

Development and Evangelism Policy

1. Policy Description

The policy of Mukti Australia Inc. (hereafter MA) on Development and Evangelism defines our understanding of the distinction between evangelism and development, and provides direction for identifying suitable activities for funding and the direction of projects and programs.

2. Context

MA is a Christian organisation which seeks to further the work in India of its partners, Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission (hereafter PRMM), and Wings of Hope, Sri Lanka (hereafter WoH). Many of our staff and volunteers are involved in the work of MA as an expression of their faith addressing the quality of life of people living in extreme poverty. There is a tendency in developed countries to regard religious beliefs as largely irrelevant to the development process, but for many developing countries such as India, religious beliefs are completely interwoven with daily life, and therefore with the process of development.

Whilst the work of MA is motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, our main purpose and objective is to relieve the suffering of the poor, irrespective of nationality, race, gender, religion, political persuasion or age. MA does not fund evangelism with funds designated for development activities, and makes a clear distinction between development and evangelism. Evangelism is defined by the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme as follows:

“Evangelism (also called proselytism and missionary work) is the practice of attempting to convert people to another religion or faith. Though the words are of Christian origin they can also refer to other religions' attempts to convert people to their religion or faith. Evangelistic activities may discriminate on the basis of belonging to a particular group or aim to persuade or develop religious beliefs and faith practices among project beneficiaries. Tax deductible funds cannot be used for evangelistic purposes or for missionary activities.”¹

¹ Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - *Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme: Guidelines for obtaining tax deductibility*, Jan 2014, accessed May 2014 from http://www.usaid.gov.au/ngos/pdfs/oagds_guidelines.pdf, p.10

3. Mukti's Response

Mixing evangelism (as defined by the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Gift Deduction Scheme) and development may result in conditions or obligations being imposed on individuals, families or communities wishing to become involved in the work of Mukti and its partners, Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission in India, and Wings of Hope in Sri Lanka. It is for this reason that we do not allow funds designated for development to be used in evangelism activities. Mukti does not condone nor support the use of humanitarian and development assistance as a means to convert the recipient from their chosen faith to that of the giver.

4. Implications for Practice

Mukti will provide funds donated and designated for development assistance to PRMM in India, and WoH in Sri Lanka, to be used solely for the purpose of development in a non-discriminatory basis. Adherence to religious beliefs or religious conversion will not constitute a condition of participation in development programs and projects funded in whole or in part by development funds provided by MA. MA development funding will be used on the basis of need, irrespective of nationality, race, gender, religion, political persuasion or age of the recipients.

MA's partner in India, PRMM, and WOH in Sri Lanka may be involved in limited church activities as part of their overall program of holistic development, and while MA supports a holistic approach to development, no tax deductible funds will be used for these activities.