

Action for change

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ActionAid UK strategy  
2012-2017



The ActionAid-supported Makhnda under-17 girls' football team celebrates a winning goal in Khubvi village, South Africa.

PHOTO: Zute & Demelza Lightfoot/ActionAid

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**“Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. And overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life... Do not look the other way; do not hesitate. Recognise that the world is hungry for action, not words. Act with courage and vision.”**

Nelson Mandela

**At the time of writing this strategy, justice still eludes us and action remains a global necessity.**

- ▶ One billion people are going to bed hungry every night, two thirds of them women.
- ▶ In Kenya mothers are binding their stomachs to stave off hunger so they can feed their children and husbands first.
- ▶ Sixty-seven million children are out of school, and across the world girls are still considered less worthy of education than boys.
- ▶ Women are facing violence every day and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, honour killings and sex-selective abortion are still commonplace in countries where we work.

**But progress is constantly being made.**

## Introduction

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Every day the work we carry out in the UK and across the world is helping poor people claim their rights and transform their lives.



Sponsored child Elian Eugenio (left) with his mother Margarita and five-year-old brother Mayco in the village of Imperial Limon, Guatemala. Margarita is a member of her local ActionAid-supported women's group.

PHOTO: Greg Funnell/ActionAid

ActionAid's child sponsorship programmes are helping communities defend themselves against hunger, and our research and lobbying helped deliver increased investment in small-scale farming. During the last decade, the number of children out of school has fallen by almost 50 million and with our partners, allies and supporters, ActionAid has helped make that happen. Every day the work we carry out in the UK and across the world is helping poor people claim their rights and transform their lives.

This is just a snapshot of what ActionAid has achieved over the last 40 years. From small beginnings as a UK child sponsorship charity, in 2012 we have international standing as an organisation with an annual income of nearly £200 million, working in 43 countries, reaching thousands of communities and, most importantly, making a real difference to the lives of millions of the poorest people.

**Much has been achieved in the last six years;**

- ▶ **£400 million was raised in total, including £168 million through child sponsorship and £48 million for emergencies such as the Indian Ocean tsunami and east Africa food crisis**
- ▶ **our campaigning contributed to greater oversight of UK supermarket practices in poor countries and ensured tax dodging was seen as a block to development**
- ▶ **the number of people in the UK who know who we are nearly doubled**
- ▶ **we are a founder member of the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) an international coalition of NGOs, Teacher Unions and campaigners against child slavery set up in 2000. Over the past decade millions of teachers, parents and young people have helped convince the UK government to become a leading international donor on education.**

The most significant change in our history came in 2004, when we became the first UK international development organisation to move our base from London to a developing country – in our case South Africa. A new federation was formed, with greater power given to each country office.

This way we were able to practice what we preach – creating greater understanding of the realities of poverty and enabling poor countries to have more control over their own decision-making. This visionary move also released a new energy – enabling tremendous growth and new thinking across ActionAid, which ensures we are equipped to respond to the world around us rather than becoming stuck in one which no longer exists. With this strategy we enter a new phase. Now is the time to make that huge change really count.

*Action for change* exists to deliver on the promises made in ActionAid's international strategy, *People's action to end poverty*, and gives a clear sense of the role of ActionAid UK and UK citizens in improving the lives of the world's poorest people. They have both been developed at a time of unprecedented change – against the backdrop of the world financial crisis and the Arab spring. These two seminal events teach us many lessons – the interconnectedness of the world, the power of people's movements, the rapid change that new technology can bring and the continuing injustice, unequal power and grinding poverty for far too many people at a time of unprecedented global wealth.

The way we have developed our own international organisation means we are well placed to respond to this new environment. And as we face the challenges and opportunities of the next six years we will not lose sight of our ultimate goal – to use all our strengths and learnings from the last 40 years to bring an end to poverty, the biggest international - and preventable - scandal of our time. ActionAid is ready but it will require us to build, focus and innovate. Even greater attention to impact and cost consciousness will be evident in all our work, in the knowledge that every penny we spend is donated by our supporters to benefit poor people.

The process of creating this UK strategy included staff and many external stakeholders. It has allowed us to examine the external and internal environment we operate in, what we have learnt and our distinctiveness and role.

In the UK, the strategy itself will help us take the right steps to ensure millions more lives will be improved and the groundwork is laid for more systemic change. And knowing that change is made by people for people, our hope for the future is based on the successes we have realised and the resilient and tireless spirit of the people ActionAid works with around the world, including our committed and talented staff, volunteers and supporters. Together we have created this strategy, and only together can we deliver it.

## 50 million

The number of children out of school has fallen by almost 50 million in the last ten years – and ActionAid, with our partners, allies and supporters has helped make that happen.

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## Learning from around the world

All around the world people want to be in charge of their destiny, and they have the power and perseverance to make that a reality.



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Education is key to escaping poverty. The longer children such as 10-year-old Eria from Nyamurimirwa, Rwanda (left) and his classmates can stay in school, the better their chances in later life will be.

PHOTO: Greg Funnell/ActionAid

Forty years of listening to poor people, gaining experience and expertise and being responsive to the external environment has taught us that new models of aid and development are necessary to achieve the transformation we strive for.

What is needed is aid and development that builds strong local ownership and participation, and alternative revenue streams that will allow poor countries to finance their own development.

All around the world people want to be in charge of their destiny, and they have the power and perseverance to make that a reality. Even in countries of greatest oppression and conflict, when women, men and children are empowered to claim their rights, their immediate wellbeing and longer term prospects are improved.

We have seen that unleashing the power of people in poor countries to bring about change in their own lives is the most effective and sustainable way of delivering development. Add to that the power of rich and poor people acting together in global solidarity and it can become a force impossible to ignore.

As a global federation, rooted in and accountable to communities worldwide, we are well placed to respond to this new reality. ActionAid UK has an essential role in helping strengthen the whole ActionAid movement: informing, guiding, supporting and, at times, taking the lead. And we know that our local partners and other members of the ActionAid federation will in turn strengthen and inform us.

## ActionAid in Orissa

An example of ActionAid's distinct approach is in Orissa, India, where after six years of joint campaigning by the Kondh community, ActionAid India and ActionAid UK, the Indian government withdrew permission for UK-based company Vedanta to mine on sacred tribal land.

The Kondh people led the fight and confronted the company, ActionAid India gave legal support, lobbied, documented abuses and helped them mobilise, and ActionAid UK created public pressure through media exposure and lobbying of UK shareholders and MPs. Two major investors withdrew but Vedanta continues to fight back.



Girls from the Kondh tribal group during their annual worship of sacred land that Vedanta wants to build on.

PHOTO: Sanjit Das/ActionAid



Campaigners Siteram Kulisika (left) and Bratindi Jena came to London to protest against Vedanta at their AGM.

PHOTO: Aubrey Wade/ActionAid

## transform

New models of aid and development are necessary to achieve the transformation for which we strive.

## Learning in the UK

We can best contribute to the global mission by raising money and by taking action in the UK to address the international causes of poverty.



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Campaigners in London make their voices heard as part of our tax justice campaign.

PHOTO: Aubrey Wade/ActionAid



An analysis of the economic, political and social context in which we operate in the UK has given us stark warning of the need to respond rapidly to many challenges, most notably the on-going effects of the global economic downturn. As we face prolonged economic stagnation and rising unemployment, many of our supporters are anxious for the future and a strategy is needed which responds to that. At the same time, increased consumer expectation and decreased support for old models of aid and development add to the challenges we face. However, our research has demonstrated we have huge strengths to draw on as we take the opportunities presented by our experience of child sponsorship, and our alternative proposals for development.

**To learn from the last six years we will:**

**► Join up**

In the UK we can best contribute to the global mission by raising money to fund work at community and national level, and by taking action in the UK to address the international causes of poverty. That way we will place power in the hands of poor people, while recognising our own role in reforming the structures and systems that keep them poor. Through linking our work at individual, community, national and international level ActionAid can create an unbreakable chain that ties us together and strengthens our legitimacy and effectiveness. It requires us to root all our work in our country programmes, it gives us a unique strength and drives our objectives and ways of working. It also requires us to talk to our audiences about the issues that ActionAid is working on at community level, especially education and equal rights for women.

To help create this chain we need to work with others to build an effective global movement of people taking action to combat poverty and injustice. At a time when support for aid is falling, and public demand for accountability is increasing, ActionAid must increase its supporter base by building a foundation of understanding, recognition and trust, and by specifically motivating people to donate and campaign. Our supporter experience must inspire them to do more, by understanding them and offering them a variety of things to do. We will respond to changes in people's expectations around giving, campaigning and participation, and find appropriate ways of building people-to-people connections.

**► Focus our messages**

We have recognised the value of joining up our work internationally and communicating the power and impact that has on the lives of poor people. We have learnt that recruiting financial and campaigning supporters requires a specific and focused approach and new financial supporters generally respond to the needs of those living in extreme poverty.

We will make sure that the public understands our messages. We will respect both the people we represent in our communication and the needs of those to whom we are talking. We know that the next few years will be economically tough, so it is vital that we understand, engage and motivate different groups of potential supporters so they recognise, join and stay with us. At the same time we will enable our existing supporters to better understand the causes as well as the consequences of poverty and motivate them to do more with us. With more focus on the purpose of each communication it will be possible to both achieve our income and change objectives while raising our profile.

To assist us we have taken steps to create a clearer identity for ActionAid in the UK, one that is true to what we do and how we work and allows us to better differentiate ourselves in a national context where thousands of charities and millions of marketing messages vie for our attention.

**► Demonstrate value for money and impact**

This will be an area of increased focus, as careful stewardship over our resources is vital both morally and practically. We know that our supporters donate money in order to improve poor people's lives, so we must increase our effectiveness and accountability. This means an increased emphasis on demonstrating our impact, building a strong culture of cost consciousness, becoming more nimble and ready to take opportunities and adapt at short notice.

**► Go digital**

We have learnt that we must argue our case in a world where people expect to communicate, donate, purchase and campaign in a different, more participatory way. This is in line with our mission and requires us to communicate and behave in an inclusive, non-elitist way and harness the power of mobile and social networking to link people together.

## How ActionAid makes change happen

The approach we take is to work at local, national and international level so that the world's poorest people can be self-reliant, more resilient and in charge of their own destiny.



Hafeza Khatun facilitates a *Reflect* adult education circle in Chandpur, Bangladesh. This group is called, 'nari akota' which means 'women united'.

PHOTO: G.M.B. Akash/Panos/ActionAid

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Global poverty is a violation of human rights made possible by the unequal power held by rich and poor people.

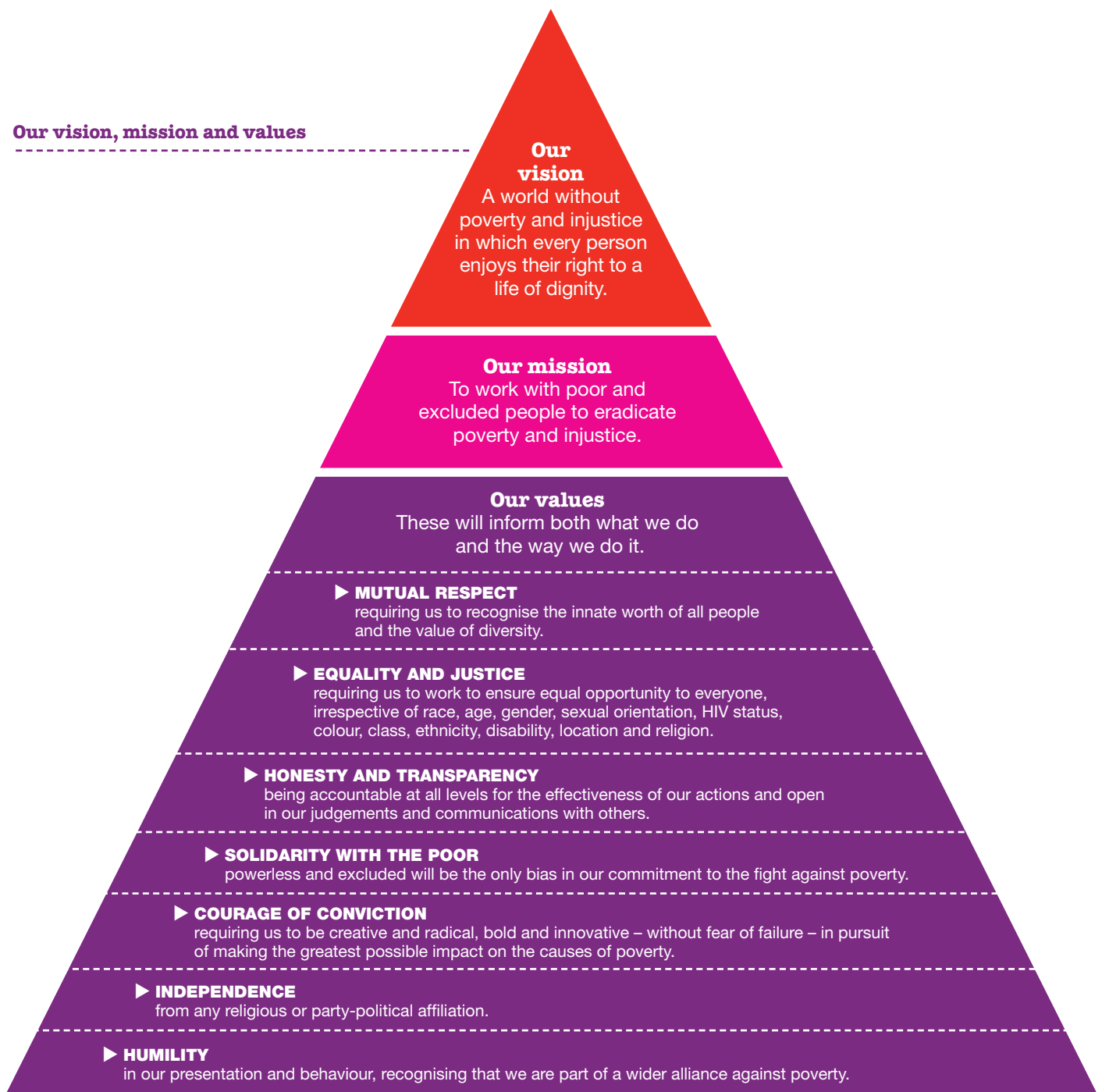
We strive to ensure our thinking and action is joined up; that our local level work links to our national and international campaigns, and our influencing and campaigning creates tangible improvements for poor children and their communities.

**Our vision** is a world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity.

**Our mission** is to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.

**An end to poverty and injustice can be achieved through purposeful individual and collective action, led by the active agency of people living in poverty and supported by solidarity, credible rights-based alternatives and campaigns that address the structural causes and consequences of poverty.**

**Our vision, mission and values**



**It follows therefore that we work in a particular way:**

**► The human rights-based approach**

We enable poor people to improve their own lives by harnessing the power they have, as individuals and as part of a community, to claim their rights and access the services to which they are entitled.

Such an approach empowers passive ‘beneficiaries’ to become legitimate ‘rights holders’. It informs our identity and the way we work; enabling the most excluded groups to have a greater say; increasing our accountability to rights holders; ensuring developing countries have enough revenue to deliver their own public services and ensuring that globally ActionAid itself creates more equal management and governance structures.

It also informs our response to conflicts and disasters – we take immediate action but also try to ensure those people who are affected are more able to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to conflict and disaster.

**In the UK,** we deliver the human rights-based approach by empowering UK citizens to take action against poverty. We do so by raising their knowledge and understanding of the real causes and effects of poverty and injustice, and by offering ways to give money, time and their voice.

We leverage the public pressure we generate ourselves and with others to help create real change to policies and practices. And we build solidarity in order to unleash the power of people from all sectors of society to make change happen together.

**► Equal rights for women**

We promote women’s rights across all our work because it is both a matter of justice, and because we have learnt that the underlying causes of poverty are linked to the denial of women’s rights. We support women to be leaders and agents of change from community level to the international stage, knowing that the best way to end poverty is to help them unleash their potential.

**In the UK,** as well as raising money to be spent on programme and campaigning work to promote equal rights for women, we contribute through our policy work, building knowledge and understanding and mobilising our supporters in solidarity with women around the world.

**Nurun Nahar’s story**



PHOTO: Nicolas Axelrod/ActionAid

When Nurun Nahar was 15 she rejected a boy’s advances and he threw acid in her face. “I looked at myself and fainted,” she said. As she endured months of surgery she became determined to help the thousands of other women attacked across Bangladesh and founded the Acid Survivors Network, supported by ActionAid.

She and other survivors work to change attitudes, give legal advice and tighten the law. They marched to demand an end to violence against women on the centenary of International Women’s Day.

**“My mission is that across Bangladesh there will be no more acid attacks.”**

► **Working with children**

Violations of human rights cause particular suffering amongst children, and limit the possibility of change in future generations. We work with children in their communities to help them reach their potential, and child sponsorship allows them to share the improvements they see in their communities with adults and other children around the world.

**In the UK,** child sponsorship allows children in poor communities to be active in making change happen by connecting them directly with financial supporters. Child sponsorship is much more than a way of raising money. It ensures we stay in communities for the long-term and are accountable for the changes poor people are able to make to their lives. It is core to our mission. To help change attitudes to aid and development in the UK, and develop more aware global citizens in the future, we will also continue our important work raising awareness of global poverty and human rights with school children and campaigning for quality education for all.

► **Working with young people**

Globally we will work more with young people as they face many serious human rights violations and have a major role in shaping a more democratic, equitable and sustainable world. We recognise that they can create dynamic movements of change and can be effective leaders in their own right.

**In the UK,** we see young people predominantly as part of our campaigning force and we believe their energy and creativity can have a multiplying effect. Older teenagers and young adults represent the next generation of ActionAid supporters and future decision makers. The way we communicate with them has the potential to positively impact on all our communications.

► **Partnership and alliances**

Our work globally has been characterised by our joint working with community-based organisations and social movements; this brings rootedness, legitimacy and collective power.

**In the UK,** we strongly believe in working in many different alliances including with other NGOs, think tanks, women’s groups and other networks. In the future we will seek to build links with other unexpected allies who can strengthen our ability to make change happen together.

**Eshwaramma Nrayanappa’s story**



PHOTO: ActionAid

Child sponsorship not only funds development and advocacy, it enables sponsored children and their communities to take control of their lives.

Sponsored child Eshwaramma Nrayanappa from India is a quadriplegic who fought exclusion, went to school and became a global campaigner on the rights of children with disabilities. Having written her homework holding her pen in her mouth, she convinced parents, teachers and government ministers that all disabled children in India deserve education and equal opportunities.

**“I like to help people and that makes me happy. I will continue to help people in the future.”**

► **Long-lasting solutions**

Globally and in the UK we increasingly strive to find new solutions to the problem of global poverty. We commit to using the experience and legitimacy of our grassroots work as well as the knowledge and analysis of our research to create alternatives that are both practical and transformative.

We aim to make them a reality through critical engagement with local and national governments, international governmental bodies and the private sector – engaging constructively where we should and confronting where we must.

## Our UK role and distinctiveness

We have one overarching message: join ActionAid and make the biggest possible difference.



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www.actionaid.org.uk

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In the UK we have a major role to play in fighting for long-term change, such as at this rally that demanded our government put people first.

PHOTO: Kristian Buus/ActionAid

Embedded in our name and in our theory of change is the fact that ActionAid is all about action. To help achieve our mission in the UK we will:

- ▶ **fund action to reduce poverty in the communities and countries where we work**
- ▶ **take action in the UK for long-term change**
- ▶ **act in solidarity with people fighting poverty and injustice in poor countries**
- ▶ **support ActionAid International.**

In order to make this happen we must react to the external environment, assimilate what we have learnt, respond to our theory of change and our values, and reflect our unique way of working internationally.

Our distinctive identity is based on the unique way in which we link our child sponsorship, our wider programme work and our national and international campaigning to create a powerful force for change that is both practical and transformative, rooted and internationally relevant. It shows how we are more effective at fighting poverty as the injustices that create it are to be found at community, national and international level. It remains true to who we really are, whilst requiring us to explain more clearly how our wider work impacts on children and their families. We also know that change is made by people for people. So, central to our identity are people. The face of ActionAid is a human face, and the voice of ActionAid is the voice of someone living in poverty.

**There are three key asks**

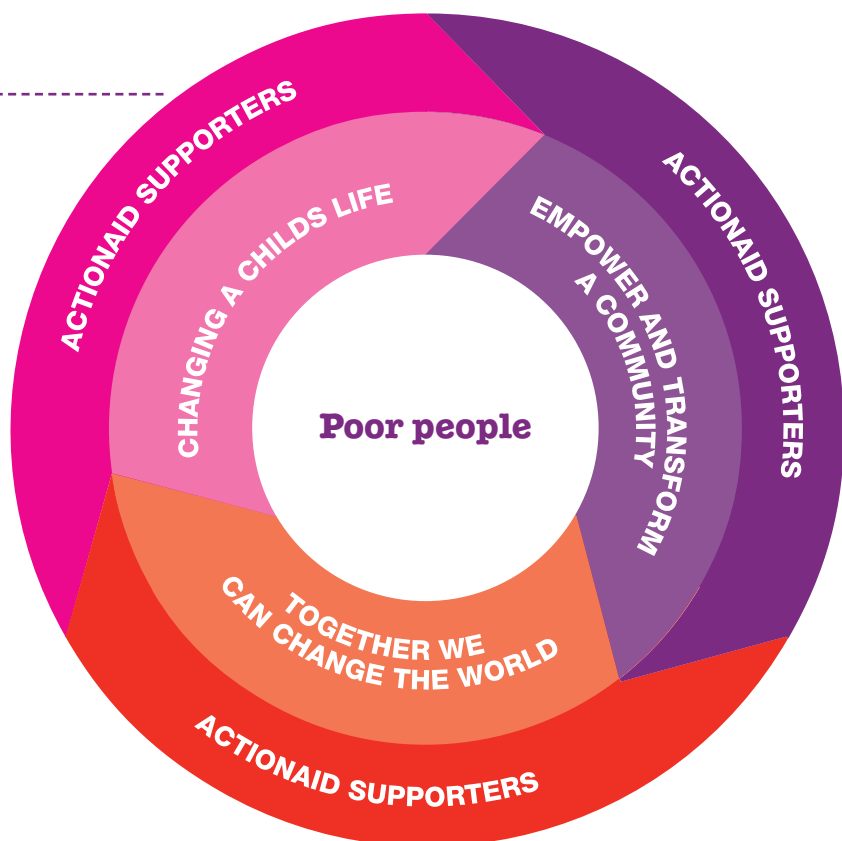
- Sponsor a child
- Support a community
- Campaign for a poverty-free world

Together they make one overarching message: join ActionAid and make the biggest possible difference.

We offer ActionAid child sponsors the opportunity not only to change a child’s world, but also to change the world in which children grow up. Our campaigners are able not only to be part of campaigns that change the world for the next generation but see the change they have made to poor people’s lives. Our major donors and institutional funders can see how we have impact at community, national and international level. And our young supporters will feel that ActionAid is both exciting and relevant to them.

We will take child sponsors and other donors on a meaningful journey, explaining the wide and deep impact their donation has and inspiring them to give or do more; convince our campaigners to increase their involvement because of the practical impact they see and the power of the human story; allow poor children and adults to speak for themselves; show how we unleash the power of people to improve their lives and become more self reliant, and communicate their experiences in a way that is immediate and relevant. And we will play our part in changing attitudes to poverty amongst supporters, schools, influencers and decision makers with whom we communicate.

It is crucial in the coming years of increased competition and, for many, decreased wealth that we harness the unique power of what we do and how we do it to attract individuals, groups, companies and institutions to ActionAid. We will not over rely on child sponsorship and will find new and innovative sources of funds to ensure long term income growth to fund action to reduce poverty and have real impact on poor people’s lives.



## What we will do

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Farhana Nahid Audry, who is an outreach worker with our *Happy homes* project in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with some of the former street children who now have shelter and a education.

PHOTO: Nicolas Axlerod/ActionAid



The purpose of everything we do in the UK is to achieve the following international objectives. They are the change we want to see in the world. We will map our UK plans against these five objectives and 10 ActionAid International key change promises:

- ▶ **promote sustainable agriculture and control over natural resources for people living in poverty**
- ▶ **advance the political influence of people living in poverty to hold governments and corporates accountable**
- ▶ **improve the quality of public education for all children and support young people to become drivers of change for poverty-free planet**
- ▶ **build the resilience of people living in poverty to conflicts and disasters, and respond to disasters with people-centred rights-based alternatives**
- ▶ **ensure that women and girls can break the cycle of poverty and violence, build economic alternatives and claim control over their bodies.**

In the UK we will create change through three prime objectives. We must make sure we are financially secure to deliver on our ambitious agenda, so this must remain our primary focus and objective.

Our theory of change and our comprehensive approach requires us to deliver against all our objectives and hold them in overall balance. This will require management judgement, and at different times different objectives will have priority so that, over the life of the strategy, all are met.

## Objective 1

**We will deliver increased, sustainable, flexible and diverse income**

Increasing ActionAid’s income presents a range of challenges and opportunities. The economic climate has never been more hostile to non-profit organisations. However, the commitment of many supporters over the last few years is testament to the value our work represents, and gives us confidence that we can navigate a path of growth over the next six years despite the climate.

The supporter base of ActionAid has shrunk in recent years. We will now seek to grow that base of support and income by both:

- ▶ **increasing our commitment to child sponsorship as a key way to build a relationship with ActionAid’s work**
- ▶ **diversifying and increasing our annual income from other fundraising products and sources that respond to the economic climate and changing areas of potential.**

Our analysis indicates we have potential to increase income significantly from the Department for International Development, high-value donors, legacies and emergencies, all of which have grown over the last strategy period, but indications are further growth is possible.

As we move ahead we will continue to seek ways to improve the alignment of our messages through development of the brand. However we also recognise that in the cluttered UK marketplace very targeted messaging is essential to both meet our fundraising objectives and ensure the cost effectiveness of our communications. As supporters get to know the organisation, its work and the enormous challenges and complex causes of poverty, it is possible to evolve the nature of our communication with them.

### Our three prime objectives

# 1

**DELIVER INCREASED, SUSTAINABLE, FLEXIBLE AND DIVERSE INCOME**

# 2

**TAKE ACTION FOR LONG-TERM CHANGE**

# 3

**MAKE OURSELVES STRONGER GLOBALLY**

To deliver increased, sustainable, flexible and diverse income over the next six years, objectives are:

► **Income growth**

We will seek to increase our total income to £75 million per annum by 2017 – of which at least 40% will be unrestricted. We are aiming for steady growth and the majority of income growth is likely to come from institutional and high-value donors.

► **Acquisition of new supporters to ensure a sustainable base of support**

Our highest priority is to increase our base of financial supporters by more than 20% to at least 180,000 people giving a committed gift to support ActionAid’s mission.

We will also expand our offer to respond to the economic environment and changing expectations to enable people to give in ways that suit their situations, including increasing the income we receive through both regular giving supporters and donations.



Clarissa Irakcze, 11, from Burundi shows us a postcard from her sponsor in the UK.

PHOTO: Sarah Elliott/ActionAid

Child sponsorship will continue to be our core fundraising product as we seek to increase the number of sponsors and value of income raised.

► **Diversify income through increased institutional income & influence**

We expect the greatest income growth to be through our high-value donors.

We will seek to more than double income from the Department for International Development during this strategy as its budget increases significantly. We believe ActionAid is an organisation that can support the impactful spend of this money and as such we will seek to enhance our relationship as a key humanitarian and development partner.

We will seek to more than triple our multi-year, high-value financial partnerships with individuals, trusts and businesses giving over £25k. Despite the recession there are individuals and organisations that continue to have the ability to contribute more to the fight against poverty.

► **Income flexibility and other priorities**

Legacy promotion will be prioritised in our aim to increase long-term net unrestricted income in a 30% increase in legacy income by 2017.

We will seek to increase the value of our supporter base by 10% and ensure the flexibility to generate 40% unrestricted income. We will seek to engage existing and new supporters to go on a journey with us that is long-term and allows them to give and engage at a level that suits their situation and supports our income growth and mission. Over time it is our ambition that supporters will maximise their financial support and are able to understand the wider drivers of poverty.

We will seek to ensure our model of child sponsorship maximises income flexibility whilst ensuring accountability to supporters and children for how income is spent.

As emergencies happen with increased frequency we will ensure we are set up to take immediate action to raise funds and attract new supporters through communicating our long-term success in building resilience to disasters and conflicts.

To protect the future sustainability of our income we will actively seek to be an organisation that embraces fundraising as a key aspect of our mission. Working together, staff, trustees and volunteers will establish a culture and operation that places giving at the heart of change.

## Objective 2

### We will take action for long-term change

The action we take over the next six years will be driven by the international strategy, and guided by the political and influencing climate in which we operate. Whilst we acknowledge that the economic and political power exercised by the UK and Europe is likely to diminish over the coming years, our government remains a major global influencer and decision maker and there are opportunities for achieving significant change in the UK and in close partnership with a small number of ActionAid country programmes. There are some UK companies that are world leaders in making corporate responsibility their core business, as well as those whose practices and policies exacerbate poverty and injustice in the areas where they operate.

We will influence the powerful and pursue a portfolio of different campaigns and policy advocacy that aims to inspire and engage supporters, potential supporters, influencers and organisations, and achieve tangible and transformative change to the lives of people living with poverty and injustice. We will work with organisations around the world to change UK and global policies and business practices that create inequality and poverty. We will invest in creating alternatives and strive to move understanding amongst particular audiences of how to tackle global poverty beyond giving aid.

A variety of tools will be used, including research and analysis, lobbying, mobilising and engaging our supporters and potential supporters, harnessing the power of mass media and digital social networks, and working in coalition and partnership with other allies.

The priority issues we will focus on over the course of the strategy will be mapped out in more detail each year. We will regularly review how they resonate with changing contexts in the UK and their relevance to our national and international allies. Our three main priorities under this objective are as follows:

#### ► Advocate for improvements in sustainable agriculture and food security

Distortions in the global food system and climate change combine to increase the number of hungry people around the world. We will focus political attention on the immediate and deep causes of a crisis in the global food system that is spreading hunger, particularly amongst women and marginal farmers.

Specifically, we will bring to an end the European and UK targets on biofuels that are driving land grabs in many African countries, displacing farmers from their land and causing food price hikes in staple foods around the world.



Jane Chebut, 25, from West Pokot, Kenya, educates young girls about the dangers of FGM (female genital mutilation).

PHOTO: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures/ActionAid

Equity for women is a matter of justice and the most effective route to eradicating poverty.

#### ► Support women to claim control over their bodies and resources

There is an ever-widening backlash against women's rights resulting from the rise in religious fundamentalism and the economic crisis. We will raise awareness amongst supporters and potential supporters that equity for women is a matter of justice and the most effective route to eradicating poverty. We will ensure curbing violence against women and girls in developing countries will be a coherent UK foreign and development policy priority, resulting in increased protection for women and girls, especially in times of conflict and humanitarian emergencies. In addition, we will undertake activities that help to promote women's economic empowerment.

#### ► Strengthen government and corporate accountability

There is a unique opportunity to seek changes to unfair rules that deny developing countries their share in taxes. We will make tax justice a compelling and widely accepted issue of poverty reduction and development, working with southern governments and inter-governmental institutions to change tax haven secrecy rules and corporate tax reporting standards. We will show how current practice affects public services such as education, and connect the policy to people's lives. We will aim to make corporate tax dodging less attractive to institutional investors and investment managers by associating the practice with high levels of risk, and will encourage business leaders to become champions of responsible tax practice.

**Other issues we will work on include:**

**► Education for all**

We will continue to improve the quality of public education for all children, working in partnership with the Global Campaign for Education.

**► An alternative humanitarian agenda**

When we respond to emergencies, we will articulate our people-centred, human rights-based response, and promote our work on increasing local resilience and decreasing the impact of disasters. We will build support for women and youth leaders as key actors in conflict transformation and peace-building.

**► An alternative aid and development agenda**

We will seek to gain acceptance from the UK government that finding alternatives to aid, as well as delivering on their aid promises, is part of helping make poor countries self sufficient. At the same time we will try to move understanding of how to tackle global poverty beyond aid and service delivery, more widely, concentrating on audiences where we can have most effect: influencers, our supporters, and schoolchildren and their teachers. Recognising the challenge of shifting opinion in the general public, we attempt to do so only in partnership.

We will grow our overall power and influence, becoming better known to those we want to take notice of us, in particular opinion formers, influencers and decision-makers.



Residents of Philippeaux, Haiti, help clean up flood-prone areas as part of an ActionAid cash-for-work programme.

PHOTO: Charles Eckert/ActionAid

### **Objective 3**

#### **We will make ourselves stronger globally**

Reflecting the importance of the UK's role in supporting and strengthening the federation, we have set ourselves an explicit objective in this area. We recognise that without ActionAid International we cannot deliver our mission and we must fulfil our responsibilities as part of an international federation, strengthening it and contributing to the whole. We are proud of the role we have played in giving birth to ActionAid International but recognise that, whilst huge strides have been made in the last eight years, the federation is still in its infancy, and more effective ways of working need to be supported and embedded.

We will work with our colleagues from across the organisation in actively identifying how the UK can bring skills and resources to bear that broaden and deepen the impact we have on the lives of poor people.

We will clearly take a lead in a limited number of areas, through time-limited interventions and build the long-term capacity of Action Aid International and country programmes.

We will also work bilaterally with a limited number of country programmes where ActionAid UK can add most value. The bilateral relationships will allow us to seize opportunities where synergies arise, from connections with the UK public or decision makers, the ability to work together on relevant policy change in the UK, potential fundraising opportunities or anticipated mutual learning or capacity building.

We know it is crucial that we improve the federation's ability to demonstrate impact so that we attract funding, build trust and communicate the change we are making. We can also contribute strengths including campaigning, communications and leadership on emergencies to ensure that we take advantage of the fact that London is a key centre for global emergency response.

## **emergency**

Build our global emergency response and influence the growing debate on how best to build resilience of poor countries.

We will also learn from the diverse experience of other ActionAids, and work with them to create powerful stories about the difference we make to help inform and inspire our staff and supporters. We want to improve our digital communications but we cannot do this without engagement all around ActionAid – this is one example of our dependency on other parts of ActionAid International if we are to deliver our strategy in the UK.

On behalf of the global federation we will use our unique position in the UK and prioritise three areas of work:

- ▶ **take the lead on an internationally agreed priority campaign, ensuring our capacity and capability can be deployed for the benefit of the wider organisation**
- ▶ **build our global emergency response and influence the growing debate on how best to build resilience of poor countries. We will agree an approach that will ensure we raise more money for emergency response, work in new ways with ActionAid International, take leadership on agreed areas and use emergencies as an opportunity to raise profile and drive key campaign issues**
- ▶ **build and model a culture and way of working that is open to being strongly influenced by our work globally. We will use ActionAid International's experience and positioning to ground our work and build our profile in line with this.**

**“We will work with our colleagues across the organisation in actively identifying how the UK can bring skills and resources to bear that broaden and deepen the impact we have on the lives of poor people.”**

**In addition we will work with the global federation to:**

- ▶ **help build effective global governance, especially the international assembly, and complete the process of internationalisation by transferring remaining assets and country programmes from ActionAid UK to ActionAid International**
- ▶ **ensure we improve our ability to demonstrate results and positive impact so that we remain transparent and accountable to rights holders, to our supporters and to the federation**
- ▶ **support the ability of ActionAid International to manage for cost effectiveness and demonstrate value for money**
- ▶ **take the lead in co-ordinating agreed global communications initiatives and work with others to share and maximise communication resources, thus reducing duplication and pressure on programmes**
- ▶ **create linkages with countries to identify opportunities for global solidarity and enhancing our supporter journey**
- ▶ **share our specialist technical skill set and expertise in clearly defined areas, thus strengthening organisational capacity in countries and the secretariat so they can become self sufficient.**

## campaign

Take the lead on an internationally agreed priority campaign, ensuring our capacity and capability can be deployed for the benefit of the wider organisation.

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## Exploration

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We will continue to strive to find new avenues to successfully deliver the ActionAid UK mission.



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International Women's Day sees women in the UK and all over the world demanding their rights – as thousands of them did at this rally in Bhopal, India.

PHOTO: Srikanth Kolari/ActionAid

During the strategy period we will continue to strive to find new avenues to successfully deliver the ActionAid UK mission. If income and resources allow, over the strategy period we will explore the following potential areas of growth in income, influence and impact:

► **Brand building**

ActionAid has committed resource to this area but has never invested in advertising or coordinated brand-strengthening activities. During the last strategy period we had some success in raising our profile, but not enough of those who know us are choosing us. Consequently we have been unable to translate the increase in profile into increase in donations. We will analyse the reasons why, and explore how to more effectively invest in building recognition and trust in our target audiences and translating that into increased income and influence.

► **Identity**

To assist with our brand building, we will create and test how our newly articulated UK role and distinctiveness and the new international identity guidelines will work together and develop a UK identity framework that supports us in achieving our objectives whilst aligning with our values and approach.

**In the spirit of our values of honesty and transparency, our progress against these objectives will be published for all to see, and we will continually strive to improve ourselves and have the greatest impact possible on the lives of poor people.**

► **Corporate engagement**

This could potentially provide increased influence, reach and income. We will look to develop a corporate partner policy that clearly outlines the risks and benefits of engagement and a screening policy to provide robust decision-making regarding engagement in line with our values and mission.

► **Mergers and acquisitions**

This activity could provide an opportunity to achieve increased income, an increased database of supporters and increased sphere of influence. During the strategy period, ActionAid UK will explore this opportunity for growth further by establishing a selection of key criteria to assess appropriate organisations to ensure alignment with our mission which would complement ActionAid UK's strategic vision.

► **Diaspora communities**

Diaspora communities are a growing constituency in the UK, with increasing political influence and a strong voice on development issues. Developing closer partnerships in the UK could result in us reaching new audiences, increasing diversity and making us more representative of the communities in which we work. We may explore devising a strategy that would be mutually beneficial to diaspora communities and support the delivery of the mission.

## strive

During the strategy period we will continue to strive to find new avenues to successfully deliver the ActionAid UK mission.

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## Our drivers for success

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Connecting people in solidarity will be key to how we engage our supporters.

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Sponsored child Mukta, age nine, with her mother Shofikun in Sunamganj district, Bangladesh.

PHOTO: Nicolas Axelrod/ActionAid



**Our six drivers are based on what we have learnt**

- ▶ to create change, rich and poor people must come together
- ▶ to motivate people we need to show impact
- ▶ to be heard we need to be more externally focused
- ▶ to have more impact we need to work with each other
- ▶ to be truly effective we must be both sustainable and cost effective
- ▶ to be relevant to the modern world we must invest in appropriate technological infrastructure and digital tools.

**Driver 1**  
**Connecting people**

Our international theory of change and our UK experience tells us that people make change happen, for people.

In order to create the motivation and power necessary for change to happen we need to link those people together. To achieve this we will adhere to a way of communicating, which creates more powerful emotional, intellectual and practical connections between people here and in developing countries. We know that child sponsorship is one powerful way of achieving this – making long-term connections between people living very different lives who share a common cause. And research has indicated that our audiences are motivated to campaign by seeing both the negative effect of unequal global systems and practices on poor people’s lives, and the effect change can bring.

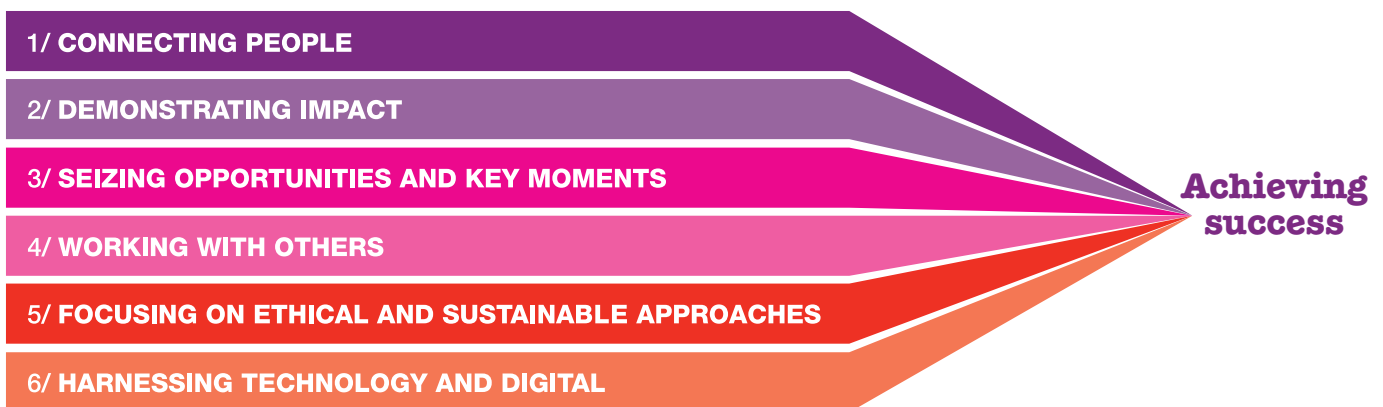
We also recognise that part of our role in the UK is to act in solidarity with people who are fighting poverty and injustice in poor countries. This will include sending messages of support, following their progress, and even being able to communicate directly with them, which in turn will improve our ability to generate interest in global poverty and get people involved in the UK. Crucially, it will also support poor people in their own struggle – helping unleash their power to act, rather than acting on their behalf.

Connecting people in solidarity will be key to how we engage our supporters, people from all parts of society united in a common goal of a poverty-free planet. We know they are our greatest assets, and we have an ambition to inform and excite them about the true causes and effects of global poverty, in order to encourage them to donate to our wider work and campaign for long-term change. An important way of achieving this is to help them experience the extraordinary bravery and power of those who are making change happen in their own communities and countries, often at great personal cost.

**together**

To create change, rich and poor people must come together.

**Our six drivers**



To achieve this we will ensure we consistently put the voice of poor people at the centre of our communications; gather impactful multimedia stories about the need for change and the impact we have; link directly with people and movements in countries where we work and create a richer online and offline experience that brings our issues alive.

We will also take steps to understand and engage our supporters and potential supporters better, be more responsive to their needs and explore how they may get others involved.

## Driver 2 Demonstrating impact

We believe that to be fully accountable to our supporters, to poor people, and also to the international federation, we need to improve how we demonstrate our impact and share the positive changes achieved through the funds we receive.

We will define the difference we want to achieve together with clear measures of success and use a rigorous evidence-based approach for all our activities so that we can measure our effectiveness in delivering this strategy.

We will communicate our success through the channels that best suit the needs of our supporters, and focus on the difference we have made. We will aim to produce timely, coordinated and inspiring communications, which will update supporters about the work we do, including our progress on campaigns, fundraising appeals and emergency appeals. We will share stories with supporters about how poor people have made a long-term difference to their lives with our support, as well as the systemic changes we have been able to help achieve together. We will also communicate clearly how communities have used funding from governments and other institutions, and illustrate the impact they have created.

Our ability to demonstrate impact will be improved by building our technical skills, developing more rigorous systems and processes, and deepening our culture of accountability. We will also make good use of data, surveys and case studies to help us understand who our supporters are, how to engage them and what their supporter journey looks like.

## impact

We will share stories with supporters about how poor people have made a long-term difference to their lives.

### Connecting people

**“The messages brought to us help us stand in solidarity as women of the world and women of Uganda,”** said Esther Arao. **“This will help us in fighting and demanding our rights.”**

We saw the value of global solidarity and person-to-person connection during our *Get lippy!* project, which on the centenary of International Women’s Day inspired 6,000 people in the UK to send their messages of support directly to women in developing countries.

More than 14,000 took part in total, raising awareness, engagement and action – including donations of £68,000 towards ActionAid projects globally – and giving strength to those at the forefront of the struggle.



PHOTO: ActionAid

### **Driver 3** Seizing opportunities and key moments

Based on our analysis of the external environment, we expect there to be an increasing number of political, economic and social upheavals, in addition to conflicts and natural disasters. Internationally we will look to harness these events so poor people can lead their own recovery and achieve a sustainably better position in the long-term. In the UK we will respond to them as opportunities to make change happen. We will also respond to requests to show solidarity with people fighting poverty and injustice in the countries where we work.

Other external events and media moments will also arise, and by responding to the external agenda we have the opportunity to build our brand, increase our influence and recruit supporters. We will develop and embed agile internal processes that help us to more effectively seize the opportunities whilst ensuring we remain focused on our core objectives and mission. Timely, evidence-based decision making, robust planning and effective risk management will remain key competencies for all our staff.

### **Driver 4** Working with others

We will place greater emphasis on working with others as we believe that through appropriate collaboration we will still be able to profile our work and also multiply our campaigns and ability to influence policy, gain skills and develop innovative ideas. Through working with others we will achieve deeper networks in the UK and have a programme of alliances that is essential for achieving change. Working with others is part of our DNA as an organisation and we are proud of excelling at working in partnership, at collaborating and providing local, national and international leadership.

We will provide a framework to identify which coalitions and partnerships would provide added value and help us achieve more than we could on our own. Criteria include whether the organisations have: similar values to us; skills capability and capacity that we can learn from; positive brand associations and a membership that corresponds to our pool of potential supporters; different demographics to ActionAid UK's own, and expertise on the issues that we campaign on.

## network

Through working with others we will achieve deeper networks in the UK and have a programme of alliances that is essential for achieving change.

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### **Driver 5** Focusing on ethical and sustainable approaches

As poor people disproportionately bear the burden of climate change and inappropriate corporate behaviour it is vital that our own ways of working do not exacerbate such impacts. We will therefore develop realistic and timely internal carbon targets and reduce our environmental impact through an effective monitoring and reduction programme. We will also ensure that ethical considerations are fully integrated into our procurement practices.

We will communicate with our supporters about our sustainable way of working and if appropriate we will promote behaviour change in schools, as they are an audience with whom we can have real impact.

### **Driver 6** Harnessing technology and digital

We believe that we can harness technology to bring about change in poor communities that geography and resources would otherwise prevent – and we have a track record of success. We will build on this and use well-designed, aligned and successfully implemented projects to harness technology to forge connections between UK supporters and staff and local partners across ActionAid country programmes. We will use technology to report on our impact in changing people's lives. We will continuously look for new technologies and digital trends that will help us deliver our objectives most effectively and enhance our ability to report on our impact in changing people's lives.

## technology

We believe we can harness technology to bring about change in poor communities that geography and resources would otherwise prevent.

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## How we will change ourselves

Our staff will drive the successful implementation of the strategy and achieve long-term positive change for poor people.

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ActionAid supporters join the Wave, the UK's largest ever demonstration to demand action on climate change.

PHOTO: Amy Scaife/ActionAid

We have a great foundation to work from: ActionAid UK is proud to be internationally focused, with an ethos that values diversity and embraces change in support of our mission. We operate in an open and transparent environment and are driven by our ambition and innovative ideas. We thrive on energy and work with vibrancy and commitment to advocate our cause. We exhibit collaborative working and are already ensuring that a result-orientated and cost-conscious attitude is at the heart of everything we do, enabling us to learn from our experiences.

The strategy development process provided in-depth knowledge of the organisation's strengths and development areas. In the new strategy period we will focus on continuing to develop our people and our knowledge, and improve internal systems and processes to further embed a culture of individual and organisational accountability. By concentrating on these specific areas our staff will drive the successful implementation of the strategy and achieve long-term positive change for poor people.

## People

### ► Leadership and employee engagement

Our leadership styles and organisational culture in the UK will meet the demands of the new strategy, providing clear strategic direction, defined organisational priorities, transparent decisions and effective performance management systems which will lead to increased organisational and employee accountability and engagement.

### ► Integrated and collaborative working

We will embed structures and processes and a way of working that proactively promotes collaborative working which is always aligned, and coordinated, and which allows us to integrate effectively when appropriate. We will ensure we respect and use each other's skills, in the knowledge that together we are stronger and will have greater effect.

We will build employee motivation and engagement and ensure that involvement in our fundraising, campaigns and engagement with supporters becomes a natural and important aspect of working for ActionAid.

By 2017 all employees will be an advocate of the ActionAid approach to working towards lasting solutions to poverty and all employees will be involved in ActionAid campaigns, fundraising and engagement with supporters.

### ► Effective resourcing, equality and diversity

Our staff will be recruited, retained and developed in accordance with the capabilities we know we need. We will have a well-deserved reputation for embedding women's rights and gender equality, and we will support employment opportunities to all groups of people who face discrimination and who are under-represented within the organisation.

## Knowledge

### ► Organisational learning

We will increase understanding and application of our human rights-based approach in the UK; we will become more accountable and improve our process of learning and acting on that knowledge. Organisational learning and development programmes will strengthen staff skills and competencies.

### ► Internal communication

Internal communications are a key way of inspiring our staff, sharing our successes and learning from our mistakes. We will improve our way of communicating with each other, ensuring it helps improve staff morale, excites everyone about our mission and drives the implementation and monitoring of the strategy by communicating organisational priorities, embedding culture change and promoting transparent decision-making.

## Accountability

### ► Organisational and individual accountability

This strategy will be reviewed annually and is underpinned by a robust operational plan and a framework that enables us to place a sharp focus on managing our performance and evaluating our effectiveness. Every member of staff will be clear about how their work and objectives contribute to ActionAid UK, and how ActionAid UK plays a key role in achieving ActionAid's international mission.

Given the fast-moving turbulent external environment, we will pay particular attention to assessing and responding to risks as they emerge.

### ► Governance and stewardship

We will ensure our governance is recognised by others as exemplary and in line with national best practice. The Board of Trustees will be effective and diverse, and will bring considerable skill to bear in terms of providing strategic direction, holding fast to the mission, and ensuring that the organisation is compliant and financially healthy. Our moral obligation to utilise the financial resources provided by our supporters will guide the Board and staff to operate within a culture where stewardship of resources, cost consciousness and value for money are paramount.

We will embed mechanisms to ensure good stewardship and be proud that our processes for evaluating impact and managing risk, projects and programmes contribute to timely, effective decision-making.

## Destination 2117

We will have transformed the lives of millions, and our supporters will have witnessed the difference that is made.



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(l-r) Betty Nakitende, Nazziwa Annette and Esther Adero march together in a rally commemorating International Women's Day in Mubende, Uganda.

PHOTO: Jake Lyell/Shoot the Earth/ActionAid

By 2017 we will have weathered the economic storm and come through stronger, increasing both the amount and the flexibility of the income we generate to achieve our mission. Fundraising will be celebrated and owned by everyone in ActionAid.

We will have transformed the lives of millions, and our supporters will have witnessed the difference that is made. Many more people in the UK will understand that equity for women is a fundamental matter of justice and crucial to win the fight against poverty, and join ActionAid to help champion that cause.

Developing countries will have made progress in claiming their rightful share of taxes, biofuels targets will have been scrapped and the UK government will have addressed the wider causes of the global food crises through policies that work in favour of poor people.

Many more people will understand who we are, our approach and what makes us different, and timely, multimedia stories of our impact will allow them to witness what that means to poor communities. We will have moved understanding amongst our supporters and other target audiences of how to tackle poverty beyond giving aid.

**“As an organisation we will be more focused and effective, and together we will have made a real and tangible difference.”**

## listen

We will listen to our supporters and they will be motivated to do more.

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## change

Many more people will understand who we are, our approach and what makes us different.

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