

# **ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL**

## **EDUCATION**

### **STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2010**

*ActionAid International is committed to working with excluded groups, to ensure that they can secure their right to free quality education within an equitable system as a key means to end poverty.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over one billion people, the majority of them women, lack a basic education and the links between illiteracy and poverty are proven and strong. Over 100 million children are out of school, nearly 60% of them girls. In many countries, IMF macro-economic constraints are undermining the basic capacity of the state to educate its citizens, whilst donor practices are diminishing accountability and transparency. Most children have to pay to go to school (user fees are still charged for access to education in 92 countries) and this has a particular impact on excluding girls. Privatisation is accelerating and undermining the contract between State and citizen. Yet education saves lives. Each year that a child (especially a girl) stays in school their risk of HIV infection reduces. If all children were in school the Global Campaign for Education estimates 700,000 lives a year would be saved.

While schools have the potential to transform pupils' lives for the better, in reality they are all too often reproducing the injustices and inequalities found outside their doors. Too often children are crammed inhumanely in class sizes of a hundred whilst trained teachers remain unemployed by governments whose hands are tied. The Dakar Framework for Action on Education, agreed in 2000, offers a vision for a better future but the global community has failed shamefully to follow this up with resources. We believe that the Education For All goals set for 2015 are achievable and we commit ourselves to helping make this happen. Over 90 countries failed to reach even the minimum goal of gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 (the MDG proposed at the UN Millennium Assembly). The rights of girls and women to education seem to be all too easily overlooked. Yet as well as being essential in themselves, securing these rights is vital for achieving many other development goals (relating to infant mortality, maternal health, HIV etc) and for transforming gender relations.

For us, education is a fundamental human right, the responsibility of the state and a core element of a development policy committed to social justice. ***Our vision*** for education is that all children will have free access to quality education within an equitable system. We want to see schools where children's rights, especially those of girls, are respected, injustices are challenged and children's lives can be transformed. We want to see early childhood education and adult learning that leads to social change. We want to break through the curse of apparent consensus on education and show how almost every aspect of education is political.

Education is part of the DNA of ActionAid. We are widely recognised as one of the leading international NGOs in the field of education and often regarded as ***the*** leading international NGO. ActionAid can certainly count many significant achievements in its education work to date, many of which are known internationally (see appendix 1). Yet most of our achievements in education are not visible at an international level. In thousands of communities across dozens of countries we have helped to ensure poor and excluded children gain access to quality education. We have helped people to demand quality education and helped governments to deliver that education. We have been highly innovative, identifying locally-appropriate responses to education problems. Our engagement has been across a full spectrum from early childhood education to youth and adult literacy. We have developed relevant teaching-learning materials for schools, provided in-service teacher training,

introduced new teaching methods, worked with children's clubs, peer educators and student councils, and we have built the capacity of parents associations and school management committees. Perhaps most of all we have focused our attention on the girls and boys who are not in school and worked to get them into education. This local engagement has been the base of all our education work- the reason we have the credibility to convene others and to get a seat at national and international policy tables.

We are lead players in managing the Commonwealth Education Fund – channelling £10 million to 16 countries in order to make education a domestic political priority and make government schools work. In the field of education we encourage all staff to see themselves as involved in programme, policy and campaigning work (breaking down old distinctions / barriers) and to work towards a condition where there are seamless connections between local, national and international work. We are confident that working towards the 6 strategic goals and 3 operational goals in this plan ActionAid will be able to achieve even more in future. This will require a continued process of transformation, particularly in our practice at local level. We appeal to everyone in ActionAid and beyond to work with us in achieving these goals.

## **2. STRATEGIC GOALS**

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1.**

***We will secure constitutional rights to basic education where these are not in place and ensure they are enforceable in practice.***

Indicative Activities

- Supporting strongly rooted and broad based ***national coalitions*** / alliances (that link unions, NGOs, social movements, debt and child labour campaigners, women's movement etc) that can mobilise on the right to education.
- Working with ***national parliaments and the media*** to place the right to education on the national agenda and to make education into a “societal project” and domestic political priority.
- Undertaking targeted ***legal work to enforce rights*** where they are being violated (working with lawyers to bring test cases), using either constitutional rights or international frameworks as reference points (eg the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, CEDAW and the Dakar framework for Action on EFA)
- ***Campaigning against user fees*** the imposition of costs (securing a right cannot depend on the ability of people to pay – and fees dis-proportionally exclude girls) and ***challenging the privatisation of public services*** (and attempts to legally enforce liberalisation eg through GATS).

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2**

***We will work with excluded groups to secure free access to quality education as a basic right***

Indicative Activities

- ***Identifying and documenting*** those categories of girls and boys who are denied their right to education (e.g. disabled children, linguistic or ethnic minorities, pastoralists, HIV orphans, migrant workers, children affected by conflict etc)

- Challenging the social, cultural, economic and school-related factors that perpetuate the ***exclusion of girls*** from schools, prevent their equal treatment or limit their achievement.
- ***Taking sides*** with those who are presently excluded from school, supporting their struggle to secure access from the State and ensuring their voices are heard by decision-makers (and linking the struggle for schooling to wider struggles against discrimination / exploitation of the groups).
- Using the *Reflect* approach to deepen people's own analysis and help them ***mobilise and organise*** around education, linking excluded groups across districts and countries so that their voices are heard by policy-makers.
- ***Helping governments to respond*** to the rights of these groups, drawing out policy implications / practical lessons from innovations that have been effective in getting excluded children into school and promoting system-wide reform (rather than purely local solutions); challenging those who create parallel provision to the State and avoiding a direct service delivery role ourselves (eg in NFE centres / community schools).

### STRATEGIC GOAL 3

***We will secure adequate resources from governments and donors to ensure effective delivery of education for all.***

Indicative Activities

- Building sustained pressure on ***national governments*** to prioritise education within national budgets and make long term resourcing commitments so that more professional teachers can be employed and children do not have to suffer large class sizes; influencing budget formulation processes at local, district and national levels both directly and through elected representatives, including promoting gender budgeting and costed policies to target girls.
- Building sustained pressure on ***international donors*** to live up to their promises on aid to education (eg the Dakar pledge), to improve the quality and predictability of their aid, to reform and properly resource the Fast Track Initiative (making it into a global compact on Education For All), and to use the power of donor consortiums to increase rather than diminish democratic accountability.
- Challenging ***IMF / World Bank*** imposed macro-economic norms (eg low inflation targets, deficit limits, caps on public spending and wages) that prevent spending on education at the levels needed to achieve EFA.
- Mobilising people around ***free education*** and challenging government policies and practices that impose costs on parents eg exam fees, school uniforms, free school meals, basic equipment, textbooks etc; building links with allies in other social sectors concerned with similar issues (eg those working with health or HIV activists).
- Democratising and improving the effectiveness of the ***EFA architecture*** internationally, ensuring the voices of poor and excluded people are heard in all key policy forums.

### STRATEGIC GOAL 4

***We will secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation at local and national levels, and increase the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of education systems.***

Indicative activities:

- Enabling national civil society coalitions on basic education to **broaden their base**, strengthen their links to grassroots and district-level work, and **increase their influence** on national education processes.
- Building the capacity of **parent teacher associations**, school management committees, village education committees, parent action groups etc. - enabling them to fulfil and **extend their roles**, and working to make them representative and accountable. Organising public hearings on education and finding other creative approaches to stimulate public debate at all levels. Helping citizen's groups to demystify national education budgets, track their use in practice, expose misuse / injustices, develop their own indicators of quality, participate in key debates about education and advocate for reform.
- Strengthening the voices of **children / young people** in school for example through building student councils / girls' clubs / peer education groups; and ensuring that children and young people are heard directly in national policy debates on education
- Deepening **links with teacher unions** nationally and internationally – pro-actively developing joint areas of work and resolving areas of traditional tension (eg re non-professionals)
- Building stronger links with **women's organisations** / alliances / associations and various **social movements** / people's organisations for whom education is an important issue even if not their *raison d'être*.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 5:**

***We will secure schools that respect all children's rights and provide education that is empowering, relevant and of good quality.***

Indicative Activities:

- Helping schools / education systems find practical and effective ways to **transform gender roles** and relations e.g. changing the school curriculum, influencing text-book production, developing new teaching-learning materials, helping with in-service training, etc. Exposing and challenging schools that tolerate prejudice, institutionalise discrimination or provide an environment in which **violence against girls** in any form is tolerated.
- Working with **teachers unions** to ensure that **basic conditions** allow / enable teachers to provide quality education which respects all children's rights.
- Supporting awareness by children, parents and teachers of **all relevant rights** and helping them to realise these - including linguistic rights, cultural diversity and crucially the right to be free from indoctrination (indeed, compliance with the full UN Charter); ensuring that democracy is practised in schools and not only preached.
- Integrating broad **human rights education** into school curricula and practices so that all children who access education learn about their basic rights and the history of struggles to secure rights.
- Working to ensure that **learning processes** are relevant, empowering and life-enhancing; that learning opens up rather than closes down children's minds (opposing fundamentalism / ideology in education); and that critical issues that affect children's lives are addressed effectively in schools (eg HIV/AIDS / disasters / climate change).
- Ensuring that schools are **safe environments** in every respect.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 6:**

***We will challenge the reduction of the EFA agenda to primary schooling and ensure balanced investment in early childhood education, adult learning and secondary education.***

Indicative Activities:

- Campaigning in defence of the ***Dakar EFA framework*** rather than the watered down MDG framework – and challenging any government or donor that focuses on this inadequate / reduced agenda.
- Supporting strategic programmes on ***early childhood education*** (especially for children traditionally excluded from school) that reinforce government responsibility and show the benefits of balanced investment in this area.
- Experimenting with and working through government to support innovative projects locally in the field of ***adult literacy***, especially supporting empowering approaches to adult learning (particularly for women) such as *Reflect* – and exploring the potential for a “*Global Adult Literacy Fund*” to catalyse new action in this disregarded area.
- Ensuring that investment in primary education is matched with investments in ***secondary schools*** so that there is no bottleneck – and finding equitable approaches to supporting poor children in secondary schools so they do not face a glass ceiling.
- Analysing education budgets to ensure ***balanced investment*** across the full education system.

### **3. OPERATIONAL GOALS**

#### **OPERATIONAL GOAL 1:**

***We will strengthen our internal organisation / structure and capacity***

Indicative Activities:

- Building a strong ***Core International Education Team*** which works effectively together despite being located in multiple countries and which has clear linkages to all regions and other themes.
- Reforming the ***Education Working Group*** as a horizontal group that provides political and strategic linkages, advising the core team and deepening governance of our education work across the organisation (TORs to be developed).
- Building an ***ActionAid Education Network*** involving ***Lead Education Resource People*** from every country programme – with these people being able to dedicate time to and work effectively on focused international issues (TORs to be developed).
- Supporting each national–level lead education person to build a ***national education team*** (eg with relevant local and national project staff and partners, CEF, national coalitions).
- Encouraging all staff to see themselves as involved in ***programme, policy and campaigning*** work on education (breaking down old distinctions / barriers) – and to work towards a condition where there are seamless connections between local, national and international work.
- Publishing “***Education Action***” magazine twice a year (with language editions once a year) to a wide audience of key players in education (approximately 5,000 people); compiling a quarterly electronic internal update on education and improving the education sections of the Intranet and public web-site.
- Seeking ***large scale funding*** for education work that fits within this framework – especially for cross-country work to deepen sharing / learning.

## **OPERATIONAL GOAL 2**

***We will strengthen our policy, research, campaigning and coalition-building work on education at all levels.***

Indicative activities

- Continuing our ***facilitating / supporting role*** in a wide range of coalitions from national to regional to global, seeking to ensure they are democratic and rooted in grassroots voices.
- Supporting a ***campaigning mode*** in all our education work (from local to national to international) and building new working relationships with teacher unions at all levels.
- Building a strong education component into the AA International agency-wide campaign eg on gender equality in education within rights to services.
- Supporting ***cross-country programming, research and campaigning*** on key issues such as
  - violence against girls in schools,
  - opposing abstinence-only education,
  - challenging macro-economic constraints to education
- ***Channelling substantial funding*** to national education coalitions through the Commonwealth Education Fund and EC Block Grant as well as through our own funding – and securing new funding for similar work in other regions (eg francophone Africa, South-East Asia and Latin America).
- Making better use of the ***media*** – print, TV, radio etc to promote public debate on education – and better links with ***parliamentary caucuses / committees***, elected representatives, Ministries of Finance
- Maintaining support to ***regional coalitions***: ANCEFA and Pamoja, strengthening the Latin American Education Campaign and building regional work in Asia with ASPBAE and others.
- Playing a leading role in the ***Global Campaign for Education*** (which we co-founded in 1999), seeking to democratise it (making it work more effectively with / through national coalitions) and helping it implement the future directions agreed at the World Congress in Jo'burg, December 2004.

## **OPERATIONAL GOAL 3**

***We will build strong linkages to the other five priority themes of ActionAid, building at least one example of excellent collaboration at each interface.***

We are committed to working more closely with other campaigns / thematic groups in order to break down artificial divides and deepen the coherence of ActionAid's work overall. In our draft strategic framework we summarised the diverse ways in which education links to each of the other themes and illustrated ways in which we are already working together. Here we are highlighting those areas we will prioritise as the areas for collaboration in the coming strategy period:

### ***WOMEN'S RIGHTS***

- Developing strong programming and campaigning on violence against girls in schools, especially using girls' charters in different countries, strengthening campaigning approaches, building links between the women's movement and education coalitions, and seeking large scale funding for multi-country work on this.

- Campaigning around the failure of the 2005 MDG on gender parity in education (missed by 70 countries) and the actions that need to be taken to get girls into schools (eg on user fees / school infrastructure / textbooks etc).
- Developing gender budgeting as a component in all our education budget work.

### ***GOVERNANCE***

- Increasing our focus on budget formulation processes, questioning the power of fundamentalist IMF ideologies over Ministries of Finance - and the helplessness of most Ministries of Education in the face of this - and exposing how this undermines democratic governance of education.
- Prioritising strategic relationships with teacher unions, parents federations, social movements and parliamentary bodies to democratise education decision making, institutionalise accountability and challenge donor power.
- Maintaining a critical engagement on the quality and amount of aid to education (eg through work on the GCE School Report Card that tracks OECD donor performance on education aid).

### ***HIV / AIDS***

- Asserting the rights of both infected and affected children and teachers in mainstream education, pushing for legal protection and effective Ministry policies and procedures eg to include challenging stigma and discrimination.
- Opposing abstinence-only approaches to education and promoting comprehensive preventive education which place HIV/AIDS in the context of sexual and reproductive health, which facilitate gender and power analysis, and which include participatory approaches, peer education etc.
- Maintaining a leading role for ActionAid in the Global Campaign for Education's work around HIV and Education, to strengthen partnerships between education and HIV coalitions and to take forward work with the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS, UNAIDS, UNICEF and the UN Inter-Agency Task team through the Accelerate Initiative.
- Researching the impact of different approaches to dealing with HIV/AIDS in education.

### ***HUMAN SECURITY/CONFLICT***

- Ensuring schools are safe environments, whether in the context of conflict or natural disaster (in line with implementation of the Hyogo agenda on disaster risk reduction), being places where a culture of peace and security is built.
- Addressing the education needs of children affected by conflict – prioritising the functioning of schools as a way of re-building communities and confidence, as well as helping children deal with trauma.
- Linking with the International Network of Education in Emergencies – to draw on and influence their minimum guidelines where relevant and to promote education responses as a priority for donors..

### ***FOOD RIGHTS / TRADE***

- Tracking the liberalisation of education and the role of GATS in enforcing this and commodifying education. Critically looking at the way Intellectual Property Rights affect education, particularly access to knowledge. Working jointly in key WTO processes to address these.

- Promoting locally-sourced free school meals (and challenging food aid / food dumping).
- Challenging corporate abuse in schools and use of tied aid / technical assistance to empower multinational companies (eg publishers / exam boards) who seek to make a profit out of the education of children in poor countries.

#### ***4. STAFFING PROJECTIONS***

The present core International Education Team (IET) are:

- Thematic Head of Education - based in UK
- Advocacy / Campaigns Coordinator – based in South Africa
- Senior Policy Analyst / Research Coordinator – based in UK
- Programme and Shared Learning Coordinator - based in Nigeria
- Administrator – based in UK

The following key people are part of the full International Education Team (which includes those working on specific themes / projects with an international role:

- Senior Policy Analyst on HIV and Education – based in UK
- Banyan Documentation project – based in Nigeria
- EC Block Grant / Funding Coordinator – based in UK
- A new position to link up with World Bank / IMF – based in Washington

The secretariat of the inter-agency Commonwealth Education Fund also sits in ActionAid, chaired and line managed by ActionAid's Head of Education. This will run to 2007 and may be extended to 2010. The CEF strategy has been defined significantly by ActionAid and is entirely consistent with this strategy, focusing on coalition building, budget tracking and documenting innovation.

#### ***5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION***

IET considers monitoring and evaluation at two fundamental levels:

1. M&E of our own work as a team – as IET / EWG
2. M&E of education work across the whole organisation: both supporting country level processes and consolidating internationally

We will use both existing mechanisms and develop our own:

- Existing: ALPs: Country Reviews and Strategies / PPRPs: country level and theme level (yearly, from January to March).
- Our own: country visits / workshops / regular communications / surveys / thematic reviews

In respect of monitoring and evaluating our own work as individuals and a team we have the following mechanisms in place:

- 6 weekly 1-1 phone calls between thematic head and team members – to review against individual work-plans / agree priorities / define training needs.
- Annual appraisal of individual team members against job description and IET strategy – define bigger shifts in priorities – includes 360 degrees appraisal.

- IET Team reviews – twice a year when we meet – including assessment of teamwork and how it can be strengthened.
- Annual commissioning of external consultant for PRRP to do a survey and phone round lead education people, country Directors and key partners to elicit comments on IET based on this strategy / key questions (Jan-March?).
- IET meeting with EWG to review findings and do our own full PRRP.

In respect of Monitoring and evaluating wider education work of ActionAid we will:

- Make inputs into country reviews e.g. advise / participate in peer review teams;
- Support lead education people participating in country reviews / strategies;
- Comment on draft Country Reviews and CSPs;
- Provide guidelines for annual plans and budgets esp matrix (see overleaf);
- Provide guidelines for annual PRRPs and advise lead education people;
- Undertake country visits: writing short reports linked to IET strategy
- Consolidate analysis of plans / reports from country programmes –esp of matrices which summarise country work in relation to IET strategy;
- Track financial trends;
- Support regional processes / events;
- Hold meetings of the full AA Education Network every 2.5 years to review progress and inform strategy revision;
- Update the Global Education Review in 2006 & 2009.

We propose the following two-step matrix as a core means to help countries map their work against this IET strategy:

	<b>PROJECT / PARTNER / 1</b>	<b>PROJECT 2</b>	<b>PROJECT 3</b>	<b>PROJECT 4 Etc</b>
SG1: Constitutional rights	£...			
SG2: Excluded groups				
SG3: Adequate resources				
SG4: Citizen participation				
SG5: Rights in schools				
SG6: Full EFA agenda				
<b>TOTAL</b>				

PROJECT 1	[In planning period]: 3 or 4 lines on location / core partners / objectives / activities / campaigning elements etc [In reporting period]: 3 or 4 lines on achievements / challenges / learning
PROJECT 2	
PROJECT 3 etc	

We will use this as a core reference document – updated when we do country visits and fleshed out at different moments. We will ask for quarterly updates from countries on major changes / developments in key projects.

We are also developing a **core set of indicators** relating to the IET strategy. The present list includes:

*Internal collaboration & communication* (purpose, frequency and quality)

- Extent of collaboration with other themes
- Level of communication within education team / network
- Level and modes used for exchange of information

*Level of influence, relationships (collaboration and related to power) with partners*

- Our level of influence within the GCE, and other key coalitions
- Power relations between AAI and national coalitions
- Progress in collaborating with Unions: achievement, challenges, risks
- Progress in challenging IMF, World Bank and donors
- Level of Community / grassroots participation in key advocacy work

*Policy & programme description*

- Level of fit between this IET strategy and strategic goals and priorities of countries expressed in CSPs etc
- Level of emphasis on the different strategic goals and trends (up and down)
- Trends of how countries allocate activities / programmes into each goal.
- Number of projects / countries that persist with traditional service delivery work that is in tension with this strategy
- Level of spending on different Strategic Goals (SGs) and funding sources

*Campaign description*

- Level of education campaigning on education at community, national, regional, international levels
- Capacity of staff for campaigning
- Key accomplishments / examples of influence (narrative)

*Policy, programme, campaign impact assessment*

- Specific policy and programme achievement, to be measured against goals/objectives of programme
- Specific policy changes secured at different levels
- Specific changes in practice secured at different levels
- Sustainability of changes

*Budget*

- How much is spent on what type of activity (including across themes)
- Shortfall in funding – are specific types of activities that are not fundable?
- Effectiveness and efficiency of how funds are expended

## **6. RISK ANALYSIS**

### **Risk Management Strategy**

<b>Risks Identified</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Risk Owner</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
lead education people at country level will not be empowered to work internationally	High	Medium	All	Work with IDs and other thematic heads to ensure new mode of working post R2EP is internalised in all countries
International Education Team is cut off from country / regional management	High	Med	All	Ensure that EWG includes at least one CD from each region and one ID – and that it is included in job descriptions and appraisals
Campaigning work (eg on IMF) is seen as directly political and challenges are made to charity status	Med	Low	Thematic head	Ensure clear evidence that arises from our programmes underpins all campaigning work.
Lead education people do not communicate regularly / spontaneously	Med	Med/High	IET / EWG	Support clear definition of roles of lead education people and agree this with Country Directors
Coordination role of IET is rejected / causes tensions in an internationalised agency	Med	Low	Thematic head / EWG	Ensure a facilitation approach in the core team / build a strong agency wide team and a strong EWG
ActionAid's identity is lost within wider coalition work / campaigning on education	Med	Medium	Thematic Head / EWG	Find creative ways to show the distinctiveness and importance of our contribution to wider coalitions / campaigns. Build some clear AA specific work

## 7. BUDGET 2005-2010

	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	unrest	rest	unres	Rest	unrest	Rest	unrest	rest	unrest	rest	unrest	rest
Core: Salaries and Overheads	107	80	218	80	222	50	240	50	247	50	255	50
Grants to other organisations	30		40		30		30		31		32	
Travel	21	5	4	10	18		15		15		16	
Meetings	22	8	16	10	20		12		12		13	
Education Action	20	10	20	10	35		30		31		32	
Campaigns	59		40		28	200*	55		57		58	
Links: HIV	10		10	10*	8	200*	11		11		12	
Links: Women	10		5	200*	7	200*	6		6		6	
Links: Conflict				200*		200*						
Links:Governance	10		5		7	50*	6		6		6	
Links: Food						50*						
Banyan Tree Documentation	0	60		60								
EC Block Grant	8	284	8	220	8	67		16				
GCE	0	89		71		62		56		58		59
UNESCO		33										
<b>Totals</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>1,079</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>109</b>

Transfers Out: 2005 - £340,802 £34.5k Unrestricted/£306.3k Restricted

Transfers Out: 2006 - £291,782 £7k Unrestricted/£284.8 Restricted

Transfers Out: 2007 - £51,418 £51.4 Restricted

Transfers Out: 2008-2010 - £0

(note inflation of 3% has been included in years 2009 and 2010)

\* Unconfirmed

The CEF is not included as it would distort the figure, but £17 million is expected 2005-10

## ***Appendix 1***

### ***OUR EXPERIENCE TO DATE***

Education is part of the DNA of ActionAid. We are widely recognised as one of the leading international NGOs in the field of education and often regarded as *the* leading international NGO. ActionAid can certainly count many significant **achievements** in its education work, for example:

- Conceiving, piloting and disseminating the Reflect approach to adult learning (now used by over 500 organisations in 70 countries and awarded the UN International Literacy Prize 2003).
- Facilitating the emergence of (and strengthening), national and regional coalitions on education – which link NGOs, teachers unions, social movements and a huge diversity of other agencies.
- Co-founding and playing a leading role in the Global Campaign for Education (which mobilises education activists in over 100 countries)
- Helping to secure long-term resources for these coalitions (eg through the Commonwealth Education Fund and EC Block Grant) and channelling these resources in a collaborative and non-interventionist way.
- Increasing space for civil society coalitions in national, regional and global education policy processes.
- Organising capacity building for programmes and partners on key emerging issues such as budget tracking, governance and advocacy.
- Securing some significant advocacy outcomes at a global level (with our allies) eg relating to the Fast Track Initiative, EU Aid to education.
- Contributing significantly to mass mobilisation around education (eg through the Global Week of Action of GCE – active in 117 countries)
- Promoting cross country research e.g. on costs, violence against girls in schools, donor finance, HIV, school governance, adult literacy and other key issues
- Facilitating global consultations across civil society on key education policy issues (eg on the MDG Task Force reports, Dakar Framework for Action, Adult Literacy Benchmarks)
- Bringing grassroots perspectives into high-level global processes (eg EFA Global Monitoring Report, High Level Group meetings, EFA Working Group, World Bank evaluation of education)

Sometimes we have made *mistakes*. The history of our involvement in education over thirty years is powerfully told in the Global Education Review (2003) and understanding that history is one of our strengths. We used to provide individual scholarships, build schools and run non-formal education centres - but each of these activities is now recognised as unsustainable and inappropriate. We have drawn learning from all of these that informs our present position and our agenda for change to education.

In our grassroots engagement we have seen again and again that *for poor and excluded people themselves*, education is often a top priority. If a good quality school is available even the poorest parents will send their children ... if they can afford to. Unfortunately, children still have to pay to go to school in 92 countries around the

world and there are many hidden costs. It is money that is the biggest obstacle – with costs rising as you go up the system. For most poor families, sending a child to secondary school remains an impossible dream. But we should never question the value that poor people themselves attach to education – their belief in education as the passport out of poverty for their children.

Over the past three years, the *Education Working Group* has helped to pull together ActionAid’s learning on education and shape our strategy. As a horizontal group with representation from all regions, EWG has provided a simple framework to guide ActionAid’s education work. It has helped develop clarity around what a “rights-based approach” means in the field of education (and we have influenced many other NGOs on the basis of this). It has promoted documentation, shared learning and increasing communication across countries, including supporting the Global Education Review in 2003 which is a comprehensive analysis of what ActionAid does in the field of education and why (offering an accumulation of our learning over 30 years).

Despite all the positive achievements identified above, the EWG has also identified a number of **gaps** in our work and **opportunities** for the future. For example:

- We have not made strong enough links between our local and national work (eg we fail to focus enough on district level engagement / mobilisation).
- We find some coalitions are still struggling with the complex power dynamics involved in bringing together different NGOs, unions and social movements.
- We risk de-linking ActionAid’s own staff from coalition building and campaigning work on education when big external funding like the Commonwealth Education Fund comes in (leading to sustainability risks).
- We are not always clear about ActionAid’s own identity on education as we work so much through coalitions at national, regional and global levels - and so our profile within ActionAid is weaker than it should be.
- We lack clear positions on key issues such as privatisation of education.
- We have struggled to measure the impact of our advocacy work on education (esp where we are working in coalitions).
- We have sometimes failed to give enough follow up / continuity to key areas of our work (eg around budget tracking).
- We do not coordinate across countries / regions on education work as well as we could so our analysis and voice is not as strong as it could be.
- We have sometimes assumed getting children into school is an end point and we have not asked enough about what is going on inside schools ... what sort of education is being provided and whether children’s rights are being respected in schools..
- We are confronted with a “curse of consensus” (everyone agrees education is important - so there is no controversy - so nothing changes) .... mobilising really passionate engagement remains a challenge.

Based on this analysis we have defined a new overall objective and vision for our work, deepened the strategic framework for ActionAid’s work on education, outlined an organisational structure and started a process of developing clear positions on critical issues such as privatisation.

## *APPENDIX 2*

### **DEFINING A RIGHTS BASED APPROACH TO EDUCATION**

The adoption of a rights based approach was a key shift in programming in AAI. The following are the main components to consider:

- We must recognise the primacy, agency and actions of rights holders.
- The State has a primary role as a duty bearer.
- Conditionalities should not be attached to rights.
- Government should respect, fulfil, protect and promote rights.
- States should be free to take actions to fulfil the rights of their citizens without constraints from any power outside the state –sovereignty.
- States should be accountable to the international community to fulfil the rights of their citizens.
- Rights holders have the duty to claim their rights and have their rights fulfilled by duty bearers.
- Rights must be protected through constitutional and legislative provisions.

Service Delivery is actually an integral part of a rights based approach since services can be a means to actualise rights; but the critical question is: who delivers the services? The government/State has a responsibility to do so. So whilst service delivery and a rights based approach are not mutually exclusive, service delivery by AAI should be an absolute last resort in clear emergency situations where we have to address immediate needs. If we do get involved in service delivery, it should not duplicate, takeover or relegate the government; we can only provide leverage for the community or duty bearer to takeover ownership eventually. A rights-based approach helps to do three important things:

- Disaggregate poor and marginalised groups to ascertain whose rights are being/have been denied;
- Establish rights; and
- Find out the rights holders.

Right holders should be actively involved in any work that is involved in their claiming their rights. Any education work we do must be ultimately empowering for the poor and excluded.