civil society brought some positive change regarding this very problematic proposal.

- ▶ We joined the global ACT Alliance staff week of meetings. We enjoyed in depth discussions and team building which continue to bear fruit in our close cooperation with our global secretariat colleagues.

i s year has shown us the need to cooperate closely to advocate on the national as well as the European level for impact. As a network we must work together to build strong alliances in the pursuit of justice and the eradication of global poverty.

I remain proud of our achievements and continued drive to foster a just, peaceful and inclusive world throughout such a turbulent and uncertain year.

a n k you for your support.

Floris Faber
ACT Alliance EU Representative

in 2020

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...had
296 
direct advocacy
communications
with policymakers


contributed to
40 POLICY
MAKING
PROCESSES


CO-HOSTED
SPOKE AT
CONTRIBUTED TO
138 events

met
policymakers
118 times
&

CIVIL SOCIETY
NETWORKS

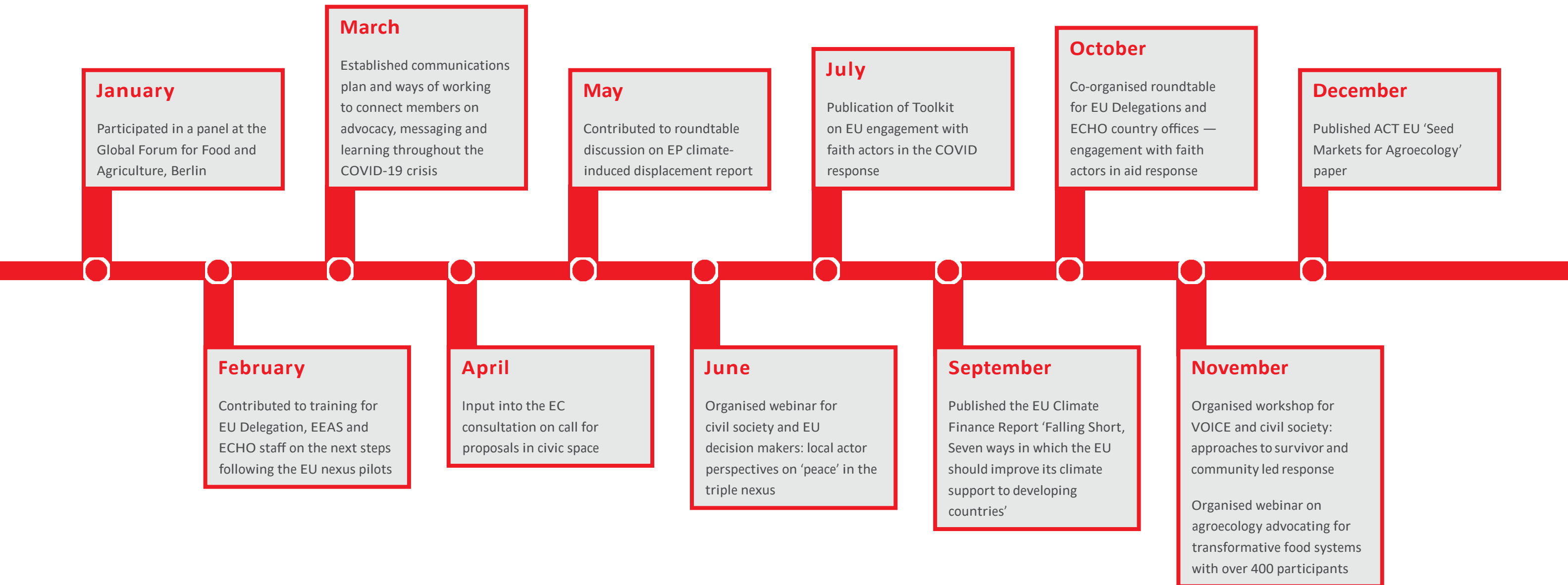
311 times

published
& co-published

54
131 media
products
(TWEETS BLOGS
PRESS RELEASES
WEBSITE UPDATES)
policy papers

statements
joint letters
& briefings

Highlights from our 2020



Development policy and practice



Credit: Keith Woko

Key achievements

The post-Cotonou EU-OAPCS agreement integrates our call for preserving and broadening civic space and enhancing civil society participation and for promoting SRHRs.

The NDICI regulation includes our key priorities and spending targets. It also preserves civil society co-financing and caps the resources allocated to guaranteeing private investments while increasing their transparency.

Our views are reflected in EC strategies to counter the shrinking of civic space, to support gender action and to implement the European Green Deal in partner countries.

Agreement between the EU and the Organisation of African Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)

We continued to monitor and influence the negotiations together with the CONCORD leading group on EU-ACP/Africa relations. Thanks to a sustained dialogue with EU negotiators we were able to influence the provisions of the agreement in two key areas; a) on the role and space for civil society and b) on sexual and reproductive health & rights. A political agreement on the text was concluded in early December after two years of negotiations. It recognises the importance of preserving and broadening an enabling space for an active, organised and transparent civil society. The parties agreed to promote and strengthen the effective participation of civil society with a view to fostering more inclusive and multi-stakeholder policy processes.

Despite our continuous efforts and pressure, we had a marginal impact on the text of the migration chapter which introduces strong commitments on returns and re-admission while providing weak guarantees on legal migration and safe pathways for migrants.

A renewed EU-Africa partnership

Over the year, the EU position and attitude towards a renewed partnership with Africa evolved. It moved towards a more human development, environment and people centred strategy, which demonstrated more respect for and attention to the African Union's own priorities for the continent. In the end, all EU plans to hold an EU-AU Summit and to launch a renewed political dialogue and strategy with the

AU were postponed to 2021 with an indefinite timeline and agenda.

Our advocacy efforts were based on the DPP paper *Recommendations for a people-centred and transformative EU-Africa strategy* [↗](#). DPP group members used this paper at national level to produce letters, blogs and statements. Our paper was used to influence the Council Conclusions of June 2020 and the European Parliament's own report on the EU-Africa partnership to be adopted in March 2021. We established a close dialogue with key stakeholders and many of our suggestions are reflected in the EP final text. Together with the EU CS steering group we maintained pressure on the EC and the EEAS to ensure they live up to their commitment to organise a civil society consultation and to support the organisation of an EU-Africa Civil Society Forum ahead of the EU-AU Summit.

Supporting civil society voices

e COVID-19 crisis made it difficult for civil society on both continents to maintain an effective dialogue process and to coordinate joint positions. # e VENRO Conference in October offered a platform to discuss thematic issues amongst civil society and to debate with EU and African officials. # e ACT EU secretariat facilitated and hosted thematic workshops, alongside Bread for the World, Christian Aid and AACC. # e format of the conference facilitated a broader participation than usual, with increased involvement from many African countries. # i s is an effective way of organising civil society dialogues. A

positive learning aspect of the COVID crisis to be pursued and improved in the future.

Future financing (NDICI & MFF)

After two years of dedicated advocacy efforts, the political agreement on the regulation of the new EU development cooperation instrument (the NDICI) was reached in December. # e agreement represents the best possible outcome on many issues but does not fully guarantee that EU ODA will not be misused. Our 2020 work focused on monitoring the negotiations and making concrete and detailed recommendations on compromise text proposals.

We worked in cooperation with CONCORD, VOICE, HRDN and CAN Europe on the MFF which sets the future budget of both the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) and Humanitarian Aid. In a political situation dominated by the debate on the EU COVID recovery budget and instruments, our demand in favour of development and humanitarian aid was barely heard at Member States level. # e budget adopted by the Heads of States is similar to the current one and the EP only succeeded to marginally increase it.

On the text of the regulation, we focused on the principles and rights-based approach, civil society funding, migration and blending & guarantees. On the latter, we worked closely with MEPs and advisers in the Parliament who were directly involved in the negotiations on the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD+). We were successful on many aspects including capping the level



of resources allocated to the guarantee fund of the EFSD+, raising its human rights, social and environmental standards and increasing its transparency and accountability.

e spending targets for action on human development, gender and climate change that we pushed for were all adopted and 93% of the NDICI spending will have to account as ODA. # e budgets for co-financing actions initiated by CSOs and for the Human Rights and Democracy programme are preserved.


e final compromise on migration related cooperation is far from satisfactory and reflects the divisions that prevail between and inside the EU institutions on migration related conditionality of EU aid. Regardless

of the political compromise reached in December, it seems that the issue is still open to interpretation and will need close monitoring in 2021.

Influencing programming guidelines

In parallel with the NDICI decision making process we started influencing the European Commission's plans and priorities for its implementation through the programming process. Together with a group of development and environment NGOs, we succeeded in raising the interest of Commissioner Urpilainen, her cabinet and DG DEVCO for the external

dimension of the European Green Deal. # i s included the intrinsic relationship between human development, preserving the environment, adapting to climate change and promoting agroecology and small-scale farming. Aided by the COVID-19 context, issues related to inequalities, social protection and human development gained priority in Commissioner Urpilainen's agenda. # e programming guidelines adopted in November included a requirement to consult civil society on the country programmes and to involve CS in their implementation and monitoring. # rough the CONCORD NDICI group, we collected information on opportunities to take part in country level consultations organised by EU delegations and shared it with members.

a n k s to the interest raised in DG DEVCO by the *ACT Alliance Report on Civic Space and the SDGs* , we influenced the content of the first ever call for proposals launched by the Human Rights unit of DG DEVCO on countering the shrinking of civic space. We also provided an input for the consultation

on the priorities and type of measures to be supported with the future civil society dedicated programme of the NDICI.

On gender, we provided an ACT EU input for the consultation on the third version of the EC Gender Action Plan (GAP III). Christian Aid coordinated our input in consultation with the ACT Community of Practice on Gender which was highly appreciated by EC staff in charge.

In what was a challenging year for our advocacy work, several important political agreements impacting EU development cooperation were reached at the very end of 2020. # e i r translation into legislative texts, programmes and concrete actions will be our future focus. Our role is to continue to closely monitor these processes throughout 2021 to make sure that the positive policy outcomes achieved in 2020 turn into practice.

Development policy and practice

2020 publications and external references

Recommendations for a people-centred and transformative EU-Africa strategy

<https://bit.ly/3s4HkAT>

European Green Deal must strengthen partner countries' recovery from the COVID-19 crisis - May 2020

<https://g.ifaw.org/3c1gdRN>

International Development and the next EU Budget: an analysis of the European Commission's proposals on EFSD and EFSD+ in the revised NDICI and Next Generation EU

<https://bit.ly/3c1mhJU>

CONCORD recommendations: EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic around the globe (April 2020)

<https://bit.ly/3tzkSjO>

Submission by ACT Alliance EU to the targeted consultation on the EU external action Gender Action Plan (GAP) III - 2021-2025 - May 2020

<https://bit.ly/30XWsnT>

European democracy needs a vibrant and independent Civil Society

<https://bit.ly/3s2oiLF>



Humanitarian policy and practice



ACT member NCCP distributes food and hygiene kits to 300 households in Navotas, Metro Manila following three weeks of lockdown in Luzon. Working with the barangay/ community leaders and members through ecumenical partner TASK FORCE DAMBANA.

Key achievements

We supported national NGO forums into institutional discussions on the peace aspect of the triple nexus approach.

Our Toolkit for EU Country Offices has led to country-level discussions with EU Delegations and collaboration among the consortia field teams and partners.

We have generated space to promote integration of approaches to survivor and community led response among ECHO and civil society HQs and in-country practitioners.

e Humanitarian Working Group had a year of deepening roots and garnering interest in new areas of advocacy. We relied heavily on our experience with locally led responses and our engagement with faith actors to inform and engage both civil society and other EU stakeholders.

e COVID-19 crisis highlighted the urgency of two key pillars of the Humanitarian Working Group advocacy:

- ▶ Accelerating the shift to localised response: meaning that local actors engage in the humanitarian system on an equal footing as valued and complementary allies to international organisations;
- ▶ Expanding the scope of participation and 'local' to take account of actors engaged in first response such as survivors, communities and faith actors.

e crisis highlighted the non-linear nature of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding as well as the ongoing complexities in operationalising the triple nexus for civil society and the EU as a donor.

In response we leveraged the existing wealth of experience and evidence among members on meaningful partnership and capacity sharing with local and community organisations. Building on this, we amplified local actor perspectives and brought NGO forums into the institutional discussions on the nexus approach. We made space to raise awareness of the crucial role of religious leaders and faith communities in humanitarian action with a focus on the COVID-19 response, and of approaches to survivor and community-led response.

Localisation and the perspectives of local actors

We brought our expertise and leadership role in localisation fora to various policy processes at EU level. We contributed to the revision of the ECHO Disaster Preparedness Guidance Note as well as the new Communication on EU Humanitarian Aid for the Commission work plan 2021.

In addition, we sought to bring local actor perspectives into the discussions on framing of the 'triple nexus' – the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions. 2020 saw both UN and EU policy makers and civil society focus on the peace component and develop guidance. However, thinking has remained mostly at international institution level and low engagement with local and national civil society experience and practice. To address this, we co-organised and hosted a workshop engaging local, national and international civil society with EU stakeholders for exchange and feedback on an influential draft paper of the OCHA Inter-Agency Standing Committee conceptualising peace and peacebuilding actions.

The workshop successfully placed the overall discussion of localisation on the table and brought perspectives from the South Sudan NGO Forum and local partners of Interpeace in Libya and globally. It received great interest from the 100+ participants and has resulted in follow-up strategy discussions on the EU approach to its framing of peace and perspectives of local actors in conflict analysis. The event has solidified relations with networks and stakeholders and provided an ongoing exchange with ECHO and DEVCO on local organisation experiences and asks.

Nonetheless, there is a long way to go. The steps for flexible and adaptable funding at EU level require translation of the policy commitments into implementation. The UN and INGO-driven agendas need to provide greater space and scope for locally designed solutions and programmatic responses to some of the major obstacles to achieving nexus programming.

Carving spaces for engagement of faith actors and communities in aid responses

ACT Alliance EU, together with a consortium of NGOs and networks, has contributed to putting the engagement of the EU and its partners with local and faith actors in humanitarian and development response on the map. We instigated the consortium's advocacy in the ECHO communication on its COVID-19 response. We began by facilitating an internal exchange of existing practices and lessons learned which resulted in clear findings. Among the members, the role of faith actors and their partnerships extends far beyond the traditionally recognised service-delivery role. They were often involved in key roles in defence of civil society space, health communications, resilience building and early warning systems. This internal sharing resulted in production of an op-ed published in Devex [link](#).

An important piece of work for us this year was the development of a Toolkit for EU country offices [link](#). The Toolkit provides practical considerations for engagement and faith sensitive action. The process engaged thematic experts on religion, humanitarian and development, gender, peacebuilding and community-based action from across and outside the consortium. Personnel throughout ACT Alliance globally were also involved. This

formed the basis for initial advocacy through an external virtual conference involving one of the EU Delegations, the World Bank, and civil society stakeholders. There were exchanges on the importance of working with religious leaders and faith communities. Initial discussions highlighted the role of faith actors in the promotion of gender justice and prevention of GBV as well as community approaches to peacebuilding. As a result, we have pursued country-level discussions with EU Delegations to establish priorities for collaboration with faith actors: collaboration both to deepen engagement across sectors and to address the challenges in faith sensitive response.

Survivor and community-led response

The third contribution we made this year was regarding survivor and community-led response (SCLR). We took a lead role in working with VOICE and Oxfam to renew discussion at EU civil society level on approaches to survivor and community-led response. ACT's Local2Global Protection community of practice guided this work. We took advantage of the possibilities of virtual meetings to facilitate practitioners getting into EU advocacy discussions globally and

providing a multilingual space. These exchanges were led by NGO personnel facilitating the SCLR approaches in the Philippines, Northern Kenya and Sudan as well as an Oxfam community-led protection initiative in the Oicha region of the DRC.

The ability of the national NGO facilitators to develop initiatives at great scale was clear. Similarly, the workshop evidenced how the model of communal self-help empowers women, youth and vulnerable members. The coordination between community protection and the formal humanitarian system was of interest among participants. There is enthusiasm to develop the methodology at organisational level among civil society. In addition, there was an eagerness to advocate for innovative micro grant modalities to facilitate the expansion and sustained support to such approaches.

By the end of 2020, we were able to open doors to connect those NGO and community representatives, as well as our policy and operational teams, with EU humanitarian decision makers. Moving forward, we will be pursuing deeper technical discussions related to funding modalities, accountability mechanisms and needs-driven capacity strengthening.

Humanitarian policy and practice

2020 publications and external references

Singing from the same song sheet? Multi-lateral and local civil society perspectives on 'peace' in the triple nexus: conference blog, summary and IASC paper

<https://bit.ly/30Y2G7b>

Video webinar summary: EU engagement with religious leaders and faith communities in humanitarian and development response

<https://bit.ly/2NxIsOx>

Devex op-ed

<https://bit.ly/3faowfZ>

Toolkit for EU field offices: engaging with religious leaders and communities in the COVID-19 response

<https://bit.ly/3vHBKqE>

Approaches to survivor and community led response Local2Global Protection: Powerpoint summary of CSO presentation

<https://bit.ly/3sBG1JX>

Climate justice



Typhoon Goni, Province of Malinao, Albay province, Philippines, November 2020.
Credit: OCHA, G Arevalo

Key achievements

We published the Climate Finance Report.

We achieved an exclusive in *Der Spiegel* on the key aspects of the report.

ACT Alliance EU's climate justice work in 2020 focused on climate finance and climate resilience as well as several important aspects of the European Green Deal (EGD). Early in the year, in cooperation with CAN Europe, we conducted policy and advocacy work on the new EU adaptation strategy, the new EU Climate Law and EU NDC (Nationally Determined Contributions) ambition i.e. EU emissions reductions targets. Many in the working group were focused on EU NDC

ambition at a national level. Although this work was on domestic EU ambition, we used the access granted through meetings on the EGD to push ACT Alliance EU's international climate finance and Loss and Damage positions. # i s led to meetings on domestic EU adaptation policies being broadened to include national EU Member State experts to discuss international adaptation policy.

In March 2020, we engaged with the European Parliament Anti-Racism, Diversity & Inclusion



Climate justice

Annual report 2020

Hurricanes Eta and Iota, Highway between San Pedro Sula and Puerto Cortés, Honduras, November 2020. Credit: Sean Hawkey / Life on Earth

(ARDI) inter-group to conduct advocacy with MEPs on climate and environmental injustice in Europe and developing countries in the Global South. We were invited to give a briefing on the climate injustice faced by some genders and marginalised communities.

We published the *Climate Finance Report* in September. *is* new report on climate finance revealed that EU institutions are failing to meet their climate finance commitments. *e* report noted that a policy shift is needed to ensure that developing countries receive the appropriate support to address the climate crisis. *e* report assessed climate finance channelled from the European Investment Bank, European Development Fund, and the European Commission, to developing countries. It reported the decline in climate adaptation and grant-based financial support for the most climate-vulnerable

countries. In addition to the press release [🔗](#), we were delighted to get an exclusive in *Der Spiegel* [🔗](#) and an op-ed in Euractiv [🔗](#). We also had an article on our website [🔗](#). *e* report was well received and opened up lobby opportunities at member state level.

Further work was done in the latter half of the year to prepare a follow-on report [🔗](#) aimed for use in national lobby work. *is* report will target EU member states, while applying the same analysis and methodology. It was released in early 2021.

Although the ACT EU Climate Justice group has been formally dissolved, ACT EU members will continue to work on climate change related EU matters of common interest in cooperation with CAN Europe and when appropriate with some support from the secretariat.

Climate justice

2020 publications and external references

Making the European Green Deal work for International Partnerships

<https://bit.ly/3vKAZNh>

*EU Climate Law: *e* Lowdown on Adaptation*

<https://bit.ly/3150pad>

Checklist for robust meaningful and ambitious adaption policies across the EU

<https://bit.ly/3c0u0be>

Op-ed: Developing countries deserve fair and transparent climate support from the EU

<https://bit.ly/3cPahdN>

Falling Short! Seven ways in which the EU could improve its climate support to developing countries

<https://bit.ly/3tH0rld>

Press release: New report reveals that EU institutions are failing to meet their climate finance commitments

<https://bit.ly/3bZS65R>

EU needs to deliver on their promises – video explaining new ACT Alliance EU report on Climate Finance

<https://bit.ly/3bZVKNG>

Der Spiegel coverage of Climate Finance Report

<https://bit.ly/31uluvj>



Food security



Credit: Gabriel Jimenez

Key achievements

We are proud that land rights are now recognised as an essential element for the realisation of many human rights as a result of years of advocacy by numerous organisations including ACT EU.

We provided strategic advocacy to the 'Our Land is Our Life' platform which led to an online Civil Society Workshop with 300 participants.

It was a challenging year for the Special Project Food Security with some important successes on land and human rights and community-led advocacy initiatives. The Covid-19 crisis illustrated just how connected we are and has emphasised the importance of healthy humans relying on healthy soil as an integral part of our world.

violations to relevant key EU officials and lobby arenas.

Early in 2020 we called on the European Investment Bank (EIB) to earnestly engage in developing a human rights framework [↗](#). Following pressure from collective advocacy efforts, the first global development bank gathering in Paris in November included human rights and community-led development language in its final declaration [↗](#).

Land rights: human rights

Land rights have been an important cornerstone of the ACT EU strategy for several years. In 2020, we saw the culmination of these efforts. In early February, the EU withdrew parts of the tariff preferences granted to Cambodia under Everything But Arms (EBA). This is already leading to changing patterns in the formulation of EU trade policy such as increased visibility and accountability on land and human rights by EU trade officials. The sustained joint CSO efforts for over a decade and ACT EU's initiative and contribution to this was essential. It included forging partners' voices on the EU trade agenda and channelling meticulous documentation on land and human rights

Our Land is Our Life

Our Land Is Our Life is a platform which brings faith-based organisations (FBO) together to support grassroots efforts in Africa fighting for the right to land, water and seeds. The platform is a powerful space to demonstrate what is happening on the ground and builds on connecting FBO and CSOs to put indigenous community-led development approaches firmly on the agenda. In February, we were invited to provide strategic EU advocacy advice to the platform. Subsequently, ACT EU jointly organised a workshop in October.

It has brought nearly 300 participants online, addressing issues such as source of food, identity, spirituality, medicine, heritage as well as land as an international responsibility. In early December, prior to the gathering of the AU-EU leadership group, a visionary policy declaration drafted by platform members was sent to AU and EU high-level officials.

ACT EU joined the ad hoc food group of Brussels-based FBOs and brought the new platform actors along. They contributed to the FBO online dialogue series aimed at inputting to the European Africa partnership. Preparations for a joint GIZ- FBO webinar looked at the importance of the concept of 'localisation' to African food systems. With the postponement of the AU-EU summit due to Covid-19, the dialogue continues.

During the year, a small group of NGO EU food experts met regularly online, advocating support to agroecology. Advocacy was based on the follow up statement produced in February 2020 on Recommendations by African and European CSOs regarding the implementation

of the Ministerial Declaration and Action Agenda adopted on 21 June 2019. Putting CSO and the community-led agricultural development vision on the agendas of EU and African institutions continued throughout the year.

Transformative food systems and agroecology

There are several highlights from our work around transforming food systems and agroecology. Firstly, a group of five organisations co-hosted a series of workshops in September and November. The goal was to build common ground based on a set of principles and elements for joint advocacy efforts on transformative agri-food systems. International speakers were invited including Vijay Kumar from Zero Budget Natural Farming, Andhra Pradesh, India. ACT Alliance EU took the operational lead for the final event which attracted 800 registrations

Credit: Dylan de Jonge



and over 400 participants from CSOs/NGOs, farm organisations, activists, researchers and policy makers. In December, a global team was formed to draft a manifesto that will be open to individual sign ups. # i s will be for use in the meetings of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the UN Food System Summit (UNFSS).

Secondly, we took the lead to ensure joint policy work in the EU Food Policy Coalition was finalised. # i s translates agroecological principles into the specifics of EU policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), trade and external relations, biodiversity and research policy. # e 2nd December edition of the working document on translating agroecology into EU policies is intended to support shared advocacy efforts.

i r d l y, we collaborated and provided input to the European Environmental Bureau article *Future Farming: Feeding the World: With less and better* [↗](#). # i s article looks at meeting the EU's pledge to reduce the environmental and climate footprint of the EU food system and requires deep changes on how we trade with the rest of the world.

Finally, we contributed to the webinar on trade and seed rights in September by the Association for Plant Breeding for the Benefit of Society (ABPREBES). Our advocacy focus is on seed marketing rules subject to reform in 2021 under a review of EU seed laws. With support from Kybele Consultancy, we worked on a policy brief in December outlining what is at stake for developing countries. Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) offers an important entry point for agency partners advocacy in the Global South. Arguing that developing countries should have more – or at least the



Credit: Simon Fanger

same kind of policy space as the EU to engage in their own regulation of their seed markets. # e increased harmonisation of seed marketing risks undermining the current flexibility and hampers the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in developing countries.

Impact of EU Common Agricultural Policy on farmers' livelihoods

Our work on the EU CAP continued strongly this year despite COVID -19 restrictions. In April, we joined the ongoing lobby efforts to fully align the CAP reform with the Green Deal ambitions. Covid-19 meant that the procedures and the Parliament vote on the CAP reform in the week of 19 October were opaque. Compromise amendments and voting lists for over 3000 amendments were provided at the last minute. # i s last-minute action undermined the usual transparent democratic scrutiny. As a result, the final vote on the CAP is out of sync with commitments in the Green Deal and fails to

respond to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and broad societal concerns.

ACT EU also joined the efforts to call for the Commission to publish the Farm to Fork strategy without further delay. In September, we actively contributed to the work of the Task Force on External Relations and co-published a policy brief on *Raising the ambition on global aspects of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy*.

Other highlights of the year included the PCD ask for a 'poultry observatory' and speaking at the Global Forum on Future of Agriculture (GFFA). We received a positive response from the Commission DG Agriculture on the PCD ask but initial joint preparations for a multi-stakeholder expert round table scheduled for spring 2020 were halted due to Covid-19. At the November Civil Society Dialogue meeting on International Aspects of Agriculture the Commission presented detailed poultry trade data to which we responded. Subsequently, we drafted a concept note but the multi-stakeholder event was postponed once again until February 2021. Finally, ACT EU was pleased to speak on the Global Forum on Future of Agriculture (GFFA) expert panel organised by Bread for the World.

EU trade policy

Our intention within EU Trade Policy is to highlight that the focus on competition is preventing the EU from doing what is needed to promote its European values and protect human rights. We have been busy this year within several key areas.

We compiled policy asks in the ACT EU Submission to a major EU trade policy review

in September, based on long-standing work on agricultural trade policy. Reiterating that inherent contradictions must be addressed between making European agribusiness competitive on global markets and intentions to reduce Europe's climate footprint and commitments to sustainable food systems.

! e GSP Platform

e GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) Platform successfully broadened its membership and outreach over the last year. ACT EU is a founding member of the GSP and this year the platform was key in inserting procedural proposals, effective monitoring and early alerts on violations of Human Rights, Labour and Land Rights. In response, many of these suggestions were included in European Parliament resolutions and reports on their position on revised new EU GSP legislation in 2021.

We facilitated a CONCORD speaking slot for Bread for the World at the first Brussels based GSP-hub Stakeholder Forum in September. Policy asks were summarised in the ACT EU Submission on the GSP review, reiterating support for the suggestion to consider all of Sub-Saharan Africa as a region eligible for EBA, the Everything But Arms initiative; thereby halting the artificial fragmentation caused by the EU's introduction of four different bilateral trade regimes with individual African countries.

2020 publications and external references

Land rights

ACT EU letter to EDFI, 12 February 2020

<https://bit.ly/3IA4TiS>

ACT EU letter to EIB, 29 October 2020

<https://bit.ly/3tQvBXg>

EIB declaration on human rights

<https://bit.ly/31hyDI0>

Letter on Global Development Summit needs
Human Rights focus, September 2020s,
Finance in Common, Paris

<https://bit.ly/3cQaHAX>

Christian Aid: Doing renewables right:
taking rights and environment into account,
August 2020

<https://bit.ly/3ltZEKG>

Our Land is Our Life: joint lobby campaign towards the Africa- Europe Partnership

Report on workshop Out Land is Our Life,
16 October 2020

<https://bit.ly/3bZze74>

Article introducing the report

<https://bit.ly/2NytLuJ>

African Civil Society Declaration on the
African European Union Partnership,
November 2020

<https://bit.ly/3r3ksRh>

EU-AU Cooperation on Agriculture
and Food Systems, February 2020 —
recommendations by African and European
CSO regarding the implementation of the

Ministerial Declaration and Action Agenda
adopted on 21 June 2019

<https://bit.ly/2Qhb1kd>

Transformative food systems and agroecology

Invitation to Webinar on Advocating for
transformational change for agri-food
systems, 16 November 2020

<https://bit.ly/3ly281p>

Antonio Roman-Alcala: On the challenge of
unifying eco-agricultural sectors globally, 16
November 2020

<https://bit.ly/38VszZI>

Development and Humanitarian Civil
Society Call to Action: Halt and reverse
biodiversity loss and put nature and
ecosystems on a path to recovery by 2030

<https://bit.ly/30Y3Gbx>

ACT Alliance EU Seed Markets for
Agroecology: PCD Discussion Paper on Seeds
and Food Security December 2020

<https://bit.ly/3bYiSvv>

European Environmental Bureau article on
Future Farming

<https://bit.ly/3sGzSwg>

Food Policy Coalition report on Farm-to-Fork
Strategy

<https://bit.ly/3udqTml>

Impact of EU Common Agricultural Policy on farmers' livelihoods

ACT Alliance EU signs CSO letter on the
urgency of publishing the Farm to Fork
strategy, April 2020

<https://bit.ly/3eYbL8i>

CSO Coalition calls on EU leaders to fully
align CAP reform with Green Deal, 30
September 2020

<https://bit.ly/3r3prBo>

ACT EU submission to EU consultation on
the EU Farm to Fork Strategy (focus on trade
related aspects of Voluntary Sustainability
Standards), March 2020

<https://bit.ly/3eX7OAA>

EU trade policy

ACT EU Submission to EU trade policy
review, September 2020

<https://bit.ly/3eVI3Ri>

Recommendations of the GSP Platform in
light of the discussion for the new Regulation
of the Generalised System of Preferences of
the European Union, June 2020

<https://bit.ly/3luOvQB>

ACT EU Submission to GSP review – focus on
African EBA countries, 14 July 2020

<https://bit.ly/3c255nV>

Build Back Better. Civil society alliance
calls for the transformation of the economy
and trade system for a just and sustainable
recovery, 25 September 2020

<https://bit.ly/311Cwk5>

Middle East



Credit B'Tselem

Key achievements

We secured substantial parliamentary engagement across Europe in response to plans to formally annex parts of West Bank territory. In June 2020, 1000 European parliamentarians signed a letter to European governments and leaders warning against annexation and calling on the EU to ensure international law is upheld.

We informed ongoing discussions regarding EU steps to prevent demolitions of EU-funded aid via active engagement with European decision makers.

2020 was a turbulent and challenging year for ACT Alliance EU's Middle East Working Group (MEWG). In January 2020, the then US administration released its 'Peace to Prosperity' plan which effectively highlighted a major US departure from internationally agreed parameters for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Subsequently in May the new Israeli government included in its coalition agreement an intention to seek annexation of parts of the West Bank territory.

We focused our efforts to ensure that the EU and its member states spoke out strongly against violation of international law that such a move would constitute. ACT Alliance EU and MEWG highlighted the importance of a rights-based approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a view to prevent annexation of West Bank territory.

While annexation was suspended in the aftermath of Israel's normalisation deals with UAE and Bahrain, the situation on the ground continued to deteriorate. Demolitions of Palestinian structures have reached the highest numbers since 2016, a previous peak.

Settlement expansion advanced with sky-rocketing speed including in sensitive areas in and around East Jerusalem – with more than 12,000 Israeli settlement units approved this year [↗](#). Space for civil society has been rapidly shrinking [↗](#), exacerbated by discreditation campaigns against NGOs working with the International Criminal Court, increasing delegitimisation attacks on Palestinian NGOs, and disinformation regarding EU funding for the Palestinians.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our work was significant. MEWG's bi-annual meeting in Brussels could not take place in person. Adapting to the major shift to work online, the MEWG instead hosted more frequent calls on a weekly and monthly basis. In fact this more regular contact had a positive impact on the group's coordination. Travel to the region could not take place this year. In this context, the excellent communication and rapid information sharing with our local partners proved to be instrumental in advancing our advocacy goals and keeping the officials up to date with the most pressing developments on the ground. However, online communication was at times made more difficult

in light of the sensitivity of our work and the importance of physical, personal meetings.

Protecting Ras al Tin school and other communities in Area C at risk of demolition

ACT Alliance EU brought to the attention of key decision makers the urgent situation of the school in the Ras al Tin community in Area C of the West Bank. The school, built with EU humanitarian aid funds, was at imminent risk of demolition, along with more than 50 Palestinian schools in Area C under threat.

Through timely information-sharing and briefings of key EU and member states' officials, ACT Alliance EU secured parliamentary questions in seven EU member states which provide humanitarian funding in Area C, and in the European Parliament. This resulted in high-level recognition of the risk the school is facing, diplomatic visits by the member states on the ground as well as media coverage.

In effect, ACT Alliance EU succeeded in alerting the officials to the rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground in Area C: numbers of demolitions of Palestinian structures have increased in 2020, reaching the highest number since 2016, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. ACT Alliance EU's work generated substantial engagement by Members of the European Parliament on this issue. The severity of the situation was also raised by the EU HR/VP Josep Borrell at the EP plenary in November.

We contributed to the ongoing policy debate regarding EU steps to prevent demolitions of EU-funded aid through sharing data and policy-relevant information with government officials and parliamentarians, both at EU and MS-level. In this context, ACT Alliance EU has been

working exceptionally well within MEWG as well as with the local partners on this issue.

Together with Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE), we issued a joint statement concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and its humanitarian impact in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We called on the EU and the member states to take steps to prevent a severe COVID-19 outbreak and mitigate its disastrous effects including urging the Israeli authorities to immediately halt demolitions and confiscations of Palestinian property and humanitarian aid.

Upholding international law in the face of formal annexation

Advocacy regarding Israeli plans to formally annex parts of the West Bank was a high priority for ACT Alliance EU this year.

Together with local partners and experts in the field we provided a number of briefings for EU officials to highlight IHL and IHRL implications of annexation on the ground, while highlighting the severity of current situation of de-facto annexation.

In February in the European Parliament's DROI committee, Breaking the Silence's co-founder Yehuda Shaul spoke about the human rights impact of formal annexation. Over 30 MEPs signed a letter to EU HR/VP Borrell in March 2020 warning against the US Peace for Prosperity plan as it departed from international law and greenlighted annexation. The letter called on the EU to take steps to prevent annexation.

In June, 1000 European parliamentarians signed a letter to European foreign ministers warning

against annexation and calling on the EU to ensure international law is upheld.

In response to formal annexation plans by the Israeli authorities, the EU and the member states have warned against formal annexation in high-level statements and discussed possible ways of reacting to such a move should it materialise. At the same time, it seems that the EU's considerations of any serious policy steps was limited at the time despite the gravity of the situation.

After the suspension of annexation in light of the normalisation deals of Israel with the UAE and Bahrain, our advocacy re-focused on bringing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict back on the EU's agenda. We highlighted the severity of developments on the ground, including unprecedented advancements of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Support for the International Criminal Court (ICC)

We worked to secure public support for the ICC and to encourage the EU's efforts to protect the Court from defamation and delegitimisation attacks.

Pressure on the court by Israeli as well as US officials came in the aftermath of the ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's announcement in December 2019 of an intention to open investigation into the situation in Palestine. While further steps were pending pre-trial chamber ruling on the Court's jurisdiction, this was a major step towards accountability.

ACT Alliance EU with local partners briefed officials on the developments regarding a potential investigation and the challenges for civil society working with the ICC in light of attacks on the Court. We also worked to secure EU public support for the ICC, including steps to protect it from attacks, via parliamentary questions and decision makers' statements.

While the attacks and pressure on the ICC – including the US decision to impose sanctions on the Court – were met with criticism by the EU and the member states, the lack of EU public support for potential investigation of the situation in Palestine was regrettable.

Middle East

2020 publications and external references

ACT Alliance EU and CIDSE statement on the COVID-19 crisis in OPT

<https://bit.ly/30YAtdC>

Parliamentary Questions in 6 MS + EP and Spain regarding Ras al Tin school at risk of demolition

<https://bit.ly/2P9PR7j>

Report on shrinking space for civil society in East Jerusalem

<https://bit.ly/31hzmZK>

Report on NGO delegitimisation

<https://bit.ly/3slo2r3>

Disinformation campaigns regarding EU funding for Palestinians

<https://bit.ly/3cjLnUE>

Debate in the European Parliament with HR/VP Josep Borrell, 24 November 2020

<https://bit.ly/310IC41>

Debate in the European Parliament with HR/VP Josep Borrell, 11 February 2020

<https://bit.ly/3eTs720>

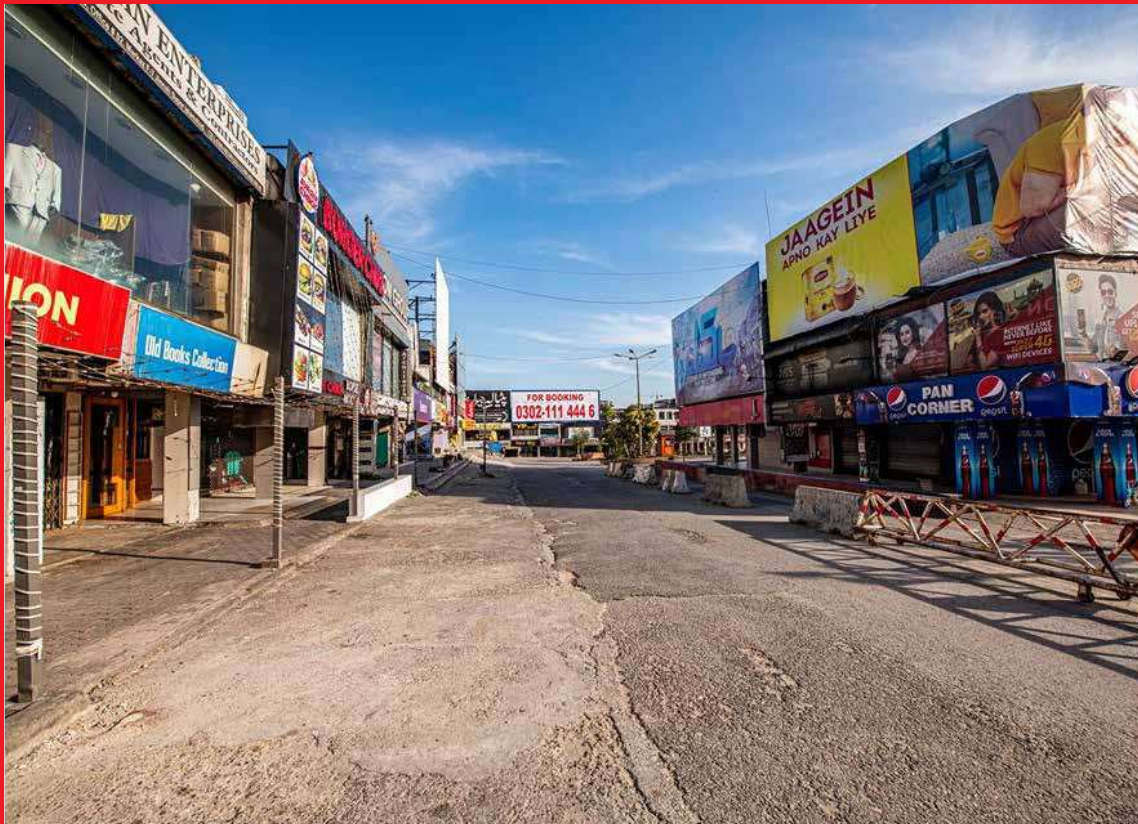
Israel West Bank annexation rejected by European MPs in letter - BBC News

<https://bbc.in/3r2PrNc>

German Presidency outlines priorities to EP committees

<https://bit.ly/38XiBak>

Migration and displacement



Credit: ACT Alliance, Pakistan

Key achievements

Our wording made it into the EP report on climate induced displacement.

We have been successful in reducing the scope of migration-related conditionality in the NDICI.

Our work on migration and displacement has been crucial to establish the trend of active advocacy on external dimensions of EU asylum and migration policy, including in the context of the EU-Africa partnership.

The first 9 months of 2020 can best be described by the strangely contradictory phrase of turbulently waiting. Initially we waited for the first version of the Joint Strategy for the EU and Africa to be released by and the EU-OACPS Agreement to be negotiated by the European Commission (EC). Next we waited for the new 7-year EU budget (MFF) and Corona Recovery Package to be proposed by the Commission and agreed by heads of state. Finally, we waited for the New Pact on Asylum and Migration to be published by the Commission. This was with the backdrop of the Von der Leyen Commission proving itself and establishing its credibility to the Member States (European Council) and the European Parliament (EP).

Climate-induced displacement

ACT Alliance EU was successful in contributing to the European Parliament's own initiative report on climate induced displacement. Our language made it to the draft of the responsible member and will be negotiated further. This is a crucial topic for the EU to start work on normative and concrete actions. The EP will adopt the report soon, hopefully marking the beginning of the EU's journey towards principled action on climate induced displacement.

EU-Africa cooperation on migration

We were active in advocating for an evidence- and rights-based, sustainable migration policy chapter in the EU-OACPS Agreement as well as an implementable, fair and just migration chapter for the EU-AU Strategy.



Credit: ACT Alliance, COVID Response, sensitising IDPs

To garner support, we held multiple meetings amongst civil society as well as with policy makers to bring evidence into the conversation and strengthen the human rights basis of the documents. Some of our wording made it into the EU-ACP political deal reached in December. We have been successful in ensuring that our position is well known around policy makers and civil society but the deal is not balanced enough to secure the interest of the ACP states and the rights of migrants. A close monitoring of its implementation will be required.

Migration and the NDICI

ACT Alliance EU, together with colleagues from other CONCORD members and other CSOs continued to push for a migration definition and spending target in the NDICI that will allow EU development policy on migration to be implemented in line with the SDGs instead of a project supporting externalisation. # i s work resulted in close and trusting cooperation with EP rapporteurs and like-minded colleagues from some permanent representations. With the support of the EP rapporteurs, we hoped that by the end of 2020, we would have a new EU development instrument without migration control conditionality. In November,

we sent a letter to all negotiators from the 3 EU institutions to urge them to reject any migration-related conditionality. The political deal reached in December limits conditionality to the resources dedicated to migration related actions (10% of the total budget) but still needs to be clearly established in the final text.

The New Pact on Asylum and Migration

The most controversial piece of work in 2020 was related to the so-called *New Pact on Asylum and Migration*. This is a complete reform of the EU's asylum and migration system, the first draft of which was released on 23 September. Despite normal information sharing among the Institutions and CSOs, the EC kept this process very closely guarded and made sure not only CSOs, but also the European Parliament did not have early access to the content of the Pact. This made it difficult for organisations to contribute to the development of ideas and the phrasing of

the proposals. However, ACT Alliance EU was able to work with members and civil society in key member states, advocating on the basis of trustworthy information from the institutions, to keep the proposal in line with human rights and primary EU law as well as existing best practice on protecting third country nationals. It will take years to negotiate a new set of policies and in that time, civil society must keep the pressure on the co-legislators not to lower protection standards, while ensuring the implementation of binding standards is expected by the Commission.

ACT Alliance EU's work on migration and displacement has been crucial to establish the trend of active advocacy on external dimensions of EU asylum and migration policy. This aspect of the EU's policy making has only recently evolved and in response civil society had to find a way to bring together home affairs and interior focused NGOs with development actors. This partnering has resulted in the topic of migration and displacement being centred in many CSOs advocacy related work.

Migration and displacement

2020 publications and external references

Migration and Displacement Chapter of the DPP paper 'Recommendations for a people-centred and transformative EU-Africa strategy'

<https://bit.ly/2ONNd7j>

2020 finances

Membership contributions are our main source of income. We are most grateful to all our members for their continued financial support which is both generous and sustained.

e 2020 accounts were audited by DGST and partners, Reviseurs d'entreprise of Brussels, Belgium.

	2020 €	2019 €
Income		
Member contributions	780 258	837 806
Other income	15 300	7 200
Total income	<u>795 558</u>	<u>845 006</u>
Expenses		
Human resources	595 622	598 433
Office costs	75 010	81 508
Communications	8 693	5 740
Travel & meetings costs	19 113	10 842
Advocacy activities	13 508	10 842
Administrative & other costs	28 104	27 684
Total expenses	<u>740 050</u>	<u>758 150</u>
Net surplus/(loss) for the year	55 508	86 856
Reserves at 1 January	419 513	332 657
Reserves at 31 December	<u>475 021</u>	<u>419 513</u>

Board, secretariat and advisory groups

Board and general assembly

Board membership throughout 2020

Bread for the World represented by Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, Chair

Diakonie ACT Austria represented by Michael Bubik, Treasurer

Bread for All represented by Bernard DuPasquier, member

Finn Church Aid represented by Katri Suomi, member

ACT Alliance represented by #orsten Göbel, observer

Membership changes

ICCO resigned from membership with effect from January 2021.

Observers

Permanent observer organisations to ACT Alliance EU are the **World Council of Churches**, the **Lutheran World Federation**, and the **ACT Alliance**.

GA met online in May 2020. An online Extraordinary GA was held at the end of September to approve the 2021 budget.

Advisory groups

An online CEO member's meeting was held in early September.

Policy and Advocacy Group (PAG) met online in March 2020 and October 2020

In October Miges Baumann (BfA) stood down as co-chair and Dennis Kjeldsen (DCA) agreed to continue as sole chair until a co-chair appointment could be made in 2021.

Secretariat and staff

At the end of 2020, the secretariat was composed of the following staff:

Floris Faber Act Alliance EU Representative

Susie Wilkinson Office Manager

Karine Sohet Senior Policy Officer, EU Development Policy & Practice

Ruth Watson Policy Officer, EU Humanitarian Policy & Practice

Karin Ulmer Senior Policy Officer, Food Security

Alexandra Gerasimčiková Adviser, Middle East

Rebecca Venuto Research Intern, EU Development Policy & Practice



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