Core Minimum Activities: ActionAid International’s Human Rights Based Approach
I) Introduction and components of ActionAid International’s Human Rights Based Approach

During the Country Director’s Leadership Development Forum in Copenhagen, Denmark in July 2009, the AAI Human Rights Based Approach was discussed. Following the development in 2007 and 2008 of the AAI HRBA conceptual paper, some key components of our programming and policy work were identified. It was emphasized that these components do not work in isolation and should not be compartmentalized, but rather they are inter-dependant and in many cases simultaneous. However, it was recognized that the empowerment component should be the foundation and at the centre of our program work. This primacy of empowerment is due to our understanding of the centrality of the agency of the poor and excluded rights holders in our Human Rights Based Approach. It is also consistent with AAI values, vision and mission statements.

The three integrated programmes in AAI’s human rights based approach:

**EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS**
(power within)
With poor and excluded rights holders and their communities, organisations and movements
For enabling their collective analysis, identity and actions

**Solidarity Programs**
(power with)
With citizens, partners, organisations, networks, coalitions and alliances
For enlarging support (including money) voice and actions towards enhancing poor and excluded peoples’ power

**Advocacy and Campaigning programs**
(power over)
Targeted at duty bearer states and non-state actors and institutions and at people and institutions who violate or deny rights
For changing policies, practices, political space or public opinion.
II) A framework on supporting leadership role towards deepening Human Rights Based Approaches

The Country Directors also discussed that it would be useful to develop some framework or key questions that would support leadership at the countries to assess, support and provide strategic direction to our local level programming.

It was recognized that such a framework should take into consideration that the scale of the changes we want requires the mobilization of poor and “non poor” citizens. As this corresponds to the structural causes of poverty (Which extend beyond geographical or administrative boundaries) this mobilization must be international as well as local and national.

It was also recognized that HRBA is contextual to the locality and country, and the framework should allow adequate space to recognize the necessary diversity and local adaptation required to tackle very different situations. There is also an understanding that the different contexts will determine the mix of activities related to the different components. However, in order to ensure coherence and consistency of the approach it is important to identify a core minimum of activities to determine if our work is human rights based.

We therefore limit the framework to core minimum elements, with the understanding that our programming should have interventions related to each of the elements below, or at least have a strategy that will build towards each of them.

AAI HRBA core minimum elements

1) Rights Analysis – Power Analysis
A program that has strategy and/or activities to include on-going analysis and understanding of the situation related to
   • The conditions and causes of poverty linked with the denial or violation of rights for specific rights holders
   • Power relations among key constituencies and players
   • Power analysis between women and men and girls and boys
   • Analysis of exploitation, exclusion and violence against women
   • Perpetrators, duty bearer’s and rights holders;
   • Role and performance of the state as the primary duty bearer;
   • Inequality causes and trends;
   • Analysis of sustainability;

2) Agency of the poor and excluded
Program that has strategies and/or activities to
   • Identify poor and excluded people as individuals and groups/communities of identity and interest holders
   • Ensure that rights holders are organized and mobilized
   • Ensure that rights holders articulate their agenda, demand and take actions to claim their human rights
   • Ensures rights’ holders ownership of the project

3) Women’s Rights
Program that has strategies and/or activities to
   • Work with women and their organizations
• Ensure women identify and contest different forms of subordination and exploitation - whether that be sexual, cultural, political or economic
• Strengthen the capacity of women or their organizations
• Reduce inequality and exclusion of women
• Transform gender power relations;

4) Poor and excluded people critically engage with duty bearers
Program that has strategy and/or activities to
• Enable poor and excluded people and their organizations to connect with and claim from or challenge duty bearers, especially the state.

5) Changing the rules
Program has strategy and/or activities to
• Achieve lasting gains at local level and beyond by tackling the structural causes of poverty and violation or denial of rights of poor people and communities.
• Entrenching gains in laws, budgets, or institutions from local to national to international.
• Connecting local rights violations with international and national processes and connecting local struggles with bigger movements nationally and internationally to challenge such processes. There should be an emphasis on connecting local experiences with national civil society processes to input into national development strategies.