Part three:
Our People’s Action Monitoring Framework and ActionAid’s programme cycle and policies
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Please note that our monitoring framework and guidelines for our programme cycle are being reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. This means that some of the links in the text below may change over the strategy period. Please contact people-action@actionaid.org if you have access problems, or if links appear out of date.

1. Our People’s Action Monitoring Framework

In our new strategy we make a strong commitment to deepen and better evidence the impact of our work on the lives of people living in poverty, holding ourselves collectively accountable for delivering on our key change promises, and strengthening our monitoring and evaluation system. We also commit to elaborating and testing our theory of change, which means being very clear about what we are trying to change and how we plan to make that change through our strategies, programmes and projects. We will test and adjust this “theory” through our monitoring and evaluation system.

How will we fulfill these promises to show greater impact? One way is through our updated monitoring and evaluation requirements. All countries are aligning their strategies to our People’s Action strategy and to our 10 key change promises. All local and national rights programmes will have agreed indicators and baselines relating to relevant change promises in their context. Programme summaries of every local, national and international programme will be available online, including funding planning information, the numbers and categories of people we are targeting and baseline data about each relevant change promise meta indicator.

The international secretariat will simplify and synergise our multiple accountability systems into one mutual accountability framework in 2013, which will ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication between our governance, sponsorship, fundraising, planning and monitoring and evaluation systems.

At a strategic, agency-wide level our key means for evidencing our impact is our People’s Action Monitoring Framework (PAMF). Elements of this have been explained in previous parts of this resource book and we now pull them together here to provide a simple reference point.
The new global strategy specifies **four clear, inter-connected elements that we must monitor** at all levels, through all programmes, and across all countries:

1. **Our HRBA/theory of change** (at the heart of the diagram). The loops depict empowerment, solidarity and campaigning, which show our theory of change when woven together and delivered in line with our programming principles.

2. **Our impact.** This is achieved through our five objectives (the five trees in the diagram), each with two change promises (depicted as fruit) and our work on alternatives (seeds for the future). Each change promise has an agreed meta indicator to allow us to collectively monitor progress (through aggregated data) towards it across the whole federation.

3. **The people living in poverty, supporters and allies we work with** (represented by the groups under the trees). We will monitor how many people (men, women, girls, boys and youth) have participated in efforts to achieve change and how many have been impacted by our work (building on element two).

4. **Our organisational priorities and values** (represented by the ground the people in the diagram stand on). What we need to change and deliver organisationally (increasing our supporter base, raising more money, strengthening members and building staff capacity and women’s leadership, for example) to be able to deliver the promised change.

The PAMF does not insist on a multitude of standardised indicators across the organisation. The most it requires is 10 global meta indicators (one for each change promise), which we will monitor together with our own locally responsive and appropriate indicators in our programmes at local, national and international level. Through our global monitoring system we will track our progress against these meta indicators (using both qualitative and quantitative elements) year-on-year, culminating in a global impact assessment. We also have global indicators to assess our seven organisational priorities.

You should integrate all four elements of the PAMF into your ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programmes, whether at local, national or international levels. But it should not replace your current monitoring and evaluation.
The PAMF is simply a framework, a guide to help you assess your progress towards your strategy and programme objectives, and for us to see how we are progressing towards the realisation of our People’s Action strategy. In summary, the PAMF is applied through the ongoing monitoring of programmes at all levels, and the information it requires is captured through existing processes in our programme cycle.

**PAMF element one:**
Monitoring and evaluating our HRBA theory of change and principles

This first element of the PAMF addresses how we think change happens, or what we call our theory of change. People, power and rights lie at the heart of our theory of change, and thus at the centre of our PAMF. Our theory is that if people living in poverty are empowered and act to address their poverty and exclusion, and that if this is combined with campaigning and the solidarity of supporters and allies, power relations will be transformed and the rights of people now excluded, will be secured. ActionAid’s three HRBA programmes areas each represent an area of change that overlap and mutually reinforce each other, like the three circles in the centre of the diagram.

We advise staff and partners, when strategically planning or designing programmes, to consider the three programme areas, thinking about the outcomes you will need to achieve in and across the areas of empowerment, campaigning and solidarity to achieve your desired overall change. You should set a few simple indicators or guiding questions for these programme areas, and establish baselines for them, so you can monitor whether your changes happen. You must ensure that your programme design addresses the different experiences and needs of men and women for change, and that the indicators you choose give you markers showing what change will look like in practice for women.

For example, if your outcome is better land access for people in poverty, you will need to bring about smaller changes (intermediate outcomes) along the way if women are to enjoy the same access as men. One intermediate outcome may be decision-makers politically supporting equal land access for women. An indicator of this would be key decision-makers endorsing a campaign for legislative change giving women productive land in cooperatives, for example. In the chapters on the programme areas in part one, we discuss how to monitor each of these areas and suggest some indicators (drawn from the critical pathways to change outlined in part two) you could use to monitor changes brought about through interventions under the three programme areas.

A very important aspect to think about is that we are not just monitoring outcomes within each of the programme areas (or circles in the diagram), but rather what actions lead to these outcomes and how they combine (or not) to bring about change. A new tool we have introduced to support integrated, linked-up thinking about change is the critical pathway to change. Visit [www.doview.com](http://www.doview.com) (free copies available on request from ActionAid – contact Hamlet Johannes for a tool to help you to create these pathways). The critical pathways are a very important part of our monitoring process. They help us monitor and evaluate whether our actions lead to the desired outcomes and if these then lead us to the change we have promised. We call this *triple loop monitoring and evaluation.*

In part two we outlined a critical pathway and a basket of indicators to monitor the outcomes for each change promise. These indicators address the three programme areas and, together with the critical pathways, lay the basis for assessing progress towards and the achievement of our 10 key change promises. Staff and partners can use these critical pathways and indicators as guidance and inspiration for their own work to design programmes at any level, and to identify the key indicators they will monitor over time. Their purpose is to help
programme designers spell out how actions lead to outcomes and eventually to impact. They are a critical tool to inform the design of monitoring and evaluation frameworks for our work.

Our theory of change also encompasses the **minimum standards against our eight HRBA principles** outlined in part one. We should refer to these as we design our programmes, addressing them in our pathways to change and in our indicators for monitoring purposes. We should also ensure we build in the minimum standards as a feature of our programme monitoring, and that we incorporate them as a very specific component of our evaluations. Some of the principles have their own tools we can use in our programme design, monitoring and evaluation, such as gender budget analysis for women's rights (see the UN Development Fund for Women's guidance at [http://act.ai/KkaEqS](http://act.ai/KkaEqS)); methodologies for power analysis, (see page 82, chapter 4); participatory reflection and review processes for accountability and transparency; and annual partnership reviews.

While we do now monitor (collect and analyse information and data) using qualitative and quantitative indicators (see critical pathways and baskets of indicators in part two), we retain **critical stories of change** as a key mechanism for analysing and communicating impact. Stories of change are a powerful process through which we can, with partners, allies and people living in poverty, identify the changes that have or have not happened, analyse the factors underlying these, communicate how change has happened, and, very importantly, derive important insights to feedback to our theory of change. Guidance on frontline stories is available at [http://act.ai/M3m8Ci](http://act.ai/M3m8Ci) and guidance on critical stories of change is available at [http://act.ai/NRLsiP](http://act.ai/NRLsiP)

**PAMF element two:**
**Monitoring and evaluating impact (strategic objectives, promises and alternatives)**

Element two of the PAMF is how we monitor and evaluate our five objectives and 10 change promises. In part two, we presented the critical pathways, meta indicators and baskets of outcome indicators you can draw on to design your own programmes at local, national or international level.

To restate, at the international level, we have decided that we will only collectively monitor one meta indicator for each change promise. Our **10 meta indicators** are:

**Sustainable agriculture and control over natural resources**
1. number of women who have greater access to and control over land and natural resources
2. number of people who have improved food security as a result of climate resilient sustainable agriculture

**People’s influence on government and corporate accountability**
3. number of people living in poverty who secure improved public services
4. number of governments that have significantly increased their national budget allocations for key public services benefiting people living in poverty

**Public education and youth mobilisation**
5. number of communities that secure quality public education
6. number of youth actively participating in our local and national rights programmes and multi-country campaigns

**Building resilience and responding to conflicts and disasters**
7. number of communities with risk reduction and resilience systems and capacities
8. number of people who receive assistance after disasters in ways that respect their rights

**Women's control over their bodies and economic alternatives**
9. number of women and girls organised to challenge gender-based violence
10. evidence of women designing, testing and advocating gender-responsive economic alternatives.
If you are working on particular change promises you cannot “drop” the related meta indicators. However you will need to translate them into more meaningful and relevant change in your context, whether at local, national or regional level. All programmes will have to identify specific local indicators which contribute to the global meta indicator. For example, our agreed “meta” or global indicator for change promise six is “the number of youth actively participating in our programmes in local rights programmes, national rights programmes and multi-country campaigns”. What “active participation” will look like will vary from one local rights programme to another, and from one country to another.

For example, in one local rights programme, there may be little youth mobilisation at the outset and so active youth participation may be understood as youth joining and regularly participating in youth groups. Another local rights programme in the same country may focus specifically on young women, and youth participation may be understood as the mobilisation of young women into a local women's network. While the understanding of what active participation is will vary across local rights programmes and countries, we will gather information on this agreed broad meta indicator on a regular basis to give us a sense of progress towards the number we have promised to reach globally. The same applies across all our meta indicators. The guidance and definitions on each objective and change promise in part two aim to give you insights, analysis and ideas to enable you to translate the meta indicators to your particular context.

Each programme working on any change promise will be expected to establish a baseline for the indicator(s) they choose. Developing the example given above further, a local rights programme working on change promise six would need to work out a baseline of how many youth or young women are “actively participating” in the local rights programme at year zero. If a local rights programme is contributing towards three change promises, they would need a baseline that addresses the selected indicator(s) for each of these change promises.

Some ActionAid staff have expressed a worry that we are moving away from understanding qualitative change to the crunching of numbers about our impact. To be clear, we believe that to actually learn from and improve our work, we need to have detailed qualitative (and quantitative) indicators and monitoring questions, and associated baselines that go beyond the 10 meta indicators.

But given the great diversity of our federation, we have collectively agreed that we should address this next level of detail in the monitoring frameworks of countries and specific programmes (local, national and international). A selection of indicators for high level outcomes and intermediate outcomes or results (the stepping stones towards outcomes) has been provided with each of the critical pathways for the key change promises in this part two of this resource book. These indicators, which are both qualitative and quantitative, and speak to the HRBA programme areas and principles, are helpful in explaining the change further, and in telling us how we will know the change we envisage is being achieved. It is important to emphasise that these are sample indicators offered as inspiration and guidance for relevant qualitative and quantitative indicators you could develop with target groups and participants in your programme.

As a final note on this element of the PAMF, we also need to monitor our work on alternatives under each of the strategic objectives. Much of our work to develop “alternatives” is at an early conceptual stage and will probably remain deliberately open-ended to encourage innovation and “out of the box” thinking. Alternatives work will need to be carefully designed from the outset to support exploration and learning, including through well designed and thoughtful monitoring and evaluation.

We will need baselines, built upon clear indicators, forming part of a clearly articulated process of change (critical pathways will be helpful here). Ongoing monitoring of these indicators, with well designed mid-term and end of programme/project reviews will be critical to the success of our alternatives work. Story-telling (to see critical stories of change go to http://act.ai/NRLsIP) and other forms of documentation (visit http://act.ai/MqBBNJ for material on systematisation, for example) about the shape and impact, and key lessons and insights derived from the alternatives work under each objective will be important features of our monitoring. It is unlikely, in this strategy period, that our work on alternatives will impact on the lives of people living in poverty; we consider it to be a strategic, longer-term investment.

A note on alternatives in relation to value for money: When looking at a programme’s value for money, it is important, at the appraisal and design stage, to consider different ways of bringing about the desired change, developing clear criteria for making the necessary decisions, and being clear about the rationale for the final decision you make. This process of decision-making should be clearly documented.
PAMF element three:
Counting who we reach: coverage and impact numbers

This element of the PAMF closely relates to element two above. Our change promises give us our targets, our outcomes tell us how we will get there, and our indicators tell us how we will measure our impact. This element gives us more guidance about how we will measure, track and aggregate data across the globe.

We have collected information on the number of people we reach (our coverage) for many years using the metric “numbers of people (boys, girls, women and men) we work with”. We now want to improve this metric in three ways:

- By agreeing a common definition to be used by all programmes so that the numbers have consistent meaning.
- By disaggregating the numbers by gender and by child/youth/adult (with additional disaggregation by other key target groups mentioned in our strategy, depending on context).
- By counting those who actually experience impact under our change promises. Without this we will not be able to show the impact of our new strategy. This is critically important for our accountability to our donors, who are increasingly making results-based monitoring a non-negotiable requirement, and to our assemblies, boards and supporters.

To achieve the above we are developing supporting guidance to ascertain the following globally:

- **People we reach.** “Number and category (social group) of people we reach through specific activities”, for example, the number of people in cooperatives or groups that we support, or the number of supporters who take action in a campaign. The minimum level of engagement will be defined at country level.
- **People who have experienced positive change as a result of our programmes.** “Number and category of people who benefit directly from our work towards or achievement of the change promises.” We expect these impact numbers to be smaller than reach numbers. For example, if there are 1,000 participants in a land rights programme, our work may actually impact on 50 of them (they may receive land or greater tenure security as a direct result of our work, for example). For an online campaign in a rich country, you might define the number of participants by those who take an action such as sign a petition or give some money, and the number impacted might be those who take sustained action (as per our youth promise), staying engaged over time. Countries will define who gets counted.

Disaggregation across all our work will allow us to improve our reporting on impact on children, which is a specific promise of the new strategy. With this combination of the “numbers and categories of people we work with” and the change promises, we will be able to report how many children have improved food security, how many have improved education and how many have more resilience to disasters and conflict, as well as how many have benefited from rights-based emergency assistance.

Currently we do not have a system capable of capturing this wide-ranging data, but we are identifying the best and most cost effective way to do this. Irrespective of the final means of collection, each country will be responsible for collecting and aggregating data and making it available annually for the rest of the organisation. All programmes will need to agree with partners and communities who will collect the information and analyse it.

Visit [http://act.ai/MOE4xC](http://act.ai/MOE4xC) for the latest notes and guidance on the numbers and categories of people we reach.
PAMF element four: Our organisational priorities and values

If we are to achieve the ambitious change agenda set out in People’s Action, it is essential we look inwards to transform ourselves into a better governed, more effective and mutually accountable federation, steered by our shared collective values. Our global strategy has seven clear organisational priorities and we will be monitoring these alongside the changes that we seek to make in people’s lives. The indicators will be diverse, drawn from the specific commitments in the strategy. Some are simple and measurable (the amount of money we raise) and some are more complex (how we have improved our mutual accountability).

The international board has yet to approve the indicators set out below and they are a draft only. This approval is necessary as the indicators will drive the collection of all data supporting them, and the creation of appropriate systems to collect those which are not already captured. Visit http://act.ai/MOE4xC for the final, approved version of these indicators.

We expect that data on these measures will be collected at the same time as other data collection (for example, financial data through quarterly reporting) and will be reported to the international board and management regularly. The exact frequency will differ for each measure but will range from quarterly to annually. We are investigating which systems to use to collect data.

We need to do more work to understand how the individual frameworks of countries will support the collection of this data. But that work has started, and we will produce more detailed guidance over time. For the latest guidance, visit http://act.ai/MOE4xC

Priority one: Deepen the impact of our work by having an effective programme framework that ensures integration, coherence and quality at all levels.

Indicators:
- percentage of programmes compliant with the guidelines in this document
- percentage of programmes that have been considered within the funding planning framework

Priority two: Raise our profile and increase our supporter base to more than five million people around the world working towards achieving our mission.

Indicators:
- number of supporters, broken down by appropriate category
- ActionAid’s awareness scores, tested on a market-by-market basis (exact measure to be defined).

Priority three: Diversify and raise our global annual income to more than 350 million euros per year by 2017.

Indicator:
- amount of income and percentage breakdown by type, source and restriction.

Priority four: Increase our own people power, valuing our diverse staff, building their capacity to deliver on this ambitious strategy, and specifically investing in women’s leadership.

Indicators:
- People in Aid accreditation rating (an external measure of our overall effectiveness within human resources and organisational development)
- percentage of women in leadership positions
- staff turnover.
Priority five: Strengthen members and expand the federation, while enhancing mutual accountability, with support from an effective international secretariat.

Indicators:
- number of countries classified by internal audit as “at risk”
- a measure of our mutual accountability (yet to be defined)
- the effectiveness of the international secretariat, measured annually through a survey of members and the international board.

Priority six: Establish effective systems and processes to improve financial management, planning and reporting and the monitoring of our work.

Indicators:
- percentage of financial reports produced on time and correct first time
- percentage of “key data points” available from all management information systems.

Priority seven: Expand strategically into new countries to advance our mission, based on clear criteria and transparent processes.

Indicator: to be defined as we further develop our work in this area.

The PAMF and ActionAid monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems

We have agreed that all countries must have a monitoring and evaluation framework and systems aligned to the ActionAid international strategy by the end of 2012. We also expect all programmes (from local to international level) to have their own monitoring and evaluation frameworks, although we do not expect this within the same timeframe.

ActionAid understands the monitoring and evaluation framework to be the overall description of what you are monitoring, when and how. The monitoring and evaluation system is the description of how you are going to operationalise the framework (including your plan for specifically how to monitor, when, who is collecting, analysing and reporting on data collected and to whom, with reporting deadlines).

ActionAid requires all programmes to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to:
- ensure we consistently and systematically track our work, for both accountability and learning purposes, providing evidence of the value of our efforts and obtaining feedback to improve our work
- cost effectively gather information to meet the needs of different stakeholders (donors, supporters, board and colleagues), avoiding duplicate parallel systems
- provide data and analysis to support our advocacy work
- generate insights and learning on which strategies and approaches are more or less effective in different contexts and circumstances, leading to ongoing improvement of programme quality
- help you track and take account of the changing context and ensure a timely response.

Some of the key building blocks of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems are:
- strong programme design, incorporating monitoring and evaluation
- the development of clear change objectives and resulting outcomes
- key indicators and guiding questions
- baseline data
- tracking the numbers and categories of people we reach.

The four elements of the PAMF, adjusted to your programme context and complemented by your own content priorities for monitoring and evaluation, lie at the core of what we monitor through all programmes, at all levels, across the whole federation. For more information and guidance on what monitoring and evaluation frameworks and systems are, and how you can develop them, visit http://act.ai/Ljp9lb
2. Our programme cycle and policies

Introduction

Over the past decade, ActionAid has become well known for our simple and participatory Accountability, Learning and Planning System, known as ALPS. Our ALPS document is at http://act.ai/MF70vF. All the essential programme management elements from ALPS are now integrated into this section of the resource book so ActionAid staff and partners can access the key information in one place. However, there are many supplementary resources that put much more flesh on this. As we develop new requirements and guidelines, you can access these on the Hive (http://act.ai/Lip91b). We will integrate other aspects of ALPS into a new mutual accountability framework in 2013.

ActionAid’s programme planning cycle applies to all levels of our work and to different timeframes (from annual to medium and long term). Our programme cycle has four basic stages, which are common sense and echo the *Reflection-Action* process that we use to work on conscientisation with excluded groups. The stages are:

1. analyse (or reflect on) the context
2. decide what to do (plan/strategise)
3. take action/implement
4. review or reflect on the action taken.

This reflection-action cycle is the basis for everything we do!
This basic programme cycle applies equally to:

- **local rights programmes** (our long-term engagement in particular communities)
- **national rights programmes** (where we have national partners/sustained engagement on an issue that may involve multiple local programmes and national work)
- **international programmes** (where we are working together on a multi-country programme or campaign, linked to achieving a key change promise or some element of a promise).

This cycle also applies over the long, medium and short term.

- **long term**, we will have an initial appraisal for any new programme, develop a long-term strategy (for example, over six years or 10 years), have a clear monitoring framework, implement and then conduct a final evaluation
- **medium term**, within the overall framework of a longer-term programme, we may have two or three periods of a three-year cycle, where we do updated appraisals/context analysis (to respond to a changing environment), three-year planning, implementation and a mid-term evaluation
- **short term**, sitting within a three-year cycle, we will have an annual process, updating our appraisal of the context and monitoring framework, developing an annual plan, implementing it and then reviewing and reflecting on it.

**Beyond these more formal processes, the essential process of reflection and action becomes embedded in the way we work at every level, every week and ideally every day!**

Our own process needs to echo the Reflection-Action process we support locally.
Phase one: appraisal/context analysis

Further internal guidance notes are at http://act.ai/Mh3nfV

“An appraisal is an exercise undertaken to explore and understand the context, feasibility and value of new medium- and long-term partnerships and programmes on the basis of financial, technical and political considerations.” Interim ALPS, 2011

A strong rights programme, whether local, national or international is built on a sound and deep analysis of the context. This requires intensive appraisals, which we require before starting any:

- new country programme or allowing a new affiliate/member to join the federation
- new long-term local, national or international rights programme
- significant new partnerships (carried out within the larger programme appraisal).

As a full appraisal for a new programme is an intensive process involving multiple stakeholders, we recommend doing a rapid pre-assessment or pre-appraisal. A pre-appraisal lets us identify partners or programmes we can build relationships with over a year to test their suitability for longer-term engagement and investment. A crucial part of this is exploring the feasibility and appropriateness of different funding sources.

The essence of a strong appraisal is a deep analysis of the context: of power, of institutions, of vulnerabilities and of rights. These are the same lenses of analysis that we seek to guarantee as part of the integrated community level Reflection-Action processes. Your appraisal or context analysis process becomes part of this.

It should always aim to help people living in poverty, your partner organisations, allies and ActionAid staff to deepen their understanding of the position and condition of excluded groups, the specific situation of women, the rights violations people face, the different forms of power, the actors who could be allies or enemies and the risks faced.

We do this by integrating different types of analysis within a Reflection-Action process to build a comprehensive analysis of rights and power. These elements include:

- **rights analysis**, identifying people living in poverty and excluded groups and their condition and positions; the key areas of rights violations; the perpetrators and duty bearers; and the state of people’s rights awareness and organisation
- **power/resource analysis**, identifying the economic, social and political resources people have (disaggregated for men and women); and exploring different forms of power (visible, hidden and invisible; public, private and intimate) and how these are manifested
- **actor and institution analysis**, identifying the actors and institutions that are friends/enemies/neutral/not to be trusted, and analysing the reasons for their action or quietness
- **women’s rights analysis**, identifying the division of labour; productive and reproductive roles; unpaid care; economic status; decision-making power; patterns of violence; and harmful practices that violate rights
- **vulnerability analysis**, identifying the disasters people are most vulnerable to (for example, floods, conflict, drought, earthquakes, landslides and loss of productive ecosystems and/or natural resources); the groups that are most affected in such situations; their problems; and institutions that can help them
- **communications analysis**, identifying the most powerful media and the skills people living in poverty have to access them; and developing plans to support people to enhance the skills they need to contribute to changing power relations
- **risk analysis**, identifying the risk to ActionAid, partners and people living in poverty, including frontline rights activists; exploring political risks (harassment and arrests); operational risks (funding, closure of the organisation or inability to deliver, for example); socio-economic risks (social marginalisation in the family or community or risk to future employment opportunities, for example); and risk to human lives.
- **feasibility analysis**, identifying the funding, partners and staffing available and their suitability.
These cannot and must not be separate processes of analysis. Integration and coherence are everything!
Over the years, ActionAid has drawn on a wide basket of participatory tools to advance different forms of analysis. The integrated Reflect-Action process will draw on the full range of these (from Reflect, STAR, PVA and ELBAG, for example) to help us build, with people, a unitary and comprehensive process of analysis at different levels.

Beyond the need to ensure that we have a comprehensive and coherent process, there are other challenges involved in any analysis/appraisal process. The following reflections and insights can help you ensure that your appraisal process is effective:

• **Do a pre-appraisal before conducting a full appraisal.** This will give you a top-line overview of whether you should start a new programme, identifies potential partners and enables us to justify the investment in a more comprehensive appraisal – which you should only do after an entry phase of at least one year.

• **Use the entry phase to build a relationship with key partners and the community.** This will deepen our understanding of the context and our analysis of issues alongside people. In this period be very conscious of principle four (see chapter 2) and use our partnership policy as a key reference point. Testing the feasibility of child sponsorship and doing some funding planning is important in this entry phase. With regard to child sponsorship, key things to look at include the presence of other NGOs using sponsorship, the stability of the population, the number of children, the administrative capacity of the partner and the willingness of communities to engage.

• **Recognise that from the moment we engage in an appraisal, we enter the power dynamic.** We are never invisible or neutral and we need to be critically conscious of our own power – of the fact that our involvement in the process will influence the responses that people provide.

• **Accept that visible power is obviously easier to perceive!** It is clear that invisible power will be more difficult to perceive, but we need to keep this actively in mind and ensure that we do not let the surface appearances of power limit our analysis. People may not be open to discussing sensitive issues when we meet them for the first time, so we need to build trust if we want to dig deeper.

• **Involve people at every stage in the process – not just as informants.** If we want to build trusting relationships with people living in poverty we need to engage them in analysis of data and drawing of conclusions.

• **Find and use the data that is already available!** There is often data already available from secondary sources that has already been collected by government agencies or others. Unless there are clear flaws in it we should draw on what is already there.

• **Prioritise the analysis of information over the gathering of it!** Data collection is simple but critical analysis of it is much more challenging. One powerful statistic may be more valuable than a hundred Excel sheets. Less is more!

• **Make sure your process and analysis are linked across levels and issues.** If you are doing an appraisal for a local rights programme, make sure that it is linked to national processes and that your local analysis is informed by and informs your national analysis. At national level, ensure that you are informed by and inform local and international analyses. Similarly, ensure that your analysis of education and food security is connected to women’s rights and budget or policy analysis.

• **Use the appraisal to inform your programme design.** This should be obvious, but sometimes huge data collection takes place revealing a complex reality, yet programmes are still designed based on prior assumptions and prejudices. The appraisal must be useful to those who are doing it.
• **Collate data so you can use it to inform a baseline.** As well as informing programme design, the appraisal will collate data to inform a baseline. You should develop a full baseline once you have a strategy in place and have agreed indicators. However, the appraisal process can be a rich resource of information for this. Visit [http://act.ai/Lip9lb](http://act.ai/Lip9lb) for guidelines on baselines and indicators.

• **Store data in an accessible way so it can be revisited and used.** Information is only useful if you keep it in an accessible format – and if people access, review, update and use it. This can be a key part of ensuring we are transparent and accountable.

• **Consider the value for money of a potential programme.** You can find a quick guide to multiple criteria analysis on the Hive ([http://act.ai/LeoGvN](http://act.ai/LeoGvN)).

• **Establish a timeframe and parameters for exit.** No programme will continue indefinitely. Understanding the time-limited nature of the work from the start helps to frame our programme design to foster sustainability.

• **Consider the potential impact (positive or negative) of programming on the environment and natural resources.** Include environmental criteria in baseline data collection. Given the inter-connectedness of livelihoods to the availability of resources/quality of the environment, we should seek to understand any trade-offs between social, economic and environmental outcomes, and make informed programming decisions.

### Criteria for selecting new programmes

The following are minimum guidelines for good practice in identifying new programmes.

New programmes should:

• be **driven by our strategy**, drawing on the international strategy and country strategies as relevant
• be clear about the **excluded groups** we plan to work with
• be clear about how they will **contribute to advancing our theory of change**
• be sure that they will be able to **comply with our eight HRBA principles** outlined in the resource book (see minimum checklist on page 30, chapter 2)
• ensure that we will be able to find appropriate partners (see principle four on page 30, chapter 2)
• consider whether they have or could leverage the necessary **competence or technical expertise** to work in a particular geography, on a particular issue, or with a particular group of excluded people
• ensure that **sources of funding** have been researched and where confirmed, that there is the capacity, competence and systems to ensure donor accountability and compliance requirements
• assess the **technical feasibility**. Can we work cost effectively? Can we mitigate against risks so overall risk is reasonable?
• consider their potential environmental impacts and compare these with alternatives
• ensure they are clear that they are adding value!
Starting in new countries

Our People’s Action strategy commits us to expanding strategically into new countries. This is an essential part of adjusting to a fast-changing world and helping us to secure the resources, partnerships, skills and political influence to achieve our strategic ambitions. We commit to expanding to new countries based on their potential for:

- political influence, programme impact and mobilisation of resources
- partnerships relevant to furthering our mission and objectives
- raising ActionAid’s general credibility, visibility and profile
- bringing in significant knowledge, skills and experiences
- forging mergers with like-minded organisations that can contribute to the federation
- becoming affiliates within a clear timeline.

It is important to recognise that as we undertake this comprehensive analysis with people living in poverty, we are supporting an empowerment process. Good programme design is ongoing and is part of the core of our HRBA. You can explore all the analysis questions above and all the different threads of analysis we support in-depth through a Reflection-Action circle or some other community process which is an integral part of our programme. Appraisal and context analysis should not to be seen as one-off or extractive processes (that serve only our institutional interests). They are ongoing, need continual refreshment and can be woven into the fabric of the programmes we design with people living in poverty.

The questions in the table below are indicative and while they are listed under different subheadings, in practice you need to address them in an integrated way. You will also need to adapt them depending on your context. You will frame questions differently depending on whether you are appraising a local rights programme, a national programme or an international programme. However, all these threads of analysis will be relevant at all levels.
### Analysing rights: some key questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Analysis of existing data/statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Semi-structured interviews and group discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rights analysis tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constitutions, declarations and laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fish bone (rights analysis in the middle with causes at the bottom and effects on top).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysing the content of laws and policies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a law or policy that contributes to the problem by protecting the interests of some people over others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is there a law or policy that helps address the particular issue you have chosen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is adequate government money budgeted to implement the solution described in the policy or law?</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysing the structures that implement laws and policies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To what extent do the police enforce the law fairly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To what extent do the courts enable men and women to find a solution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the legal system expensive, corrupt or inaccessible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are there support services where people can get help to access the system fairly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Through what policies and programmes are rights implemented and monitored for achievement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What challenges are there with the implementation of these policies and programmes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To what extent do existing programmes and services work in a discriminatory way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does a government or non-governmental agency exist to ensure the law is implemented?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysing culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Are there any political or social values and beliefs that contribute to the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In what way do cultural beliefs contradict basic rights?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How do different groups get to know their rights and how to access their rights?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do family and social pressures block a fair solution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do psychological issues play a role? Do people lack belief in their self-worth?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Analysing rights: some key questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What level of control (ability to access or make decisions) do people living in poverty have over:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>— economic resources (for example, land, finance, forests and machinery)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— social resources (for example, information, groups or networks, religious or cultural institutions)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— political resources (for example, ability to vote and participate in decision-making)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Who has most power over these resources formally and informally (or visibly/invisibly)? How are local power dynamics in respect of these resources connected to district level/national/international power dynamics? |

| What are the power dynamics that affect decisionmaking within households (between men/women/older generation/children etc) |

| What examples are there of people living in poverty gaining power, for example through organisation and mobilisation? |

| What examples of positive/transformative use of power are there? |

### Possible tools

- Power over, power to, power with, power within
- Public, private and intimate power
- Power cube
- Mobility mapping
- Social mapping
- Resource mapping
- Faces of power – visible, hidden and invisible power
- A participatory matrix focusing on different forms of power and who holds them
- Access and control profile
- Resource value tool.

### Analysing actors and institutions: some key questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which actors and institutions are:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>— friends of people living in poverty/excluded groups?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— enemies?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— neutral?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— potential allies for specific objectives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Which institutions and actors are duty bearers or have the power to advance respect for key rights? How are they connected from local to national and international levels? What have they done to date? What more could they do and what blocks them from doing more? How might we influence them? |

| Are there differences within these institutions – progressive and regressive voices or forces – and can we exploit these to good effect? |

| Are these institutions transparent – can we and others access information about them and their budgets, for example? What information do we need to advance the struggle for rights? |

| What organisations are our allies in the struggle for rights and what support can they bring? |

| What institutions and actors will actively seek to block change and what can be done to neutralise them? |

### Possible tools

- Force field analysis
- Venn diagrams
- Friends, foes and fence sitters
- Stakeholder analysis
- Relationship mapping
- Village and social mapping
- In-depth interview schedules.

Table continues overleaf...
### Analysing women’s rights: some key questions

Many questions are already posed in sections above. On the whole, we should integrate women’s rights analysis into all our other analyses, but there may be some additional questions to explore:

- What is the division of labour between men and women within the most excluded groups, in respect of productive, reproductive and social roles?
- Is there a difference in women’s access to and control over different resources? Or differences in their level of awareness/capacity/organisation/education that affects their ability to demand and secure their rights?
- What impact does this have on women’s rights, including their health, economic status and decision-making power?
- Do powerful institutions (and allies) treat women differently than men and if so how can this be challenged?
- What violence do women face?

### Analysing vulnerability: some key questions

- What exposes people to vulnerability in this context?
- Is this location exposed to floods, conflict, drought or earthquakes? If so, how are people’s rights affected when these occur?
- What types of violations do women face in different situations in any of these disasters?
- For the key rights violations you have prioritised, analyse:
  - where violations happen
  - when they started and how often they happen
  - who experiences violations most severely (men, women, boys, girls or the elderly?)
  - who is/are the main perpetrator(s) of the violation(s)?
- What impact do these violations have on you or on women in your community? What have you, as a community, done in the past and what are you doing now?
- What have other people or organisations done, or what are they currently doing, to address the problem?
- Who do you think is responsible for resolving the issue?
- What do you think they should be doing to resolve the issue?
- What structures are in place to resolve this problem?
- Do you have access to and support from these structures?
- Are the services working or not? If not, why not?
- What actions can be taken to respond to the causes and effects of the violations at community, national and international level?
- How do we assess progress of the actions?
- Whose responsibility is it to monitor progress and who should the progress be reported to?
- What has been the nature of climate change in the area? How has it affected people? And how has this impacted on women specifically?

### Possible tools

- Power, inclusion and rights-based approaches has over 100 pages of practical tools on how to do feminist structural analysis, stakeholder analysis, mapping of rights contexts and priority group analysis.
- Our Participatory vulnerability analysis guide
- Timeline to show changes over time.
### Analysing communications: some key questions

- What are the dominant means of communication locally (language/literacy/media) and to what extent can people gain access to and control these?
- What are the communication practices associated with key spaces where power is wielded and decisions made?
- What communication capacities do people need to develop to ensure a sustainable shift in power relations and how can we support these?
- What new media/information communication technologies are available or affordable and can be used to most effect to enhance the voices of people living in poverty?

### Possible tools

- Communication and power and related resources on [www.reflect-action.org](http://www.reflect-action.org)

### Analysing risks and feasibility: some key questions

It is important to address both risks that apply to communities and risks that apply to ActionAid staff and partners.

- What are the political risks to ActionAid, partners and rights holders? (by political, we mean harassment, arrests etc)
- What are the operational risks to the programme? (this refers to risks to funding, closure of the organisation and inability to deliver objectives, for example)
- Is there potential for conflict of methodologies between ActionAid and other organisations/actors?
- Are there risks of natural and/or man-made disasters occurring in the community? Which disasters could occur?
- What are the socio-economic risks to individual staff or staff of partner organisations? (this refers to social marginalisation in family or community or risk to future employment opportunities, for example).
- How likely are these risks – high, medium, low?
- What can we do to reduce these risks?
- Is suitable funding available to deliver a programme and are staff and partners available to run programmes cost effectively?
- Are we confident that our work will represent value for money?
- How does our intervention fit in with our comparative advantage?
- Are we avoiding duplication with other actors? What results do we hope to achieve from the resources we put in and are there multiplier effects?

### Possible tools

- Risk matrix
- Risk register.
Some useful tools for power analysis

We have compiled some examples of practical analytical tools that can advance your analysis of power and rights. You can use these during appraisal and context analysis, for strategic planning, for participatory review and reflection or for evaluation. To access them, go to www.people-action.org

The first set of resources looks at different conceptions of power and different frameworks that may advance our analysis of power in a particular context. They include:

- Defining power and ideology
- Mapping forms of power: Visible, hidden, invisible
- Mapping spaces of power: Closed, invited, created
- Mapping levels of power: Local, national, global
- Alternative forms of power: Over, to, with, within
- Public, private and intimate power

A second set of tools helps us build an analysis of power from our own experience, and includes:

- Body mapping power
- Calendars of gender roles and relations
- Starting with ourselves: Personal experiences of power
- Revealing and tracking power within your group
- The real power of participation: Participation ladders
- Visualising power in a Chapati diagram
- Reflecting on ActionAid's own practice of power
- Analysing power in our partnerships
- How power is not always the problem

We will add other tools over the coming months and years to create an interactive basket of tools constantly refreshed by practitioners and trainers. The People’s Action site will be navigable in multiple ways, so you can search, for example, for resources on power, rights or vulnerability or search for resources by strategic objective/key change promise.

Others have developed similar resources. These include:

- www.powercube.net from the Institute of Development Studies
- www.policy-powertools.org from the International Institute of Environment and Development

See also: ActionAid. Critical webs of power and change. 2005. (http://act.ai/MJsd7q)
Analysing natural resources and environmental impact

To develop an understanding of whether the impact on the environment (positive or negative) of programming is relevant, and whether you should collect baseline information and monitor data on it, consider the questions below.

This is not an inclusive list, but is intended to stimulate thinking about how to integrate environmental issues into programming and operations.

Natural resources/ecosystem services/land use

- Will the programme promote a significant increase or decrease in the amounts of natural resource materials people or communities use? For example, water, minerals or wood? **Reducing resource use is a (+); increasing is a (-).**
- Will the programme promote a significant shift in current land use? For example, forest to agriculture, one dominant crop to another, diverse agriculture to mono-cropping, significant addition of non-permeable/built areas? **Shifting to sustainable agricultural practices is generally a (+). Shifting from one crop to another may need more assessment to know if it is a (+) or (-).** Generally, keeping native ecological systems and resources is a (+). **Afforestation is also generally a (+).**
- Do changes in land use increase or decrease the area’s biodiversity? **Increasing biodiversity is generally a (+).**

Energy

- Will programmes promote a significant change in requirements for electricity and/or fossil fuels? **Requiring more fossil fuel or grid electricity is a (-). Increasing the amount of distributed sources of generation and generation from renewable sources is generally a (+).**
- Will the programme promote a reduction in carbon and/or particulate emissions, for example, through deployment of smoke-free stoves? **Improving efficiency of existing sources of emissions is a (+).**

Inputs/toxins/waste

- Will programmes promote a significant change in requirements for synthetic inputs such as (synthetic) fertiliser, pesticides and dyes? **Reducing synthetic fertilisers and pesticides is a (+). Reducing industrially-produced inputs such as dyes is a (+), but may need further assessment.**
- Will programmes promote a change to the amount of waste people/communities generate?
- Will programmes promote a change in the disposal of this waste? For example, in a river versus in a field or aerobic composting (active composting) versus anaerobic composting (burying).
- Will changes in land use or practices have an impact on the emissions or sequestration of carbon?

Infrastructure

- Will programmes promote significant infrastructure development? For example, roads, sewers, waste water treatment facilities, water supply, ports and power transmission? These kinds of developments might be a (+) as they reduce untreated waste in a resource area, but may be a (-) as they increase use of vehicles or increase rainwater run-off.
Other operational considerations

Additional operations will almost always result in additional impact to the environment. Our goal is to have the greatest programmatic/mission impact with the least environmental impact. Therefore, in most cases, operational impact will be relative to other alternatives. For example, if the mission and programmatic outcomes of two options are the same, then consider whether the energy (electricity, fuel), paper and/or air travel impacts will be the same as well. You will need to use your judgement when the mission/programmatic goals for two options are not the same. In these cases, the goal is to make informed choices about environmental impact when it comes to strategic decision-making.

Phase two: Strategic development and planning

Further internal guidance notes are at http://act.ai/Mh3nfV

“Strategies are key documents that guide ActionAid International’s work at the international, national and local levels, creating a sense of politics, purpose and priorities. Strategies create inspiration and focus. Strategies help to create a common understanding and guide the planning process, building synergy and coherence across our work at different levels. Strategies are effectively our statement of intent and commitment or promise.”

Interim ALPS

Strategies are required for:

- international strategy (every five to six years)
- country strategies (every three to six years, starting from within one year of approved appraisal).

Strategic plans are required for:

- local, national and international programmes
- international secretariat (twice within the six-year strategy period).

This resource book lays out a strategic framework that will guide ActionAid programmes everywhere in delivering our People’s Action strategy. It should help you in your strategic planning at all levels. If you are working on a strategy or plan in a local or national rights programme, it is essential that you align to the HRBA principles. It is also important that you connect as much as possible to the critical pathways for delivering on the key change promises that are most relevant in your context. It is important that you have a combination of a long-term strategic perspective (strategy paper) and a short-term practical plan (strategic plan).

While annual plans are key for working out what you can deliver within the available budget, we should never get caught up with short-termist thinking. One of ActionAid’s strengths has been and should continue to be a long-term engagement in change processes, enabling us to be strategic in outlook rather than projectised.

In most contexts, we are working with partners who have their own strategies and plans. It is important to respect these, and to work together to find common ground. Our strategies should not override those of our independent partners. We should not be trying to mould them in our image. Instead, we should seek to work in a harmonised way, helping them to adapt our strategic thinking to their practical context. Again, this involves a careful balance based on trust and mutual respect.

Whether you are developing an international programme, new country strategy or a strategic plan for a local rights programme, some useful insights to guide you include:
People's action in practice

In every context, a strategy should:
- be underpinned by a deep and thorough power, rights and vulnerability analysis
- clearly set out the specific rights that we will be seeking to advance
- be very clear about the change we are trying to bring about
- identify the people we will be aligning with and empowering
- specify the duty bearers we will be targeting
- identify the allies we may engage in solidarity and campaigning work
- clarify whether we are seeking to hold government responsible for efficiently delivering existing entitlements or whether we are seeking to change rules, policies or laws
- identify how we might respond to basic needs in a rights-based way
- show how the strategy inter-connects with work at other levels (relating to our People's Action strategy, country strategy paper and local rights strategies).

When developing a new strategy, the process is as important as the product. Implementation of the strategy will depend on ownership. The process needs to be as inclusive as possible, for example involving governance structures, management, staff and partners. This is about ensuring that we are applying all the principles of our HRBA (see chapter 2) to our strategy processes.

In any strategy process, you will need to deal with some really knotty issues. The first step is to be able to name them and then you need to enable people to look at them critically, from a distance. When developing the People's Action strategy, this involved constructing fictional future scenarios that followed through the logical consequences of taking different positions. This helped everyone see issues in a new light and rise above immediate tensions and conflicts. Using a scenario-building methodology can make a difference to your level of analysis.

Everyone wants focus, but you can often better achieve this through looking at coherence and inter-connections than reducing the scope of work. One of the biggest challenges is to ensure that there is coherence in the HRBA that we use in every sphere of work (including in fundraising and communications with supporters).

An external perspective is essential to enrich internal discussions. It is always dangerous to assume that you already understand your own organisation or the challenges of the external environment. It is important to be informed by:
- an external review/evaluation of the previous strategy period
- an external review of the context/environment in which you are working.

An internal perspective is equally crucial. Your own internal evaluation and peer reviews from colleagues can add new insights. It is of course essential to ensure you are drawing on insights from your appraisals/context analysis/review and reflection processes as you develop your strategy.

Clear indicators and a monitoring framework need to be defined as part of the strategy process. You should develop these collaboratively and they should enable us to track changes in the lives of people living in poverty, their level of empowerment and their access to rights and entitlements. You should also define performance indicators to help us measure ActionAid's own contribution to the process of change. You should include environmental indicators if relevant to the programme. To determine relevance see page 218.

A comprehensive baseline should be elaborated as part of the strategy process. Drawing on material from the appraisal, the baseline is only really complete once you have made strategic choices and agreed indicators. The baseline should describe the initial status of the indicators set to help monitor progress against the strategic objectives, for example including initial levels of empowerment as perceived by rights holders themselves or initial levels of support for a campaign objective.

Annual plans should be clearly rooted in and connected to the strategic plan. The context is always changing so you cannot slavishly follow a strategy. Recognise that it needs to be adapted, fleshed out and actions designed based on the practical realities of resources available (financial and human).
Key questions on cost effectiveness at strategy development and planning stage

Development and planning stage

- Do we have a clear and exhaustive theory of change based on evidence?
- Is the budget linked to the theory of change?
- Do we have clear objectives, targets and baselines?
- Can we compare the costs of different interventions to achieve similar outcomes?
- Have we included all costs: staff, volunteer time and other inputs such as land and community engagement?
- Is this intervention sustainable in the long run?
- Have we decided which type of value for money method we will choose and its implications for data collection systems? Are systems in place or do they need to be developed?

Developing a campaign plan

When developing a campaign plan, the following chain of questions may help:

- What is the problem/rights violation you are addressing? What are its root causes? What aspect of the problem can you make a difference to now? Who does it impact on? (remember to consider the ways it will impact differently on women and men) Who benefits and in what ways from the existence of the problem? How do they benefit?
- What is the particular solution that you are advocating? Is it credible and compelling? Are there solutions that rights holders have already started to build in practice? Could we partner with rights holders to create alternative solutions to a problem that we could then advocate through the campaign?
- What needs to happen to bring about the solution? What specific outcome or decision do you want? For example, what is your campaign objective? What are the “stepping stones” (the actions that need to be taken, the things that need to be done) to bring about the objective?
- Who has the power to bring about that outcome (your campaign target)?
- What is the best way to get to them? Who or what would influence them to do what you want? Who do you need to work with/convince/mobilise? Your campaign allies, partners, secondary targets or audiences? Who will be working against you (your campaign opponents)?
- What action do you want your allies and audiences to take?
- What does your audience believe/need/want in order to take the desired action? How can you craft the right call to action (your campaign action message) and use the right people or media to reach your audience (your campaign channels)?

We outline some key steps for developing a campaign on page 80, chapter 4.
Developing a country strategy paper: Linking macro-micro level analyses in India

ActionAid India works with a wide range of social movements and organisations taking up various issues at multiple levels. In an attempt to build alliances between diverse groups of marginalised people, ActionAid India facilitated a “platform” process to bring together different movements, organisations and networks around issues of common concern. By using this platform process, ActionAid India facilitated community participation in developing its country strategy paper at all levels, ensuring links from the grassroots to national levels.

At the grassroots level, they worked with partners to facilitate extensive consultation processes with different social groups. The process helped to promote political awareness and confidence among the groups to discuss how rights and responsibilities are perceived, who has access to and/or is denied entitlements and why, and to develop a clear idea of the changes people want.

At the state level, ActionAid India facilitated a sharing of issues that emerged from the grassroots level between partners and people representing different social groups. Subsequently, they connected different movements, organisations and networks, and built platforms around those common issues. At the national level, these platforms and networks fed into ActionAid India’s overall strategic direction.

Understanding funding planning

Funding planning

Funding planning (as illustrated above) is not a process in itself, rather a way of combining existing processes in a coherent way to meet a number of objectives:

- to ensure ActionAid’s fundraising processes do not result in the organisation being donor-driven
- to prevent developed and aspirational pieces of work being lost during the planning process
- to make funding transparent and to match the demand for funding with funding opportunity.
People’s action in practice

Phase three: monitoring during implementation

“Participatory review and reflection processes (PRRP) are the core component of ActionAid’s approach to regular and ongoing monitoring of the progress and outcomes of our work. The term ‘PRRP’ refers to ongoing participatory monitoring mechanisms and to periodic moments of more in-depth review with key stakeholders on the progress of our work, where data collected through our monitoring processes are gathered, analysed and consolidated for learning and accountability purposes. PRRPs enhance our relationships with and accountability to primary stakeholders, keep us focused and energised and help ensure that we are on track in achieving our objectives.” Interim ALPS, 2011

Having done an appraisal and developed a strategic plan, we move into the implementation period, which is of course the heart of our work. However, in this core phase we do not blindly follow our plans. Rather, we
always review and reflect to ensure that we are on the right track and making progress. We need to continually question whether our assumptions are correct and whether wider changes in the context mean we need to revise our plans. This keeps us flexible and responsive to a changing world. The PRRP process is our main means of doing this, ensuring all stakeholders are involved.

The People’s Action Monitoring Framework in the previous section outlines the full spectrum of areas that we will monitor during any programme, including our approach/theory of change; our delivery on our promises; our coverage and impact on people; and our organisational priorities and values. All these will be relevant within PRRP processes. Our monitoring and evaluation requirements for all programmes specify having monitoring frameworks with clear objectives, outcomes, indicators and baseline information. You should use these in PRRP processes (http://act.ai/KTjayH) so you are clear about what to monitor, why and what information to collect. You can collect critical stories of change (http://act.ai/MtFAqH) through rigorous review and reflection processes to generate evidence/stories of change which provide qualitative information. There are many other tools too, such as rights registers and outcome mapping (http://act.ai/MFfUZZ).

Some important insights we have gathered over our years of supporting participatory review and reflections include:

- **Everyone at all levels of the organisation needs to do PRRPs**, including local staff and partners, senior leadership teams and trustees.
- **PRRPs should be ongoing with synthesis moments** linked to planning (usually around July) and reporting (usually between December and February).
- **People living in poverty should be involved** in the review and reflection processes wherever possible, as it is part of the empowerment process.
- As most of our work is with partners, we need to agree the parameters of PRRPs as part of our memorandums of understanding, so we are clear and transparent from the start about the processes we expect.
- The most common mistake is to see PRRPs as one-off moments once a year. You should see them as ongoing, with particular synthesis moments (at least twice a year) to inform planning and reporting.
- An ongoing process of evidence collection against agreed indicators is crucial to inform a good review and reflection process.
- **PRRPs should include** reflection on changes in the external context; on the relevance and effectiveness of our activities; on the progress made against our objectives based on agreed indicators; and on an analysis of our assumptions/theory of change. There should be some specific reflection on whether programmes have been designed and delivered in line with the eight principles/minimum standards of our HRBA programmes (see chapter 2).
- **We can learn as much from failures as we can from successes.** We need a culture that embraces failure and the drawing of learning from it. Every report should highlight at least one major failure and what we learned from it. As Laozi said, “Failure is the foundation of success; success is the lurking place of failure.” We should always reflect on whether programmes have unintended impacts, and whether they are positive or negative.
- **The main value of a PRRP is to inform/guide the people involved in doing the PRRP.** It is not to satisfy an external requirement. It is not just about producing a report to satisfy a line manager or donor, it is about enriching our own practice.
- **In the PRRP we should see “triple loop learning”**. We want to see if we did things right (did we carry out the actions we planned and achieve the right outputs?); if we did the right things, were our objectives rightly framed for achieving strategic outcomes?; and if our assumptions were right, will our theory of change really deliver impact/achieve our goals?
Value for money at monitoring and implementation stages

To analyse the value for money of a programme on a regular basis, you should ask some key questions to analyse cost effectiveness at monitoring and implementation stage:

- Are we flexible enough to track unexpected/unintended impacts and modify objectives and data collection accordingly?
- Where results vary from expectations, are we able to explain why?
- Are stakeholders involved in identifying benefits? How are their perspectives included?
- Are we systematically collecting data and is there evidence that we are achieving what we aimed for?

Sometimes your monitoring will lead to a change
Phase four: Evaluation

Further internal guidance notes are at http://act.ai/Mh3nfV

We use a range of peer reviews and external evaluations to analyse progress against our strategic plans, to hold ourselves accountable and to inform future strategies. We review our international and national strategies at the end of each strategy period (usually five or six years) and review our local rights programmes at least every six years. Mid-term reviews (often after three years) are recommended but optional.

It is never easy to review or evaluate objectively. There are always pressures on us to prove our successes and the effectiveness of our work, to satisfy donors, supporters and managers. But an honest, critical approach to evaluation is essential if we are to learn and adjust our strategies based on learning – this has been one of ActionAid’s strengths over many years. Whether reviews or evaluations are done in local rights programmes, at country level or for international programmes or campaigns, there are some common considerations:

- It is important to **bring in external perspectives** so that we see our work through the eyes of others. However, we need to make sure that external consultants understand our mission, values, principles and approach and that the way they work is consistent with our principles. There should be a gender specialist on every external evaluation team and their approach should be participatory, engaging people living in poverty in the process in an empowering way. We need to avoid situations where evaluators have a conflict of interest which might limit their objectivity.

- All evaluations and reviews should, as a minimum, **assess programmes against the eight principles** of our HRBA as laid out on page 30, chapter 2.

- We need to **be proactive in creating space for the participation of women and other excluded groups in the evaluation process.** We need to make a conscious effort to create safe spaces for women to participate without fear during evaluation, ensuring the location and time of meetings is appropriate, the language accessible and the facilitation suitable. A women’s rights lens should inform our whole evaluation process.

- We need to **be conscious of our own power in the evaluation process.** We need to find the right balance between providing adequate support while not compromising the independence of an external evaluation. We need to recognise that some respondents may be unwilling to speak freely in our presence.

- We need to **ensure that external reviews are rigorous in selecting case studies, focus communities and countries – against clear criteria in a random manner (to guard against positive selection).** Too often, organisations seek to manipulate what external evaluators see, which distorts findings and limits learning.

- **We should offer a management response to all external evaluations or reviews.** This will help us be transparent about how we see the process and what we have learned/drawn from it. We should not do this in a defensive manner, but in the spirit of recognising that we can often learn more from failures or difficulties than from simple successes.

- A peer review dimension should be integrated with external evaluations (or should follow them). At one point, we encouraged peer reviews after external evaluations, but now we increasingly see the opportunity of linking these, and having peers join external teams. This enhances mutual accountability and learning and internal solidarity. This can be extended to having local partners involved in peer evaluations of other local rights programmes where there are connections. These are excellent means for us to generate and share learning, building a more cohesive organisation.

- An evaluation is always a moment to review exit plans, even if we are only mid-way through the planned timeframe. You will have defined a timeframe for exit during the appraisal process. You should review and revisit this, considering the options for how to phase out, including through a sustainability period or solidarity phase.
Checklist for evaluations (from notes to accompany ALPS)

- Be very clear about the scope and objectives for the evaluation – you cannot look at everything from all angles – and set the terms of reference/recruit the consultants accordingly.
- Create an evaluation team with a team leader, liaison points in the programme staff and clear stakeholder representatives or contacts.
- Develop guiding questions for the evaluation based on the focus and objectives.
- Ensure a gender and women’s rights focus; one of the review team should have this responsibility.
- Map out key stakeholders and select those to be involved according to the objectives and focus of the evaluation.
- Time the evaluation well to ensure strong participation of those stakeholders.
- Involve staff throughout the planning to foster a cooperative, non-threatening atmosphere.
- The methodology for the evaluation should be designed to ensure meaningful and critical participation of stakeholders.
- Ensure that the responsibility and accountability for implementing findings and recommendations are clear from the start.
- Create strong feedback loops so that those participating can see what happens to their comments.
- Apart from the final report, consider other media and formats to share findings and learning with different audiences.

Key questions to ask to analyse cost effectiveness at evaluation stage

- Are we incorporating learning into future programmes?
- Was this a good use of resources relative to alternatives? What should we do differently next time?
- What value did this intervention create and for whom? How can we describe it in concrete ways?
- Is there evidence that our theory of change worked in practice?

Linking programme work and sponsorship

In the past there has been a gulf between our programme work and our main funding mechanism, child sponsorship, with staff having little connection and little joint planning or coordinated work. But in local rights programmes these two threads work with the same communities and the same people. Making stronger connections is win-win. There are many opportunities for child sponsorship and programme teams to work together at all stages in the life of a local rights programme.
Here are some areas and practical tips:

**Appraising new local programmes**

- Ensure that both child sponsorship staff and programme staff are recognised as key stakeholder groups in new appraisals and work together from the start; present a united team from the onset!
- **Ensure programme-led funding planning.** “The need comes first and then comes the funding.” But when child sponsorship has been identified as a potential funding solution it is important to factor into programme design the reporting requirements, child protection and child sponsorship policies.
- Include and consider children’s issues in the appraisal process, alongside other stakeholders, and these should be considered within an integrated approach to work locally.
- **Make the capacity to manage sponsorship a factor in partner selection.** Lead discussions about selecting potential partners and assessing the new area together.

**Implementing joint activities**

- Use sponsorship activities as opportunities for programme activities. Child message and child profile collections and photo updates are excellent opportunities to link child sponsorship and programme work (see box on page 41, chapter 2).
- Sensitise about sponsorship during programme activities. Do not treat sponsorship as a separate activity. Organise joint field visits and reinforce each other’s work.
- Connect around education work. Make sure sponsorship activities connect with schools as much as possible and contribute to Promoting rights in schools and wider education programme work.
- **Link sponsorship and engagement with youth.** When children outgrow sponsorship, create new means for them to be involved through youth networks and Activista.

**Providing training to ActionAid staff and partners**

- Deliver joint programme and sponsorship training. Programmes and sponsorship share a key stakeholder – the partner or local rights programme staff. These stakeholders often have to deliver on both sponsorship and programme requirements, so they should be trained jointly.

**Preparing annual plans**

- Include child sponsorship activities in the annual programme planning process. Child sponsorship activities should be part of the local rights programme annual planning process, and children, parents, and other community members must know what is expected of them in relation to child sponsorship activities; they should be involved in deciding when activities are done and how.
- Use planning to set report themes. The wider planning process is an ideal opportunity to set themes for sponsorship reports and activities.

**Doing PRRPs**

- Plan PRRPs and reviews jointly. Programme and sponsorship teams should plan PRRP exercises together, so that conscious efforts are made to engage children and tap into children’s views and opinions, alongside other stakeholders.

**Planning for phase out**

- Ensure there is joint planning of phase out from an early stage and that this is communicated clearly and transparently to communities, including children.
Postscript

Operationalising this resource book

The HRBA programme support team is dedicated to supporting local, national and international programmes to internalise and operationalise this resource book.

The team will help to design curriculum materials and support training workshops. It will facilitate peer support and exchanges to strengthen practice. It will accompany programmes in real time processes to apply HRBA when you are developing a new strategy or doing an evaluation.

There will be an exciting interactive website on People’s Action – creating a home for practical resources from around the world to advance our HRBA and our delivery of the 10 key change promises. This will be a forum for trainers and practitioners, a space for exchange and refreshing ideas. It will be a space for dialogue and critical reflection to keep us open and flexible and responsive to a changing world.

Importantly, this website will also be a space where policy analysts are helped to produce simple, accessible versions of their work – to guide practical analysis at local and national level. Every time someone produces a high level national or international report they will be expected to produce a one-page summary and a tool that can help people everywhere integrate this with their work locally and nationally.

This is a bold vision – one that binds us together into a coherent organisation – linking local, national and international work, and linking long-term grassroots empowerment work with campaigning and solidarity work. It is ambitious but it is essential! Our theory of change recognises the essential role that we all play in finding lasting solutions to poverty and injustice.

The strength of our unique global federation will be realised when we fully recognise our dual citizenship – a national and international identity – and when we come to recognise that we all have an essential role to play, whether we are a community facilitator, a country director, a sponsorship administrator or a high flying policy expert. It is through our collective efforts to promote people’s action that we will deliver on the long-term promise of a poverty-free planet.
**ActionAid** is a partnership between people in rich and poor countries, dedicated to ending poverty and injustice. We work with people all over the world to fight hunger and disease, seek justice and education for women, hold companies and governments accountable, and cope with emergencies in over 40 countries.

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