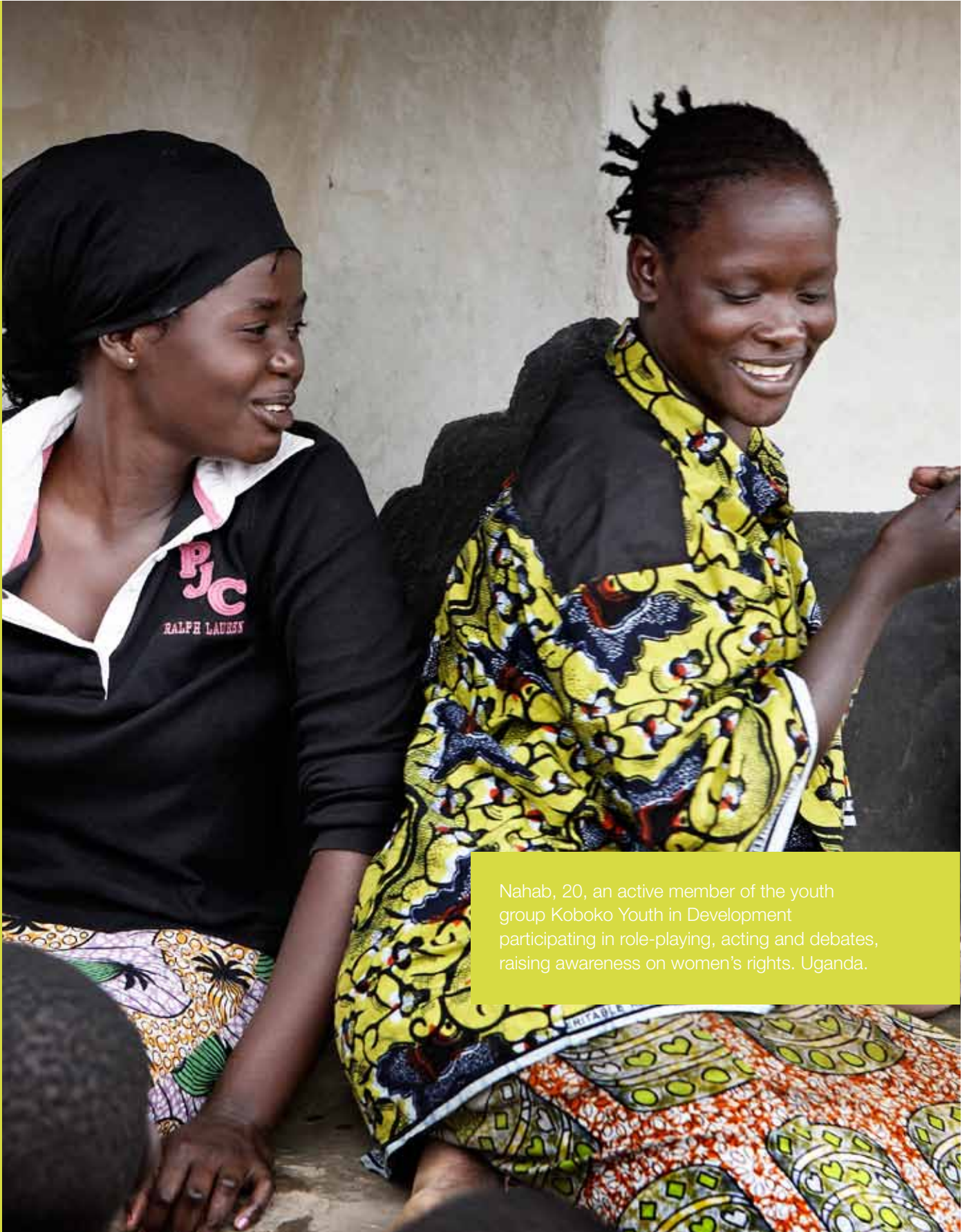




People's Action To End Poverty

ActionAid's Strategy
2012-2017

“Moving on from just fighting **against** poverty to working **for** long lasting solutions to poverty, advancing alternatives together with our partners and allies.”



Nahab, 20, an active member of the youth group Koboko Youth in Development participating in role-playing, acting and debates, raising awareness on women's rights. Uganda.

Front Cover:
Women leading a sit-in protest in the state capital of Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh in a build-up to the centenary of International Women's Day. India.

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ActionAid's Strategy 2012-2017

ActionAid activists from across Europe campaigning at the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg.



This strategy has emerged from an extensive participatory process. A comprehensive independent review from July-December 2010, "Taking Stock 3", helped us draw lessons from our previous strategy (*Rights to End Poverty 2005-2010*). Two "future strategy days" in October and December 2010 involved consultation with communities and partners around the world. Self-organised staff teams and individual staff came up with proposals for priority issues. A co-creative international conference in Johannesburg in January 2011 brought together 120 people including Board and Assembly members, international and country directors and heads of themes and functions. A diverse international team of ten people then developed drafts that were circulated repeatedly to staff, governance structures and partners, leading to extensive discussion and feedback. This document was signed off by ActionAid's International Board in May and approved by ActionAid's International Assembly in Tanzania in July 2011.

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I

Introduction

...ActionAid is a global federation working to end poverty and injustice with thousands of communities and millions of people across the planet...

Building on our learning and achievements over the past 40 years this International Strategy seeks to deepen ActionAid's impact in a fast-changing world. In recent years we enriched our practice of a human rights-based approach to development with women's rights as a priority across all our work. We've taken sides with some of the poorest communities around the world, defending their right to food, securing access to basic services and helping to stop corporate abuse. We've built the economic literacy of thousands of

excluded people so they can track budgets that affect them and hold governments to account. With social movements, partners and our supporters, we were at the forefront of securing education rights for millions of poor children. We also showed the interconnected, unified approach needed to address both HIV and AIDS and violence against women. Our human rights-based response to the 2005 Tsunami was applauded by an independent review panel. Our HungerFree campaign led to policy changes that benefited women farmers, helping them respond to the world food crisis. And as part of our own transformation we moved our International Secretariat to South Africa and developed a truly unique international and democratic federation – shifting more power to low-income countries and deepening our relevance.

Our previous strategy, *Rights to End Poverty* set a strong direction and helped us progress towards achieving our mission. However change is still needed. This Strategy therefore represents **a balancing of consolidation with innovation** as we pursue alternatives for a poverty-free planet. In this strategy we make it clear how we believe change happens and

Carolina with her bicycle provided by ActionAid working for girls' rights and protection against violence. Ghana.



Women taking part in a mass rally in coordination with ActionAid's HungerFREE campaign, Chitwan District, Nepal.



what our role and approach will be in bringing about this change. We commit ourselves to five core mission objectives and ten “**key change promises**” against which we will hold ourselves to account:

1. **securing women’s land rights**
2. **promoting sustainable agriculture**
3. **holding governments to account on public services**
4. **achieving redistributive resourcing of development**
5. **transforming education for girls and boys**
6. **harnessing youth leadership to end poverty and injustice**
7. **building people’s resilience to conflict and disaster**
8. **responding to disasters through rights**
9. **increasing women’s and girls’ control over their bodies**
10. **generating women-centred economic alternatives**

In the coming years we will also transform our leadership, improve our systems, diversify our

income and harness the remarkable people-power of our staff, our committed Boards and Assemblies, our volunteers and supporters, so that together we can:

- Move on from just fighting **against** poverty to working **for** long lasting solutions to poverty, advancing **alternatives** together with our partners and allies.
- Build **deeper connections**: linking people and movements across the planet and across issues; connecting our work locally, nationally and globally; and linking our programme, policy, campaigning and fundraising.
- Strengthen our **human rights-based approaches** with a greater focus on changing attitudes and behaviours, using mass communications and campaigning from the local to the global level.
- **Show the impact of our work more explicitly** on the lives of women, men, youth and children living in poverty, holding ourselves collectively accountable to delivering on our key change promises.



Poverty in a changing world

Local residents clearing rubble from gullies in flood-prone areas to reduce the risk during the rainy and hurricane season. Philippeau, Haiti



We are at a remarkable moment in the global struggle for a more just and sustainable world. The planet is changing rapidly – but not rapidly and positively enough for the billions of people who live daily with the profound injustice of poverty. Inequality, both within and across countries has increased in the past 20 years. As we set out our strategy for the coming years, we can see, from research and trend analyses, a volatile decade ahead full of challenges – and opportunities:

- Dramatic shocks and crises will inevitably occur – whether related to food, fuel, finances, climate or conflict – increasing human vulnerability and inequality.
- Over half the world's population will be

children or youth. Half will also be living in urban areas, shifting the location of poverty. Gender-based discrimination will persist as a cause of poverty and injustice, although women will be striving for increased leadership in all sectors.

- The rise of consumption and growing middle classes around the world will increase demands for energy and food, and put significant pressures on natural resources, especially in low- and middle-income countries.
- As the world faces up to its natural resource limits (notably of oil reserves, water, forests and land), there will be a more compelling agenda for advancing ecological justice, sustainable agriculture and development

models based on fair shares for all. A generation of young people with more community-based values may challenge the individualism of recent decades.

- Political and economic power will continue to shift away from the United States and Europe, towards a more multi-polar world. Economic powers including China, India, Brazil and South Africa will rise and re-emerge, expanding and transforming approaches to global governance and economic and social development.
- The capacity of states to take effective large-scale action against poverty will increase in many developing countries as they head towards middle income status; yet the temptation may also grow to use enhanced state power to enforce repressive policies that favour political elites or private sector interests. At the other end of the spectrum, a growing share of those living in extreme poverty are likely to be concentrated in fragile or predatory states where enforcing human rights obligations is extremely difficult.
- The globalisation agenda of the international financial institutions will likely continue to perpetuate unfair trade agreements and the privatisation of public services. However we are likely to see many “developmental states” challenging this doctrine to pursue more equitable and redistributive policies.
- Many multinational corporations will try to accumulate unprecedented market power and political influence, which often results in worker exploitation, land grabs, or tax dodging. The case for government regulation, international action and legally-binding frameworks to stop corporate abuse will likely become stronger because of increasing global awareness. More progressive corporations will contribute to finding sustainable solutions to ending poverty.

Gabriele Nunes da Silva Bernardes, 10, with her brothers Hugo Gabriel, 9 and Ruan Luiz, 7, and Wanderson Conceição de Oliveira Jr, 12, at Casa da Cultura which is playing a vital role in giving poor children and their families new skills and opportunities. Brazil.

- The rapid pace of technological development will accelerate further, in many cases deepening divides between the “haves and have nots”. At the same time it will create huge opportunities for democratising access to information and for people to be more involved in government and corporate processes. Online communities and social networking will continue to change the nature of activism, organising and campaigning.
- Civil society and people’s movements will find new ways to connect and strengthen their movements across the planet, making their voices heard and contributing to building more democratic and sustainable approaches to development. However, reactionary and intolerant movements will also strengthen, threatening to undermine the rights of women and minorities.
- Finally, the “aid business” will become less relevant if it fails to move beyond the post-colonial model, reducing aid dependency and more effectively and transparently promoting local ownership and human rights approaches for those living in poverty.

These few examples above show that to succeed in the coming years, the struggle for justice and equality needs new thinking, new approaches and new ways of organising. There is much cause for optimism. As the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals passes and the policies of International Financial Institutions are discredited in the wake of the financial and food crises, new frameworks will be needed. Rights-based alternatives are being developed every day, on every issue, in different spaces, in different countries. With people around the world, ActionAid is committed to harnessing and advancing these into strategic solutions for a poverty-free planet.



...we can see, from research and trend analyses, a volatile decade ahead full of challenges – and opportunities...



Our vision and mission

Our VISION is:

“a world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life of dignity.”

Our MISSION is:

“to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.”



Who we are

ActionAid is a global federation committed to finding sustainable solutions to end poverty and injustice. With more than 40 national members and country programmes worldwide, ActionAid focuses the majority of its resources on working with millions of the poorest and most excluded women, men and children – taking sides with them, making long-term commitments to advance their human rights and to transform the world in which their children grow up.

We support thousands of communities, partners and peoples' movements in lower income countries to improve their lives through participatory capacity-development, solidarity, campaigns and emergency responses - and we

make people-to-people links across the world with those who share our vision of a poverty-free planet.

ActionAid International is a unique democratic federation collectively governed by all its members¹, supported by an International Secretariat in Johannesburg so we can act as one organisation in solidarity with people living in poverty.

Our central values of gender equality with courage of conviction drive our ambitions to innovate, take risks, promote women's leadership and advance alternatives and lasting solutions.

Our theory of change: how change can happen

5

ActionAid believes that the indignity of poverty is a violation of human rights, arising from unequal power relations from the household to the global level. We have seen how institutions such as international financial bodies, the State, the market, the local community and the family often perpetuate inequality and injustice – through exclusion, authoritarianism, exploitation, racism, patriarchy, and other forms of discrimination.

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

In other words, people living in poverty often need to be supported to discover their own power, get organised and connect into movements, publicly demanding their rights from local institutions, national governments and powerful corporate bodies. Human rights

Signing to call for
antipoverty action.
Vietnam

need to be matched with the recognition of human responsibilities - to each other and to protecting our fragile ecology. Education and mass media can be critical to shifting people's attitudes and behaviours to be more inclusive, open-minded and committed to justice. Poor communities also need to organise and share knowledge so they are resilient to disaster and conflict. Key to tackling some of the structural causes of poverty are campaigns built on good research, local knowledge and people pressure worldwide to secure fair national and international policies.

Ending poverty and injustice is a complex process. Sometimes change takes decades or it can seem to happen overnight– as the movements to end apartheid, advance gender equality, stop wars, or demand accountable leaders demonstrate. Change does not follow a straight path. It is however happening every day because of the passion, vision and commitment of people working together across borders, social groups, and experiences. People make change happen!



...Change does not
follow a straight
path. It is however
happening every day...



Our approach to bringing about change

...We build and strengthen solidarity by connecting and organising people committed to a common cause...

Who we work with

ActionAid works with many different groups, including supporters and donors. But our priority with our mission-related work is long-term engagement with the **poorest and most excluded groups**, and the organisations that represent them, in rural and urban areas. In particular, we support indigenous peoples, people living with HIV and AIDS, landless people, marginal and small-holder farmers, informal workers, people with disabilities, dalits, sexual minorities, migrants, pastoralists, fisherfolk, displaced people, slum dwellers and other groups suffering from social discrimination and poverty. Within these groups, we specifically engage with women, youth and children. Our achievements overall can be measured best by the changes we bring to these people's lives.

We are specifically committed to **working with women** from these excluded groups and to making sure that we promote women's rights across all our work. This is because the underlying causes of poverty and injustice are gendered. Because of their socially ascribed roles, women living in poverty have less access to land, education, networks, technology, transport, cash, decision making or control over their bodies and safety – all of which keeps them poor. Developing strategies to explicitly confront these different causes of poverty

and injustice are essential if we want to have real impact on the lives of women and their communities. Working with boys and men to change their attitudes and behaviours is part of the process, but ensuring girls and women have independent and safe spaces to build their analysis and leadership is our priority. We also strive to “walk our talk” on women's rights by encouraging women to take on leadership roles within ActionAid and changing our organisational culture and practices to respect and protect women's rights.

This strategy commits us to working more with **young people** as leaders in their own right and as a group who are facing many serious human rights violations themselves. We recognise that youth are powerful drivers of change and we will work with them in shaping a more democratic, equitable and sustainable world. ActionAid is able to build on many years of experience in training and mobilising youth, for example through our youth network *Activista* and our fellowship programmes. We will invest in the capacity of youth to find rights-based alternatives, to organise and to run campaigns, supporting new and existing youth organisations, locally and nationally, promoting their leadership and linking them into dynamic movements for change.

We also prioritise strategic **work with children**,

as the violation of rights impacts on them dramatically, limiting the potential for future change. This involves drawing on the immense potential of our child sponsorship programmes to build links and contribute to achieving our mission. We will make sure that we are able to track the changes that all our work on our mission-related objectives makes in children's lives. Our child sponsorship related activities in local communities will always advance our rights-based approach and wherever possible be linked to our programmes in schools. We will also continue our important work raising awareness of poverty and human rights issues with children around the world.

How we work

The **human rights-based approach**² defines *all* our work. There are three axes to this: empowerment, solidarity and campaigning. We are committed to asserting the indivisibility and inter-connectedness of rights, recognising that for people to enjoy their rights we need to change not only policies and practices but also attitudes and behaviours. Our human rights-based approach means that we assert basic needs as basic rights, engaging in service delivery work only in ways that help to strengthen people's leverage to claim their rights from the State more effectively and sustainably.

One of the distinctive strengths of our **empowerment** approach includes our participatory action-reflection processes with the most excluded groups at a local

level. The rich set of methodologies we use will be harmonised and enhanced to build people's communication skills and deepen their critical awareness of power and rights. These empowerment processes are crucial for building effective mobilisation and strategic action, supporting grassroots organisations and **strengthening social movements** that represent excluded groups and their causes. It is through organising at different levels that those living in poverty can engage with formal power structures, develop sustainable relationships and create new spaces to hold governments, the private sector and other actors to account, using for example, social audits and participatory budgets.

We build and strengthen **solidarity** by connecting and organising people committed to a common cause. We link people within countries, across borders and between social classes, connecting people living very different lives. ActionAid's sponsorship programme is a powerful resource for solidarity action. Connecting people and movements is necessary to build the critical mass to change policies and practices.

Campaigning and influencing is embedded in our rights-based approach. Some of the fundamental causes of poverty lie beyond the immediate location or borders where the effects are felt, and can be addressed by effective campaigns mobilising people to shift national or international policies or practices. This work can also include strategic actions behind the scenes – lobbying those in power with the right research, which can accelerate policy change.

Hilda Dokubo, Nigerian actress giving ActionAid information posters to students at the HungerFree campaign held at the University of Jos in Nigeria.



Our approach to bringing about change (continued)



...We build long-term partnerships with community-based organisations and social movements...

Volunteers of the ActionAid supported Activista movement raising awareness of the need for increased support for smallholder farmers, and collecting views on how hunger can be tackled in Sierra Leone.

Sometimes challenges lie not in policies but in the attitudes and behaviours of people that perpetuate poverty. In such cases, media and mass communications is a critical part of campaigning for change.

Whilst organisations and movements of people living in poverty have primacy in our work, **forging alliances with voters, consumers, and taxpayers** through campaigns, fundraising and communications is key to influencing and securing change. **Fundraising** is an essential part of our approach in all countries. It's a key way to support the struggles of people living in poverty and the easiest way for many people and institutions to give their support, act on their compassion and feel linked to something bigger than themselves. We are committed to improving our fundraising and campaigning practices, harnessing new technologies to provide a much richer, more inspiring and real time connection between our financial and campaign supporters, and those who are in the frontlines of the struggle against poverty and injustice.

These mutually reinforcing approaches to empowerment, solidarity and campaigning are woven together into **coherent rights-based programmes** at local, national and international levels, designed to secure measurable change for people living in poverty. In this strategy period, we commit to deepen our downward accountability to the poorest and most

excluded people in our local programmes, making sure they are actively involved in programme planning and monitoring. However, we have learned that isolated or self contained local programmes in any country will struggle to sustainably change people's lives - and that "project islands" will not help to address the structural causes of poverty that affect millions of others. So while local programmes are our fundamental base, they need to be linked upwards to national level (and sometimes beyond). We'll do this by linking local groups to wider movements, gathering strong evidence, promoting policy analysis, building campaigns and using mass communications and digital media.

Our **partnerships** and **alliances** are important to our approach. We build long-term partnerships with community-based organisations and social movements, respecting their autonomy, strengthening their capacities and helping them to share learning across issues, sectors, movements and geographies to build a formidable movement for change. We also work in alliances with many different actors, including NGOs, networks, think-tanks, unions, campaigns and progressive companies. We also seek to hold those with power accountable through critical engagement - for example with governments or the private sector - engaging constructively where possible but being willing to challenge where necessary.

Finally, in this Strategy period we will focus more on working together with people and their movements to discover and implement **alternatives** and lasting solutions. Too often struggles against poverty and injustice focus on challenging and confronting existing conditions without providing credible solutions. We will engage proactively with others to uncover, explore, document, share and activate alternatives, adding two key ingredients to change processes: a sense of optimism and a sense of direction.

Where we work⁵:

The majority of our local rights programmes are based in **rural** communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas. In the coming period we will expand our **urban-based** work in recognition of the rapid rise of people living in urban areas and urban poverty. Our approaches in urban contexts will be further developed and refined throughout the course of the strategy period based on our collective learning and the experience of others – and will be harmonised with the core approach described above.

Most of our programmes are focused in **Low Income Countries**. We work in huge diversity of contexts, with strong and weak States, progressive or reactionary governments, adjusting our tactics accordingly while remaining

consistent and coherent with our core values and approach.

We also work on poverty and injustice with some of the most excluded people and poorest communities in **Middle Income Countries** (for example, Brazil, India, South Africa and Thailand). We are committed to engaging the middle classes in these countries to support our work, influencing government priorities on the international stage, changing corporate practices and generating funding in these countries. Over time fundraising in these countries will represent a shift in our funding and supporter base, which to date has been concentrated in High Income Countries (across Europe, USA and Australia) - reflecting the shifts in global economic power.

Some of the root causes of poverty and injustice lie in the decisions and practices of institutions and actors based in (or influenced by) **High Income countries**. That's why we're committed to solidarity, campaigning and influencing work here to contribute to global change. In these countries we do much more than just raise funds. We link our supporters with people on the frontlines of human rights struggles. We also seek to inform and change public and political attitudes and empower people, building people's understanding, commitment and action to end global poverty and injustice.

Women learning vocational skills, literacy skills and learning about their rights at a women and child friendly space following flooding in Pakistan.





Our mission objectives 2012-2017

Objective 1: promote sustainable agriculture and control over natural resources for people living in poverty.

Around the world natural resources are rapidly becoming privatised and commoditised. As a result, the poorest and most marginalised communities are experiencing expulsion, exclusion and deprivation. Yet land, water, forests and all of earth's biodiversity are the very essence of life and the key to providing food, livelihoods and a sustainable future.

The Jatropha Energy pilot project, Dakatcha woodlands, home to 20,000 people from the Watha and Giriama tribes, Kenya.

Meanwhile the planet's increasing dependency on commercial crops and export-oriented agriculture often undermines food security and takes a heavy toll on the environment and climate. Greater investment in sustainable small-scale farming, the majority of it done by women, can renew ecosystems and significantly reduce

hunger and poverty. But women need access to land and productive resources, and government support to do this.

Building on our experiences of working with small-holder farmers, peasant and land rights movements to secure the right to food, we will support women and indigenous groups to strengthen their control over land and natural resources. We will also build their capacity to adapt to climate change, and support their demands for policies that support just and sustainable governance of food systems and natural resources.

Advancing alternatives⁴: We will become respected innovators in developing and testing economically and ecologically just alternatives to commercial over-exploitation of ecosystems and food production, including through agrarian reform, strengthening informal rural economies, agro-ecological farming, seed banks, cooperatives and community forestry. Working with others, we will develop compelling proposals to put innovations like these into practice at national, regional and global levels, building on our past learning and action on trade and corporate regulation..

Promise 1⁵: By 2017 we will have organised and supported rural women to claim access to and control over land or natural resources leading to enhanced rights and improved livelihoods for at least one million women living in poverty.

Promise 2: By 2017 we will have supported marginal and small-holder farmers to secure direct support and policies from their government, and effective accountability of corporates, enabling them to gain a good living from climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, improving the food security of 25 million people.



...inclusive
decision
making allows
women living
in poverty
and excluded
groups to have
greater political
influence...



Hafeza Khatun
facilitating the Reflect
group, 'Nari Akota'
meaning 'Women
united' in Fathapur,
Shahrasti, Chandpur,
Bangladesh.

Objective 2: advance the political influence of people living in poverty to hold governments and corporates accountable.

Throughout the world, people's demands for democracy are growing louder as many have suffered under oppressive regimes and unaccountable leaders. Without meaningful democracy, elites capture decision-making processes and resources. For many of the poorest and most excluded groups, there is a strong connection between a lack of political space or influence and the perpetuation of poverty and injustice. Seeking alternatives therefore, women, men and youth around the world are taking to the streets or to the internet or joining local meetings to demand proper political representation and accountability from the State for delivering on basic rights.

To meet this objective, we will draw on our many achievements with using participatory methodologies, strengthening people's economic literacy and securing rights to information, as well as our experiences in advancing our own downward accountability. Our most fundamental work will be with women and others who are most excluded from decision-making, including for example, people living with HIV. Through direct engagement on issues of local importance we will support frontline struggles to secure quality services from local government, open up democratic

space, and confront corrupt practices. We will elevate this mobilisation and build people-to-people movements to demand that States raise and redistribute the resources needed to provide quality services through progressive taxation, equitable financing for development and corporate regulation. Where relevant we will engage with strategic international fora, challenging policies and practices, including aid practices, that undermine democratic decision making and exacerbate poverty.

Advancing alternatives: In this period we will support and put forward new models and processes of inclusive decision making that allow women living in poverty and excluded groups to have greater political influence. Working with others, we also will promote the most advanced thinking and practice globally in accountable governance, social protection, taxation, the care economy, development finance and other redistributive measures for ending poverty and injustice.

Promise 3: By 2017, through holding governments and corporates to account, we will have secured improvements in the quality, equity and gender responsiveness of public services for five million people living in poverty.

Promise 4: By 2017 people and their movements supported by ActionAid will have won significant victories in achieving fair redistribution of resources to finance public policies that reduce poverty.

Our mission objectives 2012-2017 (continued)



Farida teaching
a literacy class in
Hesarak village,
Afghanistan.

Objective 3: improve the quality of public education for all children and support youth to become drivers of change towards a poverty-free planet.

Half the world's people are under 25. In low-income countries over one billion are between 10 and 19. Despite this expanding demographic group, the rights, voice and agency of children and young people are consistently denied. Further attention to their education, livelihoods and voice will help to ensure that their dreams for better futures are more likely to succeed.

While the past two decades have seen a sharp rise in primary school enrolment for girls and boys across the planet, the quality of that education is often unacceptable. Widespread lack of resources for public schools in poor communities has led to overcrowded classrooms with under-trained teachers using outdated curricula and teaching processes. These conditions are accelerating the growth of private schooling, undermining one of the core responsibilities of any State: to provide good public education. And tens of millions are still excluded from formal education altogether,

for example children of pastoralists or migrant workers, children with disabilities and those affected by HIV or conflict. As a result the education system is entrenching the inequalities in society, discriminating against girls and closing children's minds.

Building on our decades of achievements and our strong partnerships, we will work with children, parents and teachers in the poorest communities to make sure that government schools are accessible to all and respect the rights of girls and boys, open minds, and nurture values of equality and justice. We will link this work to local, national and international movements to reform policies and practices so that we can realise the potential of education to promote a more equal and sustainable world.

In the communities where we work we will engage with young people living in poverty and their organisations, helping them to drive change, supporting their local activism on rights and their poverty-focused campaigning. Inspired by new youth-driven and digital ways of organising, we will also support youth-to-youth mobilising and campaigning from the local to the global level on agendas that both help them

Vandana, an activist from Parmarth, holding a discussion with women's group members in Murlipur, Jalaun, UP, India.



to improve their own opportunities or livelihoods and help to end poverty and injustice.

Advancing alternatives: In our pursuit of truly transformative education, we will work with our allies including unions to develop alternative models of teacher training and practice, and curriculum development, so that education contributes to wider social, economic and ecological justice. We will also explicitly seek alternative approaches and ideas from young people who want to be part of finding new and sustainable solutions.

Promise 5: By 2017 we will have ensured that girls and boys equally enjoy a quality public education that respects their rights in 5,000 communities where we work, leveraging system-wide education reforms designed to improve equal opportunities for all.

Promise 6: By 2017 we will have mobilised over five million youth to take sustained action towards building a poverty-free planet.

Objective 4: build the resilience of people living in poverty to conflicts and disasters and respond to disasters with people-centred, rights-based alternatives.

Climate change, natural resource limits and increasing conflict mean that people living in poverty are experiencing more intense shocks and more hunger, confronting new violations of their rights and facing increased violence. The connections between poverty and vulnerability are clear. People's ability to be resilient and to claim their rights will be essential for them to adapt to climate change, to respond to and rebuild after disasters and conflict. Women have a unique role in building resilience as they are often the first to respond to disasters though they are frequently excluded when agencies and governments step in.

ActionAid's work within some of the poorest communities around the world and our focus on women's rights mean we can play a unique role in building resilience. Drawing on our disaster risk-reduction interventions in schools and with communities, our innovative participatory methodologies and our focus on climate resilient agriculture we will work with women and youth leaders to build local resilience and reduce vulnerability to conflict and disaster.

When humanitarian disasters hit we will respond quickly, working with others to ensure people-centred, rights-based responses that address psychosocial as well as material needs, promote protection and stop violence against women, strengthening the capacities of local authorities, national government and civil society to respond. We will use humanitarian crises as opportunities to shift power relationships in favour of people living in poverty, empower women, increase access to justice, and promote long-term recovery.

Advancing alternatives: We will work with allies to promote community-centric and rights-based humanitarian approaches, changing

...Women have a unique role in building resilience as they are often the first to respond to disasters...

Our mission objectives 2012-2017 (continued)

...Women asserting greater control over their bodies is perhaps the most crucial means to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS and to break the cycle of poverty.

national and global policies and practices around risk reduction, disaster prevention, climate adaptation and coordinated emergency responses.

Promise 7: By 2017 we will have built effective risk reduction and resilience systems and capacities in over 5,000 communities.

Promise 8: By 2017 at least five million people experiencing disasters or conflicts will have been assisted in ways which respect and strengthen rights, support recovery of livelihoods, empower women and promote solutions for long-term change.

Objective 5: ensure that women and girls can break the cycle of poverty and violence, build economic alternatives and claim control over their bodies.

ActionAid has prioritised women's rights since our strategy "Fighting Poverty Together" in 1998 which called for us "to advocate at all levels to address the causes of gender inequity". Our strategy Rights to End Poverty in 2005 challenged "deep-rooted patriarchy" arguing that "the realisation of women's and girls' rights offer the most effective route to poverty eradication". This has led us to place women and girls at the heart of our work around the world. Indeed, enabling women to break out of the cycle of poverty is central to all four of the objectives above, whether we are defending women's access to and control over land, increasing the influence of women in public policy, improving the education of girls and the

voice of adolescents, or strengthening women's leadership in building resilient communities.

We have made great strides in advancing women's rights in our work, but new contexts have emerged. Alongside rapid urbanisation, we have witnessed increasing harassment, backlash and violence towards women seeking change. Political, religious or cultural rationales to control female sexuality and movement justify harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, honour killings, early marriage, rape, forced pregnancies, unplanned pregnancies, sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, abstinence-only education and widespread sexual harassment. Such practices present overwhelming obstacles to the rights, health and dignity of women and girls and yet are neglected in mainstream development discourse. Women asserting greater control over their bodies is perhaps the most crucial means to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS



Fariya Mohammed, with her children – Fendishe Jama, 3, and Bedri Jemal, 5, standing on her plot of land. After her crops were totally destroyed by army worm she was given emergency short cycle wheat seed by ActionAid, which will mature in 3 months. Ethiopia.



and to break the cycle of poverty. In the rural and urban communities where we work we will defend the rights of women and girls to live free of gender-based violence, organise against harmful practices, live a life of dignity in the face of HIV and AIDS and increase their knowledge and power to control their sexuality.

As economies grow and urbanise, women need more power to shape how markets are organised. Traditionally women living in poverty have been seen only as a docile, cheap labour for the fields and factories, or as wives and mothers whose unpaid hours of toil at home make it possible for poor households to survive on the lowest of wages. Increasingly however, women are organising to claim more power over productive resources. And they are building economic and ecological alternatives, from new forms of cooperative and social enterprise, to demanding recognition and reduction of unpaid care, to campaigning for comprehensive social protection and for macroeconomic policies that deliver decent employment, social inclusion and environmental sustainability instead of growth for its own sake. Based on the principle that the poorest and most excluded groups in society must benefit from economic practices and policies, such alternatives hold out hope of breaking the cycle of exploitation and

oppression that creates and recreates poverty and environmental degradation.

Advancing Alternatives: Throughout this strategy period, we intend to support women and their organisations and movements to progress innovative thinking, research, pilot and advocate for women-led alternatives – related to feminist economics, and ecological justice. We have learned that gender equitable approaches are not just about “adding women and stirring” but that the focus and outcomes can be significantly different when women get organised:

Promise 9: By 2017 we will have organised over five million women and girls in rural and urban areas to challenge and reject gender-based violence that would have denied them control over their bodies and sexuality and made them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.

Promise 10: By 2017 we will have supported women to build and advocate gender-responsive economic alternatives at all levels from cooperative enterprises to national and global policies that recognise unpaid care, guarantee comprehensive social protection and enable the most marginalised women to break the cycle of poverty.

Immaculee Niyimpagaritse is part of a group of widows in Karusi raising chickens and growing vegetables. They receive support with building houses, training in protecting themselves from HIV and AIDS and advice on small-scale agricultural projects. Burundi.



Our organisational objectives: how we will change ourselves

Our values, as defined in our constitution, are:

Mutual respect, requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity.

Equity and justice, requiring us to work to ensure equal opportunity to everyone, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, hiv status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.

Honesty and transparency, being accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our judgements and communications with others.

Solidarity with the poor, powerless and excluded will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty.

Courage of conviction, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.

Independence from any religious or party-political affiliation.

Humility in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.

To deliver on this ambitious strategy we will need to build a better governed, more strongly managed and mutually accountable federation, driven by our strong collective values. Working together towards the following seven priorities will help us to achieve this:

Priority 1: deepen the impact of our work by having an effective programme framework that ensures integration, coherence and quality at all levels.

We commit to:

- Develop and implement a **common programming design and monitoring framework** and revise our Accountability, Learning and Planning System to support the development of closer-linked local,

national and international work in line with the new strategy. These will ensure stronger programme design, monitoring and evaluation and support coherent linkages between local empowerment and solidarity work, campaigning, communications and fundraising work at all levels – in line with our key change promises. This framework and system will set out clear minimum standards but allow for adaptation to the diverse contexts of different countries. Countries will be required and supported to establish participatory baselines and indicators for all programmes to strengthen learning, accountability, and assessment of impact.

- **Elaborate and test our Theory of Change.** Building on the theory outlined in this strategy and the description of Our Approach, we will invest in ongoing work to

deepen and enrich our theory of change. We will test our beliefs and develop an evidence base that substantiates our theory of change, ensuring that our practice is coherent with it at all levels.

- **Become a more effective campaigning force.** We will improve the quality of our local and national campaigning work with movements of people living in poverty as well as developing multi-country campaigns that seek to address structural causes of poverty such as unfair policies or corporate practices. We will invest in the campaigning systems, skills, policy analysis and research, and tools to link, organise, and energise our partners and supporters at all levels. Over the strategy period we will develop and deliver a portfolio of at least three diverse multi-country campaigns that will bring people living in poverty and others together to win tangible victories against the global causes of poverty. Bringing to life the political vision behind ActionAid's internationalisation⁶ project, all Members will be expected to participate actively in at least one of ActionAid's multi-country campaigns. To make sure that our international influence and relevance continues to grow, we will put special effort into increasing our popular support base and advocacy, communications and campaigning capacities in Middle Income Countries.

- **Strengthen our funding planning,** making sure that we are programme-led and that our financial and contract management systems are integrated with our programming and planning framework - and are of high quality across all parts of the federation. We will strengthen senior staff capacity to provide financial oversight and establish common systems and standards, ensuring that we use unrestricted funds only for work that cannot be funded by other means and that we are more strategic in designing project

proposals for restricted funds that cover a fair share of core costs.

Priority 2: raise our profile and increase our supporter base to more than five million people around the world working towards achieving our mission.

We commit to:

- **Grow our supporter base to over five million people,** (with an additional network of youth activist supporters) giving our organisation massive potential to increase our resources, influence and mobilisation across the world for progressive social change. Our supporters will be defined as sponsors, donors, campaigners and volunteers who support our mission. We will deepen our relationship with them, enhance their understanding of our mission, value their multiple contributions, strengthen our accountability to them and support their ambitions for justice, linking them with people in communities, other supporters and active citizens across the globe.
- **Enhance our capacity for external communications,** recognising that creating and occupying public space, with our partners and social movements is fundamental to securing changes in policies, practices, attitudes and behaviours. We will become a more externally-facing organisation, building support and momentum behind our organisation, our partners and our campaigns in all our countries. Cost-effective means of mass communication will become a stronger part of our work everywhere, supporting our efforts to empower people to know and exercise their rights, and

Put People First
March, 28 March
2009, G20. London.



...we will invest in our ongoing work to deepen and enrich our theory of change...



Our organisational objectives (continued)

to challenge harmful social attitudes and behaviours in the public at large, especially in low and middle income countries. Our communications and public engagement work in all countries will be highly responsive to external events, establishing relevance and currency of our voice with a wider target audience and creating space for the voices of the communities we work with. Digital communication and campaigning will become central to our vision, with our website and social media strategy being key to achieving change and meeting the needs of our evolving, current and potential audiences and constituencies.

Priority 3: diversify and raise our global annual income to more than 350 million euros per year by 2017.7

We commit to:

- **Build our funding strategy** on clear national and international funding plans, seeking to grow our funding in innovative and sustainable ways for the flexibility required to achieve our strategy, with the majority of income still coming from individuals (with over 700,000 financial supporters, including sponsors and regular donors), a tripling of high value income and almost a doubling of official income. Fundraising will be a recognised responsibility of all Members and will be integrated as an element in the job descriptions of leaders within the organisation. All Members in High Income Countries will seek a minimum of 40% of their voluntary income to be unrestricted.
- **Maximise our net income from existing markets, supporters and propositions**, including through transforming our child sponsorship model (making it more accountable to communities and sponsors and more efficient and flexible), significantly increasing high value and official income and prioritising investment in Middle Income Countries (India and Brazil, for example).
- **Raise income from new audiences and donors in existing Member markets**,

developing new voluntary fundraising programmes in our Middle Income Countries, launching a co-ordinated regular giving proposition for audiences attracted by our strong identity, our campaigns and digital communication; and developing our capability to raise income from new institutional donors in High and Middle Income Countries including Brazil, India and South Africa.

- **Launch a Global Appeal to increase income and supporters**, raising over 50 million Euros through an exciting three-year global fundraising appeal launched in 2014 that will bring communications, fundraising and campaigns teams together around a joint goal.
- **Find new and innovative sources of funds to ensure long-term income growth**, innovating with fundraising online, raising more (and more flexible) funds for emergencies and reaching new markets through cross-border approaches, regional hubs and mergers.

Priority 4: 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.

We commit to:

- **Invest in capacity building**: identifying the core capabilities needed across the federation to deliver on this strategy successfully and sustainably, particularly supporting political (not just technical) capacity building for staff and partners on human rights-based approaches, power analysis, integrating participatory methodologies, effective programme design and monitoring and evaluation. We will also invest in skill development around funding planning, human resource management, communications, fundraising, financial management, internal governance and leadership development.
-

...provide an empowering and enabling environment that supports employee motivation...



Bongani Radebe, youth coordinator of Vukuzenzele REFLECT Community Organisation in Orange Farm, bidding farewell to actress Emma Thompson. South Africa

- **Celebrate our diversity and promote equality:** promoting gender equality as a core value, challenging sexism, racism, homophobia, stigmatisation and the abuse of power internally and in the larger society, and consistently guaranteeing our secular identity. We will work to achieve a better work-life balance for our diverse staff, adapting policies to different contexts and needs, investing specifically in women's leadership; and working towards becoming a more multi-lingual organisation.
- **Provide an empowering and enabling environment** that supports employee motivation, improves their well-being and helps them to fulfil their potential, so that together we have the maximum impact possible on ending poverty and injustice.
- **Ensure mutual accountability:** holding each other to account to make sure that we uphold our responsibilities to ourselves, to our strategy and to the reputation of ActionAid; to rights-holders, movements, communities; and to our partners, donors and our supporters. We will encourage collaborative behaviour in working towards our common objectives, breaking the mentality of working alone in silos and maximizing the cooperation between all the different areas and functions in our federation. We will implement effective performance management; encourage staff to openly recognise and manage risks; set

clear standards for managing our reputation and relationships; improve communications internally and support transparency in decision making processes at all levels.

- **Increase our creativity in the pursuit of impact:** making sure we demonstrate the courage of our convictions; encouraging a constant focus on solutions and results; incentivising innovation among our staff in the search for alternatives that will impact on ending poverty; building our capacity to demonstrate the impact of our work; and valuing the production and creative sharing of knowledge.

Priority 5: strengthen members and expand the federation, while enhancing mutual accountability, with support from an effective international secretariat.

We commit to:

- **Strengthen our unique governance model,** further developing the capacities and representative nature of our Boards and Assemblies, enhancing our legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness, and bringing decision making closer to the point of impact. We will endeavour to make sure that internationalisation is seen as a political not just a technical project, collectively working to

Our organisational objectives (continued)



...recommitting to the principle of Members working directly together and working to strengthen each other...

Marching against Monsanto seeds in Jacmel to commemorate international rural women's day and international food day. Haiti.

prevent it from becoming over-bureaucratised and focusing on how it strengthens our accountability and can have a positive impact on people living in poverty. Our federal model, built on the foundation of interdependence and mutual accountability, will require a renewed commitment to dual citizenship (national and international), and shared rule.

- **Facilitate up to 15 country programmes and associates to become full affiliates** through a carefully phased, streamlined and supported process, based on learning from the past five years. The support from all relevant functions of ActionAid will continue beyond the association / affiliation process aiming to make sure that all Members are strong, financially stable and delivering on impact. We will make sure that countries that cannot become affiliates due to political or legal constraints will have their voice represented in the Assembly, and explore how this will be achieved.
 - **Develop effective systems of delegating responsibilities to Members**, recommitting to the principle of Members working directly together and working to strengthen each other – and creating a web of inter-connecting ownership, where there are significant opportunities to enhance quality and impact. Where the International Secretariat delegates responsibilities to Members for the delivery of some areas of international work (for example emergency response) it will be based on consistent and transparent criteria and clear accountability agreements with the Secretariat in order to ensure ongoing oversight, equal power among Members and coherence with other threads of work.
 - **Deliver on this strategy through an effectively restructured International Secretariat** which will be designed to make sure it is able to fulfill its full constitutional obligations cost effectively, facilitating strong linkages, collaborative working and mutual accountability among the various axes of our operations and members; strengthening our outward facing engagement, building international alliances, generating knowledge, supporting cross-country campaigning and promoting alternatives.
- Priority 6: establish effective systems and processes to improve financial management, planning and reporting and the monitoring of our work.**

We commit to:

- **Reform financial management and control systems and processes**, raising the recognition of finance as essential to our mission, improving contract management, ensuring transparency in our financial management and investing in the capacity of leaders across the organisation to use systems effectively.

...building international alliances, generating knowledge, supporting cross-country campaigning and promoting alternatives...

- **Develop a new planning and reporting system** that is appropriate for our unique federation, streamlining planning and reporting, and aligning it to this strategy at all levels, strengthening monitoring and evaluation and developing an overarching accountability framework.
- **Harmonise Information Technology systems and solutions** – centralising procurement and services where this improves efficiency and reduces costs. We will also improve Management Information Systems to strengthen our generation and management of knowledge.
- **Develop an effective system to monitor the environmental impact of our work**, helping us to become a greener organisation: recognising the negative environmental impact associated with the conduct of our work we will promote a greener organisation by making informed choices where our work has an impact on the environment, setting targets to reduce our environmental impact and carbon footprint.

Children playing games on International Children's Day in Nanba refugee camp, China.



Priority 7: expand strategically into new countries to advance our mission, based on clear criteria and transparent processes.

We commit to:

- **Consolidate our work in existing countries** and expand our engagement in existing middle-income countries.
- **Support geographic expansion** as an essential part of adjusting to a fast-changing world, helping us to secure the resources, partnerships, skills, and political influence to achieve our strategic ambitions. We will expand 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, experiences
 - forging mergers with like-minded organisations that can contribute to the federation
 - becoming affiliates within a clear timeline.
- **Thoroughly test the fundraising potential** in advance of a full market entry to any country where a significant purpose is fundraising – establishing a strong business case. In the case of mergers we will establish the organisation's financial sustainability, long-term income potential and ability to contribute financially to the Federation's core costs.
- **Explore potential mergers within existing countries**, where our ability to grow is limited by our resources or where our ability to increase our influence is constrained, looking for like-minded organisations to create a stronger national presence which is better able to deliver on this strategy.

Conclusion

...filled with hope and courage of conviction, we aspire to innovate, take risks and transform the challenges faced in the world into opportunities for change...



Children from Miyuyu Primary School playing after lessons, in Tanzania.

This international strategy articulates our commitment, ambition and approach to deepen our impact on poverty and injustice.

From 2012 to 2017 we will deliver on five strategic objectives that will result in millions of the poorest and most excluded women, men, youth and children with whom we work (both directly and indirectly): **having access to land, food security, improved public services, more accountable governments, quality education, resilience to disasters and shocks, freedom from violence and economic rights.** We will measure and collectively hold ourselves to account against our change promises.

In order to deliver on this urgent mission, we have also committed to change ourselves **in order to strengthen our programme quality, increase our supporter base, enhance staff capacity and leadership, diversify and grow our income, strengthen our members and unique global federation, improve our financial and monitoring systems, and expand strategically into new countries.**

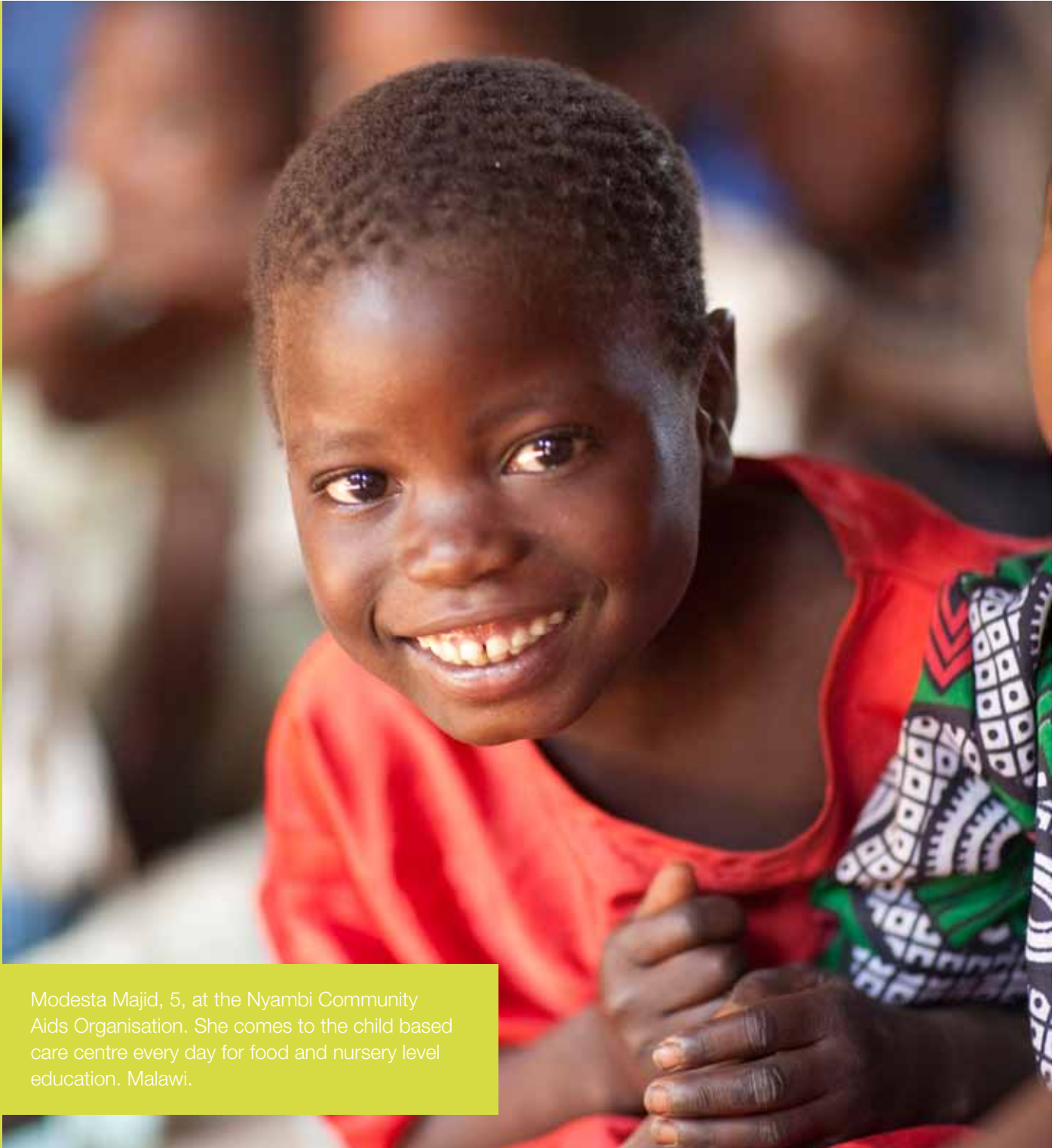
Filled with hope and courage of conviction, we aspire to innovate, take risks and transform the challenges faced in the world into opportunities for change. We believe that it is more urgent today than ever to advance alternatives with people and people's movements towards a poverty-free planet.

Jenifer Marisol, 6 and her mother, at the village's school during an ActionAid child sponsorship message collection. Guatemala



End notes:

- 1 Our constitution refers to Southern and Northern Members but we recognise that the use of the words North and South, though politically important for acknowledging the global divide, can reinforce divisions that we are trying to transcend in the way that we organise ourselves. After hours of debate, in an effort to find more neutral language, elsewhere in this strategy we refer to low-income, middle-income and high-income countries - which is based on United Nations commonly agreed language - though we recognise that all this language is imperfect!
- 2 Our Human Rights Based Approach Resource Book elaborates this in more detail and is being updated in line with this strategy. Significant investments will be made in building the capacity of staff and partners to deliver this in practice.
- 3 We presently work in the following countries: Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Denmark, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, The Gambia, Uganda, UK, USA, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- 4 For each of our five objectives we describe ways in which we can contribute to advancing alternatives in the coming years. These involve aspirational and innovative work which provides a foundation for the future and helps us respond to a changing world. This work is not so easily measured as the commitments we make under our key change promises.
- 5 We make ten promises in this document and we will measure our delivery on these systematically over the coming years, ensuring that we, unlike so many agencies, are genuinely held to account on our promises.
- 6 Internationalisation is the name given to the process of transforming ActionAid's own governance structures, shifting our own practice of power through establishing national Boards and Assemblies in affiliated Member countries and constituting an International Assembly of affiliated Members that elects an International Board.
- 7 ActionAid's Long-Term Funding and Financing Plan, developed alongside this strategy, and our Resource Allocation Framework elaborate this in much more detail.



Modesta Majid, 5, at the Nyambi Community Aids Organisation. She comes to the child based care centre every day for food and nursery level education. Malawi.

act:onaid

ActionAid International is a unique partnership of people who are fighting for a better world – a world without poverty.

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ActionAid International is registered as a foundation in Haaglanden, the Netherlands, under file number 27264198

Photographs in order of appearance:

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- Christophe Hebbing/ActionAid
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Wow! Creative