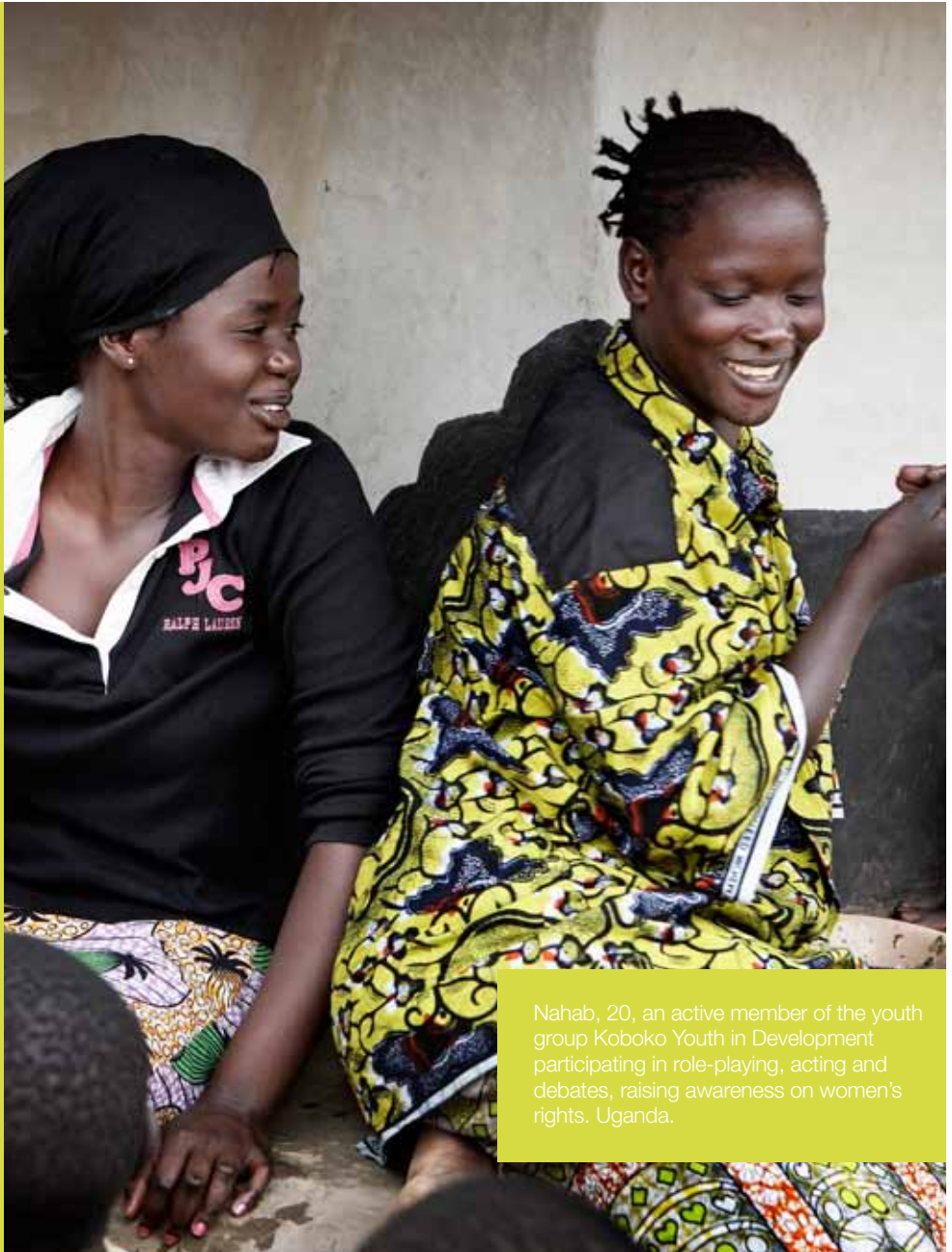




People's Action To End Poverty

A summary of 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.

...How can we bring about real and sustained positive change in the lives of women, men, young people and children living in poverty?

That's the question we asked ourselves and the communities we work closely with as we put together this six-year strategy.

Our previous strategy, Rights to End Poverty, positioned us to achieve many successes – from ensuring education for thousands of children to securing land rights for women farmers, from successfully responding to the 2005 Tsunami to improving the livelihoods of millions of Dalits, people living with HIV and AIDs and indigenous peoples.

It helped us get almost half a million individual supporters on board, who sponsored a child or campaigned for policy change. And we moved our International Secretariat to South Africa and shifted power within our own organisation, closer to the heart of where we work.

But more change is needed.

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

In this strategy we make it clear how we believe change happens and what our role and approach will be in bringing it about. We commit ourselves to five core strategic objectives and ten “change promises” we will hold ourselves to account against.

These are based on the principles that, working 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.



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

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

- **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 work.
- **Focus more on changing attitudes and behaviours**, using mass communications and campaigning from a local to global level.
- **More explicitly show the impact of our work** on the lives of women, men, young people and children living in poverty, as we deliver on our key change promises.

People living in poverty can lead the fight to end poverty. We know this because we've been working closely with them for almost 40 years. Every day we're helping people change their own lives for the better, for good.

We take a human rights-based approach to everything we do because basic needs, such as food and education, are basic rights. And when people know their rights, and can act on this knowledge, long-term change is more likely.

Together with our partners we work side by side with the most marginalised and poorest women, men, young people and children over the long-term and connect their realities and dreams to bring about local, national and international change.

In other words, 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.* This is our **theory of change**.

A changing world

The planet is becoming increasingly complex – and unfortunately, more unequal. There will be significant shifts that offer both opportunities and challenges to our mission in the next decade:

- **Dramatic shocks and crises will inevitably occur** – whether related to food, fuel, finances, climate or conflict.
- **The population will get younger.** Over half the world's population are children or young people and this group is growing. A generation of young people with more community-based values may challenge the individualism of recent decades.
- **Poverty will shift its location.** Half the world's population will live in urban areas.
- **Gender discrimination will continue to be a cause of poverty and injustice.** But women will be striving for increased leadership in all sectors.
- **Demand for energy and food will grow.** Consumers around the world will put significant pressures on natural resources. But this will increase the case for more sustainable agriculture so that everyone gets a fair deal.
- **Political and economic power will continue to shift** away from the United States and Europe, towards a world where power is shared more equally. China, India, Brazil and South Africa will rise, expanding and transforming approaches to global governance and economic and social development.
- **Public services will be privatised and unfair trade agreements will continue.** But some countries will pursue more equal and fair redistribution policies. Calls for the corporate world to stop unfair, abusive practices will increase and more progressive corporations will help find solutions to end poverty.
- **Aid will become less relevant.** We will move beyond the post-colonial model of aid to developing countries. This will reduce dependency and promote human rights approaches for people living in poverty.

We will transform the challenges faced in the world into opportunities for change.

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. To succeed in the coming years, the struggle for justice and equality needs new thinking, new approaches and new ways of organising.

New alternatives are being developed every day, on every issue, in different spaces, in different countries. With people around the world, ActionAid is committed to turning these actions into long-term solutions for a world without poverty or injustice.

Our five strategic objectives

From 2012 to 2017 we're committed to advancing five strategic objectives and delivering on 10 change promises:



Strategic objective one: Promote sustainable agriculture and control natural resources for people living in poverty.

Land, water, forests. They are all around us and provide us with the natural resources we need to live. And yet, as they're increasingly privatised and commoditised, it's the poorest and most marginalised communities who are deprived of basic human rights. Greater investment in sustainable small-scale farming, the majority of it done by women, will improve the environment and significantly reduce hunger and poverty.

Promise 1: By 2017, we will have organised and supported rural women to claim access to and control over land and natural resources. This will enhance the rights and improve the livelihoods of at least 1 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. This will mean they can make a good living from climate-resilient sustainable agriculture, improving the food security of 25 million people.



...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.

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Strategic objective two: 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 who have perpetuated poverty and injustice. We will support women, men and young people to get proper political representation, access to decision-making and accountability from the State for delivering on their basic rights.

Promise 3: By 2017, through holding governments and corporates to account, we will have secured improvements in the quality, equity and gender fairness of public services for 5 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.

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Strategic objective three: Improve the quality of public education for all children and support young people to become drivers of change towards a poverty-free planet.

In low-income countries over 1 billion people are between 10 and 19. Despite this, the rights and voice of children and young people are consistently denied. Beyond a focus on mere access to education, improving the quality of their learning while amplifying their voices will help their dreams for better futures to succeed.

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, using system-wide education reforms to improve equal opportunities for all.

Promise 6: By 2017, we will have mobilised over 5 million young people to take sustained action towards building a poverty-free planet.

Strategic objective four: Build the resilience of people living in poverty to conflicts and disasters and respond to disasters with people-centred, rights-based alternatives.

An ability to be resilient and to claim their rights will help people living in poverty to adapt to climate change, and respond to and rebuild their lives after disasters and conflict. 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.

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

Promise 8: By 2017, at least 5 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.

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

We have made great strides in advancing women's rights. But we have witnessed increasing harassment, backlash and violence towards women seeking change. We will defend the rights of women and girls to live free of gender-related violence, have dignity in the face of HIV and AIDS, control their sexuality, and enjoy economic empowerment.

Promise 9: By 2017, we will have organised over 5 million women and girls in rural and urban areas to challenge and reject gender-related 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 economic solutions 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.

Who we work with

We support the poorest and the most excluded groups, and the organisations that represent them.

Over the strategy period we will more specifically work with:

Women. Less access to land, education, networks, technology, transport, cash, decision-making and control over their bodies and safety. All of these things keep women poor. We will develop strategies to tackle these problems, encouraging women to take on leadership roles.

Young people. Powerful drivers of change. That's what young people can be. We will work with them to shape a more democratic, equitable and sustainable world, investing in their campaigns, supporting new and existing youth organisations, locally and nationally, promoting their leadership and linking them together into dynamic movements for change.

Children. The violation of rights impacts on children dramatically, limiting their future potential. This is why we will continue to use our successful child sponsorship programme to advance our rights-based approach to poverty.

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

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



How we work

Empowerment. Solidarity. Campaigning.

These are the three elements of our approach to development work.

We help to empower excluded groups by building their communication skills, raising their awareness of power and rights, supporting grassroots organisations and strengthening social movements. That way they can have a say in the formal power structures that affect their lives.

We strengthen solidarity by connecting and organising people committed to a common cause, linking groups in countries, across borders and between social classes to build up the power needed to change policies and practices.

We campaign to shift national and international policies and practices. Our campaigning accelerates policy change and we're committed to developing innovative approaches that connect our supporters closely to our work.

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

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



Who we work with

Our programmes are based in rural communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas. This covers:

- **Low-income countries** (where people on average earn less than \$1,005 per year). We work with strong and weak States, progressive and reactionary governments, adjusting our tactics accordingly but remaining consistent with our core values and approach.
- **Middle-income countries** (where people on average earn between \$1,006 and \$12,275 per year). We work with some of the most excluded people and poorest communities in countries including Brazil, India, South Africa and Thailand. Our work influences government priorities, changes corporate practices and generates funding.
- **High-income countries** (where people on average earn more than \$12,276 per year). Some of the root causes of poverty and injustice lie in the decisions and practices of institutions and people in (or influenced by) high-income countries. That's why we're committed to solidarity, campaigning and influencing work in these countries to create global change.

Farida teaching
a literacy class in
Hesarak village,
Afghanistan.

Over the strategy period we will expand our work in urban areas, as more and more of the world's poorest people flock from rural regions to cities.

...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.



Our organisational priorities

We're confident that we will deliver on this ambitious strategy. To do this, we will need to change ourselves.

We have set ourselves seven priorities so that our international federation will be better governed, managed and more accountable. We will:

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

PRIORITY 2: Raise our profile and increase our supporter base to more than 5 million people around the world working towards achieving our mission.

PRIORITY 3: Raise our global annual income to more than 350 million euros per year by 2017.

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.

PRIORITY 5: Strengthen our national ActionAid members and expand the federation, while enhancing mutual accountability, with support from an effective international secretariat.

PRIORITY 6: Establish effective systems and processes to improve financial management, planning and reporting and the monitoring of our work.

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

Signing to call for antipoverty action. Vietnam



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

Our values

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.

In conclusion...

Our work is about directly improving the lives of the women, men, youth and children living in poverty. That's what this strategy will help us to achieve.

From 2012 to 2017 we will deliver on our plans that will result in millions of the poorest and most excluded people having:

- access to land
- food security
- improved public services
- more accountable governments
- quality education
- resilience to disasters and shocks
- freedom from violence
- economic rights.

It's an urgent mission, and to deliver on it we have also committed to change ourselves. We will measure this change and hold ourselves to account against our change promises.

ActionAid doesn't just tackle the effects of poverty. **We change what keeps people poor.** Where some see victims of poverty, **we see people with the potential to end it.**

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.

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





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.

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

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