

# Induction Toolkit for New **act:onaid** Activists



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# Executive Summary

## Purpose of this guide

This guide was built to support new activists to join the ActionAid Activist Network. It can be used as both an induction for new activists joining the network and also as a guiding resource for long-time activists who want a manual for their activities.

## Key takeaways

By the end of this guide you should:

1. Understand the ActionAid Activist Network: its purpose, vision, values and structure.
2. Understand community organising and the role it plays in movement-building and winning campaigns!
3. Understand what campaigns are and how activists play a role in these.
4. Understand how you can build or be part of an ActionAid local group.
5. Understand policies and processes that will support you in being an active members of the ActionAid Activist Network.



# About ActionAid

## Who we are

Guided by feminist values and analysis, ActionAid stands with women experiencing injustice around the world, and supports them to take action to claim their human rights by collectively confronting the injustices they face. We recognise that patriarchy and poverty are inextricably linked and believe that a feminist approach is essential to ending poverty and injustice.

We recognise the power in people and work in alliance with those who share our vision. We work with our growing community activist network to hold Australian decision makers to account and to ensure that Australia is fulfilling its responsibility to protect and uphold the rights of women everywhere.



## The story of the ActionAid Activist Network

ActionAid Australia supports women in communities living in low-income countries to campaign for their rights and fight for justice. However, often women find that the cause for injustice and inequality is perpetuated by actors in wealthier countries like Australia, as our government and corporate policies and practices can work to entrench gender inequality.

For example, large Australian mining corporations may pollute the land and water of lower-income communities, making it difficult for women farmers to secure food and water for themselves and their families. Another example is Australian multinational corporations avoiding paying tax in low income countries, draining money that could otherwise be used for things like education, healthcare and public transport – all things that are essential for women's rights.

These examples are just a few that make it clear that there is a role for ActionAid Australia to play to campaign in solidarity with women fighting for justice and equality around the world, and so in November 2016 we launched the ActionAid Activist Network.

Since then, the network has been built by a dedicated group of activists who stand in solidarity with women around the world claiming their rights. These activists organise events and campaign actions, bring new people into the movement, and build their leadership skills along the way. We know that to achieve the gender equality and justice that women are fighting for around the world, we need everyday people to get involved and take action.



## Our vision for the Activist Network:

We're been building a people-powered movement here in Australia to hold government and corporations to account, and to stand with women around the world who are demanding a fairer and more equitable world.



## How the Activist Network contributes to our theory of change:

People power is essential in the change-making process. As Margaret Mead famously said, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”*

Movements around the world are the most successful when people turn out in large numbers to raise their voice and demand change. That’s why ActionAid Australia is building a movement of people across the country. To do this we use a group model where local activists build local groups in their community. We build groups of activists across the country who then use their collective voice to influence targets, whether that be a local politician or a CEO of a mining corporation.

Local groups are key to our vision as they galvanise local communities by bringing them together and raising their voices around a common goal. They advocate for change locally to contribute to a broader national and global strategy for change. Here in Australia we’ve seen what local groups can achieve when they set their mind to it - read on to see some of the case studies on ActionAid’s local activist groups.

# Our values

It's really important that our activist network and local groups uphold ActionAid's values and have a strong feminist leadership. That's why we think it's important to flesh out what our values are and how activists can live them in their local groups:

## **Mutual Respect:**

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

## **Equity and Justice:**

requiring us to ensure the realisation of our vision for everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, HIV status, disability, location and religion.

## **Integrity:**

requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources and open in our judgements and communications with others.

## **Solidarity with People Living in Poverty and Exclusion:**

will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty, injustice, and gender inequality.

## **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, injustice, and gender inequality.

## **Independence:**

from any religious or party-political affiliation.

## **Humility:**

recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice.

In addition to these values, we ask that all our activists practice feminist leadership. This can be a tricky concept to grasp, which is why we've created the top ten basics of feminist leadership.





# Feminist leadership within our network

We hope that everyone involved in our activist network strives towards feminist leadership. This may be a new concept to you, so we've spelled it out into the top 10 basics to support you in your journey to feminist leadership.

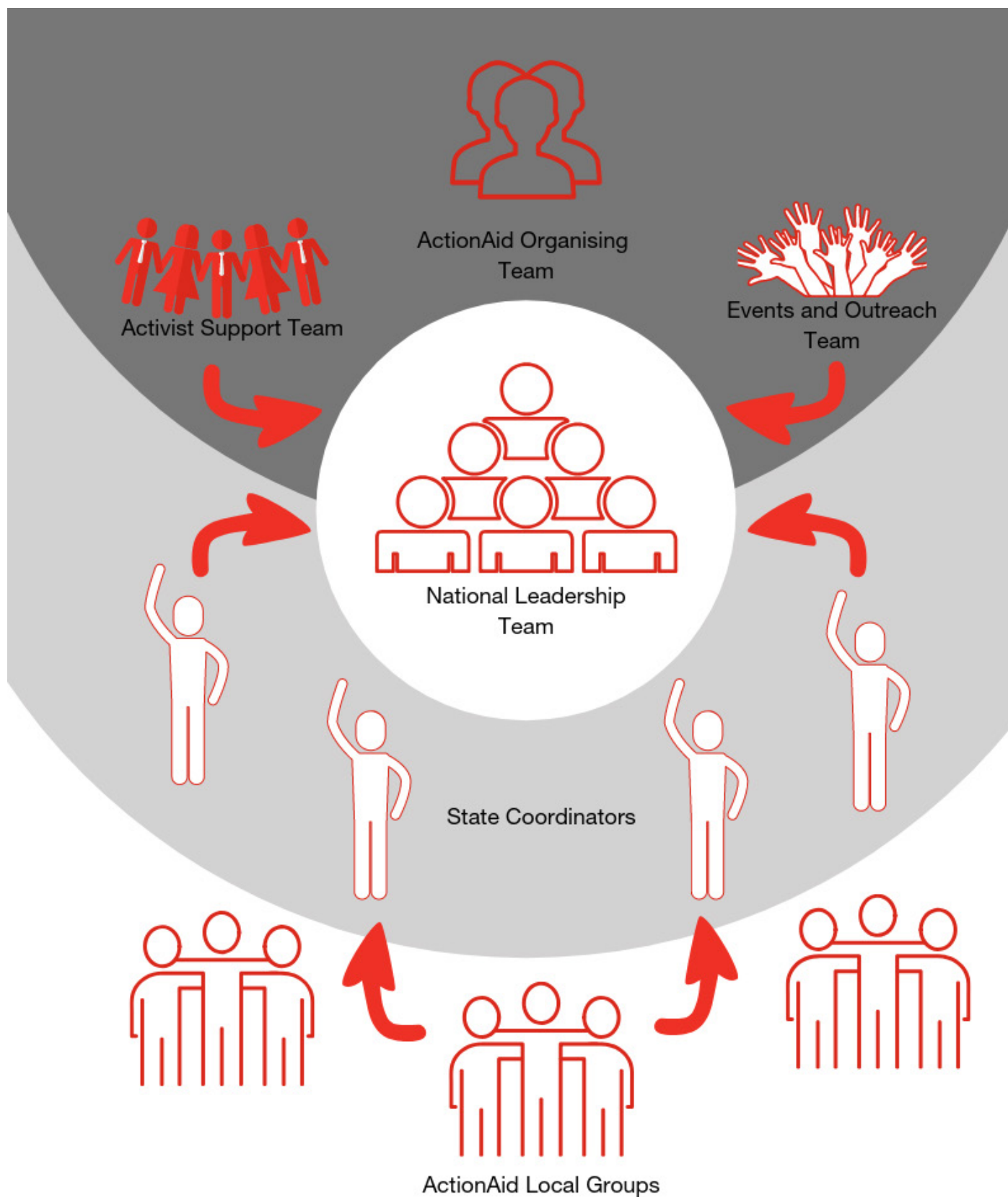


<b>Value</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Self-awareness</b>	I will keep my ego in check, so that I can lead with empathy and an open mind. In order to do this, I will work towards accepting my vulnerabilities, as well as recognising and valuing my strengths and those of others.
<b>Self-care and caring for others</b>	I will take care of my emotional and physical well-being, in order to renew my inner sources of inspiration and compassion so that I can continue to give my best to colleagues. I will encourage and support others to do the same, actively working towards a more flexible and supportive work environment, particularly for those with caring responsibilities.
<b>Dismantling bias</b>	I recognise that society gives me (and others) certain advantages that are not asked for or earned (for example, based on gender, class, race, caste, ability, sexual orientation, education and other factors). I will help to uncover and challenge these forms of discrimination in our day to day workplace practices and policies. I will be aware of how my own privileges can make others feel disempowered or inferior, as well as how I react to others' privilege, and deliberately change my behaviour to treat all as equals.
<b>Inclusion</b>	I will create ways for everyone to be equally heard, respected and successful in my team and organisation. I will challenge myself to build diverse and inclusive teams and to recognise and respond to different barriers to participation.
<b>Sharing power</b>	I accept that the ultimate test of my leadership is the space I create for others to lead. Involving my team in setting shared goals, I will trust and empower them to share leadership with me in reaching those goals. Likewise, I will trust and support those in positions of authority to guide me in the best interests of our mission.
<b>Responsible and transparent use of power</b>	I will be clear, timely and transparent in making the decisions entrusted to me, with appropriate consultation and in the interests of our mission. If involved in allocating resources and choosing partners, I will ensure these choices promote ActionAid's values and aspirations. I will communicate decisions, and the reasons for them, openly.
<b>Accountable collaboration</b>	I will ensure that goals are clearly defined and mutually owned, and hold all team members, including myself, strongly accountable for our individual and collective efforts to achieve them. I will measure my own achievements by the contributions I've made to team success.
<b>Respectful feedback</b>	I will seek, give and value constructive feedback as an opportunity for two-way learning. I will promote non-violent and respectful communication and behaviour.
<b>Courage</b>	I will constantly aim for transformative change, seeking out new ideas and learning from mistakes rather than fearing failure, and empowering teammates to do the same. When I encounter defeatism or cynicism in myself or others, I will strive to restore belief in our goals.
<b>Zero tolerance</b>	I will call out any form of discrimination and abuse of power that I witness or experience in the network and safely enable and support those around me to do the same. I will ensure my own conduct is free from any form of harassment, exploitation and abuse.



## The structure of our network

Because the majority of our network is made up of local groups, it's important to understand the broader network and how groups interact with one another. Have a look at the below diagram for guidance:



Who	Role
<b>ActionAid Organising Team</b>	The Organising Team is made up of two community organisers that work from ActionAid Australia's office in Sydney to support the activist network. Their main role is strategic guidance, support, management and oversight of the network.
<b>Activist Support Team</b>	The Activist Support Team is made up of volunteers in the Sydney office, and handles all volunteer inquiries that come through to the office. Any new volunteers that are interested in being involved will be contacted by the team and informed about how they can take action, mainly by joining a local group. This team can also support your group to recruit new volunteers.
<b>Events and Outreach Team</b>	The Events and Outreach Team is another volunteer team based in the office, and supports local groups to carry out events and outreach. They support groups in activities such as booking venues and catering, but can also support groups by creating resources and toolkits for them.
<b>State Coordinators</b>	The National Leadership Team is comprised of the Organising Team, the Activist Support Team, the Events and Outreach Team and all State Coordinators. They meet monthly to coordinate national strategy and actions and to liaise with each other across the network.
<b>ActionAid Local Groups</b>	ActionAid local groups are geographically-based (such as a suburb or university campus) group made up of ActionAid activists. Some local groups will be more structured than others (read on for more on this) whereas others will be a small group of activists working towards a shared goal.





# The qualities of an activist



In order to achieve change we need a movement of people here in Australia that are willing to speak up and demand change to ensure that women's rights are protected everywhere. Activists are key to doing this.

An activist is part of a local group working to raise awareness about our campaigns. This could be through organising events like film screenings and panel events, as well as campaign actions like getting petition signatures and meeting with local politicians.

They build relationships with people in the community, identifying what they are passionate about, what skills they have and how they combine those passions and skills to work together in the local group.

Activists come from all different backgrounds at different points of their careers and lives, but whether they be students or parents, they all share a passion for doing something to promote women's rights around the world, and a willingness to reach out to the community.

An activist isn't the person you see on busy streets trying to get people to stop and donate -it's being part of a group who work together to support long-term, meaningful change to support women in low income countries.

Activists are everyday people channeling their passion for gender equality into campaigns for change. Whether you're a State Coordinator or a member of a local group, there are certain qualities we hope to see including:

- **A positive attitude and motivation to make change even when there are obstacles.**
- **Capacity to meet regularly with other activists and organise events or actions.**
- **Communication and people skills to be able to interact with a wide range of people coming from diverse communities.**
- **An understanding of intersectional feminism or a desire to learn more.**
- **An inclusive and welcoming approach.**
- **A strong passion for advocating for human rights and gender equality.**
- **Anywhere between 1 hour to one day per week to commit to the cause.**
- **A commitment to living our values.**

## As an activist you will have:

- The chance to connect with ActionAid supporters and staff all across Australia.
- Connection with an international movement of supporters who believe in women's rights and social justice.
- Connection with likeminded people who care about the same issues as you.
- The chance to contribute to the national strategy of how we continue to build our movement.
- Access to ongoing training opportunities in community organising and campaigning.

Does this sound like you? If so welcome aboard! We are excited to have you.  
If you aren't already part of a local group, you can find your local group here:

<https://actionaid.org.au/home/take-action/activist-network/>

If there is no local group in your area, don't worry, you can start your own group!  
Get in touch with us today so we can support you to do this.





## Activist Case Study

### Monique from the South-West Sydney ActionAid Group

Monique joined ActionAid in July 2017, after hearing about our training through a friend and deciding to come along to find out more.

After attending the training, Monique was an integral part of forming the South-West Sydney group and she used her networks to reach out to new volunteers and get together a group of committed people to start planning events. She has helped to organise and run market stalls, and reached out to other groups in the area to hold events in partnership.

In 2018 Monique helped to organise a table talk event in partnership with Voices for Power, who organise diaspora communities in Western Sydney. Together they hosted a great event featuring performance poets, artists, and experts discussing climate justice. It was a very successful event, with over 60 people attending.

Monique also came along to a lobby trip in Canberra in 2018, which saw 15 activists from across the country come together in Canberra to meet politicians and raise awareness about the need for a human rights watchdog to create access to justice for mining affected communities.



# Understanding campaigns

Activists work on ActionAid's campaigns on climate justice for women and economic justice for women. However for newcomers the term 'campaign' can mean a lot of different things, so it's useful to break it down to understand what kind of campaigns we work on.

Campaigns are sustained efforts towards a specific goal in line with our mission. Campaigns are a powerful way of achieving real impact at the same time as building the capacity and experience of people-powered movements..

- **Campaigns have an attainable goal.**
- **Campaigns have a strategy that may be made up by many different tactics.**
- **Campaigns take time to build.**
- **Campaigns have a bold vision and shift the power to the grassroots.**
- **Campaigns bring in new energy and form new alliances.**

For example, think of the Marriage Equality Campaign that:

- **Had the goal of making same-sex marriage legal in Australia.**
- **Their goal was attainable in that it required a change to the law at a time when many other countries were legalising same-sex marriage and there was mounting public support.**
- **The groups running the campaign used many tactics as part of their strategy including phone-banking, door-knocking, events, protests and many other creative tactics.**
- **The campaign took over a decade to win, and took sustained effort from community groups.**
- **The campaign had the courage to call for marriage equality despite negative rhetoric being put forward by conservative groups.**
- **The campaign build the power of community organisations forming a strong alliance that worked together.**
- **The campaign brought in allies outside of the LGBTQI+ community who took action in solidarity with them.**

Through campaigns we can identify the people who are on our side, and just need to be given an opportunity to take action in order to move from being passive spectators into participants!

Ultimately, campaigns are strategic in that they know who they need to target to win their goal, and how to influence them. They are a series of tactics, focused on an attainable objective, which build skills for resistance and grassroots leadership.

Note: You can have an advertising campaign, a fundraising campaign, or an election campaign. But in this context we are talking about a grassroots or advocacy campaign. This type of campaign focuses on a change of policy or practice. Read on for a real-life case study.

*Source: 'Campaigning for Social Change: beyond just protesting for it!' by Daniel Hunter*



## Campaign Case Study

### Efic campaign win

We stopped Efic (Export Finance and Insurance Corporation) from funding a proposed Australian-run coal mine in South Africa that would undermine women's rights.

In 2017, ActionAid Australia campaigned in solidarity with women in South Africa who were fighting a proposed Australian-run coal mine near Lephalale, South Africa. When we found out that Australia's Export Credit Agency, Efic, was considering funding the mine, 7,276 ActionAid activists took action to stop it.

Our activist network stood in solidarity with South African women and took action. Together we delivered a national petition with over 12,000 signatures collected online and offline through market stalls and activist events, we ran events in communities to raise awareness of the issue, we sent solidarity messages to the community in South Africa, and we made formal complaints to Efic's Board to keep



the pressure up. In June 2017 we won the campaign, with Efic revealing in Senate Estimates that it was no longer considering funding the project.

This was our first campaign win as an activist network, and shows the power when people work together towards a common goal!



# What is community organising?

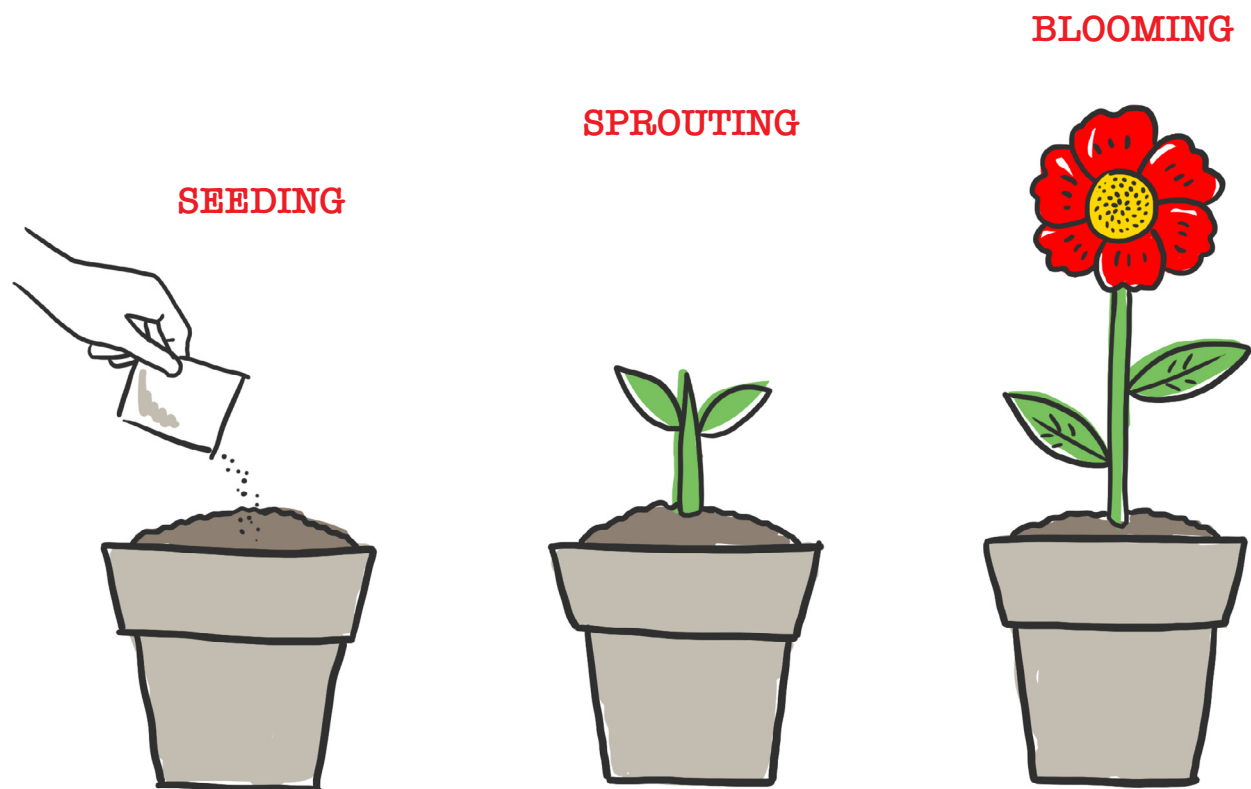
Community organising is the process of building a network of activists who can collectively confront the systems that perpetuate poverty, inequality and injustice. We do this by recruiting activist leaders who build groups in their community that can deliver strategic campaigns tactics, while building ActionAid Australia's network for the long-term.

In practice this involves:

- **Developing grassroots power and building the capacity of activists to solve their own problems with their own resources.**
- **Focusing on long-term structural and political change, not band-aid solutions.**
- **Using relationship building tactics such as community meetings, phone calls and face-to-face conversations.**
- **Distributing leadership to a large network of activists.**
- **Maintaining your efforts over a long period of time.**

## Group phases:

Community organising takes time, and groups don't appear overnight. They take nurturing, just like plants, which is why we've used the metaphor of growing a plant to illustrate how we can grow a group. It's important to note that each ActionAid group is different. Some groups will be just starting out, whereas some will have been around for years and are more established. Depending on where your group is at, your activist experience may vary.





Group phase	Key characteristics
<b>Seeding</b>	<p>Seeding groups are often smaller groups generally with less than five members who have recently agreed to work together, for example after having met at an ActionAid training or event.</p> <p>It's likely this group will be establishing processes and systems such as ways of working together, how often to meet and communicate, and establishing processes on how to make decisions.</p> <p>These groups are working towards their first or second event or action.</p> <p>These groups need keen individuals to help step up and take ownership of building the group in its earliest phase.</p>
<b>Sprouting</b>	<p>Sprouting groups have around 5-10 active members. These members will regularly attend meetings and carry out tasks assigned to them. By this stage, sprouting groups have generally put on two to three successful events.</p> <p>Group members share responsibilities and take ownership over key areas. Sprouting groups generally have more members who are able to share the responsibilities for their group and members take on various roles in the group. For example, one member could manage event logistics and book venues and create run sheets.</p> <p>These groups have a sense of community, they've developed relationships with each other and feel a sense of shared values and vision.</p>
<b>Blooming</b>	<p>Blooming groups are generally quite structured, with a core 'leadership' team of group members assigned certain roles who help to maintain the group and support its growth. Blooming groups also seek to create leadership opportunities for new group members, by identifying and encouraging people in the group who seem motivated to step up.</p>

## Circles of commitment

Within every group and the broader movement, there are people who express various levels of commitment.

**Community:** This represents all the people the campaign is trying to reach.

**Crowd:** the crowd circle represents the community members in contact with the campaign, those who've taken a flyer or signed a petition or joined our email list, and so on.

**Contributor:** the next level of engagement are those who contribute to the campaign, perhaps by donating, attending an event, or by volunteering in a one-off capacity. These are the people who might not have the capacity or interest to come to monthly meetings, but help out with small tasks.

**Committed:** Committed volunteers are those who can organise others. For example, they can train volunteers at a stall or organise the stall itself.

**Core:** the committed people without whom the campaign would fall apart. For ActionAid's Activist Network, this is our National Leadership Team and key activists that coordinate local groups.



*Source adapted from the Purpose Driven Church by Rick Warren.*

Within any group there are varying levels of membership. It is good to reflect now on where you want to be in your group. Key questions to ask yourself:

1. How much time do I have to commit?
2. What level best reflects my capacity?
3. How can I communicate the above to my group so they know how involved I intend to be?

Don't forget you can always move up or down the ladders of commitment and step forward or back depending on your capacity.



# Policies and processes

Now you know the basics of who we are, what we do and understand campaigning and organising, we can jump into a few key policies and processes that all activists should be aware of.

## Fundraising

Fundraising is a great activity for your group. You can fundraise for ActionAid at events or market stalls.

To do this you require an 'authority to fundraise' from ActionAid. Make sure to email the organising team before you plan on doing a fundraiser so we can ensure that we have the 'authority to fundraise' in your state and can send you the relevant forms.

Look out for key opportunities to fundraise with ActionAid. The Strong Women Challenge, our annual challenge-based fundraiser, is a great opportunity to do this as a group and get active together.

## Events

If you are planning an event, you need to fill out the event proposal form (also on the activist toolkit section of the website: <https://act.ai/2VsIITYK>). You can then send that to the organising team for approval.

The event proposal form allows you to set objectives for your event, request resources and ask for a small budget needed for the event.

## Communications

### 1. Sign off:

As State Coordinators many of you will be writing materials to invite people to events and actions in the form of:

- Posters
- Flyers
- Facebook posts
- Facebook events

If you are writing anything that the general public will come into contact with, such as any of the examples above, it will need to be signed off by the Communications and Media Manager. You can send a draft to the organising team so that they can coordinate sign off.

Note: for Facebook events there is a template on the activist toolkit section of the website: <https://act.ai/2VsIITYK>



## 2. Social media:

Our local groups have their own closed Facebook groups. The only policy here is that you should have the ActionAid house rules prominent on the page in the description and follow these rules:

**Rule #1** We will only approve entry to the group to people who we know are ActionAid activists or interested volunteers.

**Rule #2** We will only post content relevant to ActionAid, for example, events, trainings, campaign tactics, stories and interesting articles. We will remove random or irrelevant content such as spam, advertising or promotions.

**Rule #3** Moderators and admins will delete any unwanted or inflammatory content or comments at their own discretion.

**Rule #4** We will conduct a member vetting process every 6 months to ensure all members are still actively engaged through offline or online activism.

## 3. Photo consent:

If you want to post a public photo to the ActionAid Facebook you need to get consent of the people in the photo.





## **Budgets:**

Each group has a small annual budget which depends on the group's size. You can check in with organising team to find out how much your group's annual budget is and how much is remaining for the year.

When groups want to access their budget, they will need to get their expenses pre-approved by the organising team. Expenses that have not been pre-approved will likely not be reimbursed.

The organising team will keep track of groups' expenses but groups are encouraged to do the same so they also know how much budget is available to them.

## **Child protection policy:**

Lastly, it's important to note that we don't engage with people under 18 years old. So keep this in mind when planning events and actions.

People who engage with children need a specific level of training that we're not in a position to provide.

If for any reason you think that there is a chance you will be engaging with children let us know immediately.

All activists in the ActionAid activist network are required to sign our [child protection policy](#), and all National Leadership Team members require police checks.

## **Where to go to for support**

### **Siri Andersen (Campaigns and Organising Officer)**

[Siri.andersen@actionaid.org](mailto:Siri.andersen@actionaid.org)

### **Activist Support Team**

[Volunteering.au@actionaid.org](mailto:Volunteering.au@actionaid.org)

### **Events and Outreach Team**

[Eventsvolunteer.au@actionaid.org](mailto:Eventsvolunteer.au@actionaid.org)

### **National Leadership Team and State Coordinators**

Email the organising team to find out who your relevant State Coordinator is.