

4  
Puentes tanque agua potable Las mujeres no han atraer agua.  
Salon comunal se asen fiesta si estamos alegre  
huertos ortaliba es para comer  
Proyecto de patos para comer o para vender

¿Quiénes participaron?

5.  
Los cocodes, alcalde  
todas las personas que viven en la comunidad

¿qué aprendieron?

6  
huertos ortaliba  
como silandro

7  
¿Cómo continúan?  
siguir con los grupos de mujeres  
8  
ES PERMANENTE PARA UNA FUTURA MEJOR

Lograr mas proyectos.

Aldea San Antonio Chiquito

¿Qué problemas tenían?

Las mujeres antes no tenían participaciones

4  
Cocina sirve para hacer comida.  
el huésped sirve para dormir las personas  
que vienen de otra comunidad.  
Radio sirve para escuchar.

Quiénes participaron

Participaron los alcaldes vecinos  
y tambien las comunidades.  
Como mujeres, hombres, y niños.  
para que sigan aprovechando.

¿Qué aprendieron?

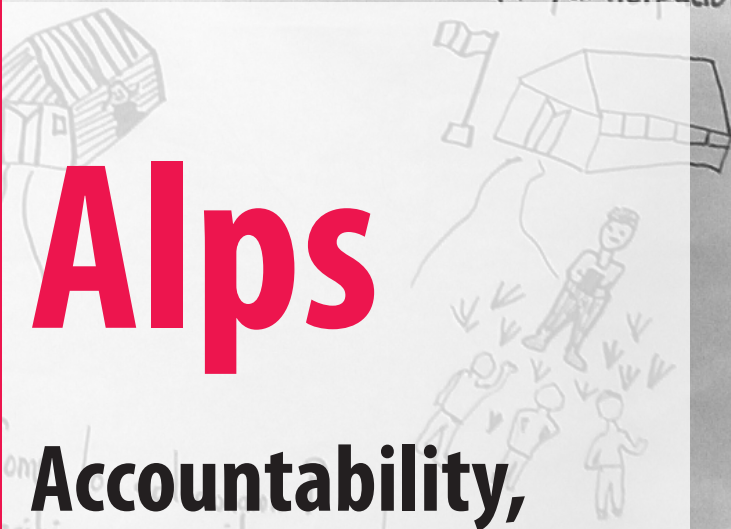
como los niños aprendieron escribir  
y leer en la escuela si no habia  
escuela no hay que aprender.

¿Cómo

hay que  
para que  
como un

hay que

Esperar  
guter  
para  
chando



# Alps

Accountability,  
Learning and  
Planning System  
2011 Update



# Alps 2011

# contents

page

## Accountability, Learning and Planning System

### Our vision

A world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life with dignity.

### Our mission

To work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice.

### Our values

ActionAid International lives by the following 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 and injustice
- **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 and injustice.

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# Introduction

*Alps* is ActionAid's over arching accountability framework, containing within it our programme planning system. *Alps* is distinctive in that it is strongly driven by principles, and sets out necessary personal attitudes and behaviours alongside organisational processes for planning, strategy formulation, learning, monitoring reviews/evaluations and audit. *Alps* defines our standards, not only about what we do but also how we do it. *Alps* is part of ActionAid's human rights-based work.

In ActionAid we have multiple accountabilities – to the poor and excluded people, groups and partners with whom we work, to our supporters, volunteers, staff and board members, and to our donors. *Alps* emphasises accountability to all our stakeholders while also making it very clear that our primary accountability is to poor and excluded people, especially women and girls who bear the brunt of poverty and injustice. We are also accountable to our mission, strategy and policies, to which we hold ourselves mutually accountable in the federation.

ActionAid has undergone a number of major shifts and changes since the original *Alps* (1999) was revised in 2005. We have a new governance structure. We have introduced a new Human Rights Based Approach programme framework, funding strategy, a number of new policies, and more specific monitoring and evaluation requirements. In July 2011 ActionAid will also agree its new international strategy. Once approved, we will need to align our structure and systems in support of the new strategy including revising *Alps*. We will be seeking to find ways to build closer linked local, national and international work, to increase mutual accountability, and to simplify and integrate our planning, fundraising, and programming systems. We expect this to only be completed toward the end of 2012. We have therefore decided to produce this 'interim' *Alps* to make sure all current requirements are clear.

Changes made to bring *Alps* in line with current agreed policies and practices:

- It **incorporates monitoring and evaluation requirements** which make participatory baselines and indicators a requirement for all programmes.
- It **integrates funding and programme requirements for appraisals**. A one year 'entry' phase is now required to build mutual understanding and trust before proceeding to full appraisals and planning.
- It **incorporates programming policies** such as the programme framework, Human Rights Based Approach minimum standards, and partnership policy.
- It adds in **new accountability policies**, such as the complaints response mechanism, and the assurance policy both developed since the previous version of *Alps*.
- It **uses new programme terminology**. We no longer use Development Area ('DA'), Development Initiative ('DI') 'special projects' and 'multi- country programmes' to describe our work. We now call all medium to long term work 'rights programmes' at local, national and international level.
- It **streamlines processes**. The secretariat has one rather than 17 sets of processes. We have begun to rationalise overlap between *Alps* and governance processes.
- We have begun to set out more precisely what the **requirements for national and international programmes** are, so as to enable linkages between different levels and members.
- It takes into account feedback from various *Alps* consultation processes which highlighted the need to **make *Alps* more relevant for members who do not work directly with poor and excluded people**.
- This *Alps* is **shorter, concentrating on minimum requirements**, and leaving more detailed guidance on processes to *Notes to Accompany Alps*, which practitioners can find on the HIVE in the IASL section.

These new requirements will be made clearer through the capacity building initiative (HRBA CBI) taking place later this year and in 2012. The new requirements will be mandatory by 2012, but you are encouraged to start working with them in 2011. We also encourage you to post any feedback you have on how to further improve *Alps* on the HIVE.

The spirit of *Alps* and what it stands for continues to inspire staff, partners, our stakeholders and the poor and excluded groups we work with. This interim revision of *Alps* seeks to remain true to its original intention to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, while retaining core accountability.

# What is Alps?

## *Alps* is the Accountability, Learning and Planning System of ActionAid International

*Alps* is essential to operationalising ActionAid's mission and achievement of its common goals. It is designed to:

- Deepen our **accountability** to all our stakeholders, particularly to the poor and excluded people with whom we work, while also meeting our accountabilities to our supporters, donors, mission and our governance structures;
- Ensure that all our processes create the space for innovation, **learning** and critical reflection, and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy;
- Ensure that our **planning**, monitoring and review/evaluation processes are participatory, empowering, transparent, rigorous and consistent with our human rights-based programming approach; and
- Build synergy and **linkages** across our programmes at local, national and international level.

### The core elements of *Alps* are:

**Principles:** *Alps* seeks to fulfil all our accountability requirements while retaining accountability to poor and excluded people as primary. It strengthens our commitment to women's rights. It requires evidence (rigour), emphasizes learning and promotes transparency. It requires a constant analysis of power.

**Attitudes and behaviours:** *Alps* can only be effective if ActionAid staff, volunteers, activists, board members and partners hold attitudes and behave in ways that fit with our shared vision, mission and values.

**Programming approach:** *Alps* seeks to ensure that we are consistent in applying our human rights-based approach programming principles and standards across cycles of appraisal, strategy formulation, planning and reviews/evaluations. It seeks to operationalise systematic linkages across programme levels to achieve synergy.

**Core programme and organisational processes and standards:** *Alps* sets out the core elements of ActionAid's programme cycle of appraisals, strategy and baseline formulation, planning and reviews/evaluations, and includes programming policies such as the Partnership Policy. *Alps* also includes other organisational processes to further strengthen the accountability of the system, such as audits, governance reviews, organisational staff climate survey, Open Information Policy and compliance policy. More detailed guidelines for core *Alps* processes and full policy documents can be found on ActionAid's intranet, HIVE.

"It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation"

Paulo Freire

***Alps* applies to the whole of ActionAid and forms the basis of our partnerships and multiple accountability relationships.**

- *Alps* applies to the whole ActionAid International federation, including affiliates, associates, country programmes and all parts of the international secretariat. All other organisational policies and systems should be consistent with *Alps* principles. All staff, volunteers and board members should refer to it as the core requirements of key accountability procedures and processes that guide our ways of working. Boards and directors sign off annually on compliance with *Alps* in the board-agreed assurance policy.
- *Alps* sets out minimum core requirements and standards. Boards and managers can go further (e.g. do more reviews than required) and staff are encouraged to be creative and to innovate with new processes, but should adhere to the core principles, attitudes and behaviours set out in *Alps*. Adjustments (for example combining a peer review and affiliate review) can be agreed by one level of management up. The Impact Assessment and Shared Learning (IASL) should be informed of these decisions.
- *Alps* also forms the basis of our partnership with other organisations. While partners are not expected to adopt ActionAid policies and processes, ActionAid will not be able to enter into partnership with any organisation which states or practices values and principles inconsistent with those mentioned in *Alps*, and those partners receiving funding must participate sufficiently to enable ActionAid to account effectively to funding partners and supporters. ActionAid will apply *Alps* and our partnership principles, as set out in the Partnership Policy, in the way we work with partners.
- *Alps* recognises the needs of donors and funding partners which might have to supplement the core requirements. All efforts will be made to harmonise these needs to *Alps* principles and processes.

The overall custodian of *Alps* within the International Secretariat is the chief executive, who will seek the approval of the International Board for any substantive changes to the system.

*Respect for people, particularly poor and excluded people, and their rights, are at the heart of Alps.*

Gideon Mendel/Corbis/  
ActionAid



# Key principles and standards

## Accountability

ActionAid's concept of accountability is one of mutual accountability driven by a primary accountability to poor and excluded people with whom we and our partners work. For ActionAid, accountability is integrally linked to our mission; it is about empowering people and transforming power relations, thus it is part of our strategy and theory of change. Our accountability practice should empower poor and excluded people to claim from us, and ultimately from duty bearers, to shape their own development processes. It should strengthen our governance by ensuring mutual accountability between our members and all our stakeholders. It should allow us to demonstrate impact and be accountable to donors and supporters, thus building more support and solidarity.

- Locally, *Alps* requires that poor and excluded people take part directly in all processes of local programme appraisal, analysis, research planning, monitoring, implementation, research and reviews, including recruiting and appraising frontline staff. This requires ActionAid and our partners to work with poor and excluded people to facilitate their analysis, respecting and critically engaging with what comes out of it. Poor and excluded people have a right to take part in decisions that affect them.
- *Alps* also requires us to work ensure our research, analysis and campaigns are informed by our work with poor and excluded people. Where we do not work directly with poor and excluded people, we are nonetheless obliged to ensure our decisions, including campaigns, organisational policies and ways of working take into account ActionAid's core principles of accountability to poor and excluded people. This requires strong programme links from local to global and global to local and developing appropriate communication channels that take into account the different cultural, language and communication characteristics of others and supports joined up work at multiple levels.
- *Alps* requires that our accountability commitments to other stakeholders – such as donors, supporters and campaign allies – are consistent with our commitment to building the agency of poor and excluded people. This requires us to ensure that we carefully match funding sources and partnerships with programmes through funding planning, appraisals and strategic planning so that there is no conflict in accountabilities.
- *Alps* requires mutual accountability between federation members, by ultimately holding board and assembly members accountable for ensuring *Alps* principles, processes, policies and standards are implemented in practice. It also requires us to be transparent in sharing full information about the outcomes of *Alps* processes as set out in ActionAid's Open Information Policy, including budgets and expenditure.

## Women's rights

Gender intersects with all forms of poverty and injustice. Without challenging and transforming deeply embedded norms and customs that perpetuate unequal power relations between men and women, we are not truly living up to our commitment to fight poverty and injustice.

- All ActionAid programmes, including those of funded partners, must use gender analysis and must have components to advance women's rights. Women must be centrally involved in decision making.

- All programmes must do gender budget analysis as part of planning and reporting, wherever feasible involving women rights holders themselves in this assessment.
- All ActionAid units and funded partners must seek to address women's rights and advance women's leadership within their own organisations.
- Where gender analysis, women's rights programming and organisational gender equity are weak, there must be clear plans to strengthen these. ActionAid will not fund partners who are not at least seeking to improve their work on gender and women's rights.
- ActionAid will actively seek to influence all allies and non-funded partners to take up stronger positions and actions in favour of women's rights.

## Power

*Alps* requires a constant analysis of and action on power imbalances, both in the environment we are seeking to change, and in the way we interact ourselves with people with less power. Power imbalances lie at the heart of poverty and injustice. Power refers to the degree of control over material, human, intellectual and financial resources exercised by different individuals, groups and institutions. It also means the power to make decisions and take actions. Power comes internally from one's sense of dignity, confidence, capacity and can-do attitude as well as from finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength to challenge injustice. Rights cannot be truly realised without changes in the structure and relationships of power.

- ActionAiders will seek first to understand personal power: how we make use of our own power positively in our relationships, in our families, in our work. We must constantly reflect on our own position of power vis-à-vis those who are less powerful than ourselves and seek to use our power to advance equity and justice, particularly women's rights.
- All strategies, appraisals, research initiatives, plans, reviews or reports must have an analysis of power and clear actions to address power imbalances. Reviews, ongoing monitoring and reflection processes and impact assessments should also assess how power has shifted and what impact this has had, both positive and negative.
- *Alps* requires us to examine ActionAid's power in relation to partners and communities. We must recognise the power we wield in our alliances to shape positions as we engage in collective actions, provide funding and technical advice. Similarly, when we are working with community-based organisations, we need to be aware of the power because of our relative wealth and status, and recognise how powerful groups often deny poor people the right to participate.
- *Alps* encourages us to create sustained spaces for poor and excluded people to do their own analysis of power. We must ensure that engagement in *Alps* processes provides opportunities for poor and excluded people to challenge and hold us, as well as others, accountable. Ultimately, all our actions should aim to build the agency of poor and excluded people.

## Learning

*Alps* regards learning and critical reflection as fundamental to our commitment to making change happen. *Alps* aims to simplify reporting requirements and promote processes which emphasise critical engagement, mutual learning and accountability.

- *Alps* aims to optimise staff and partner time spent on critical reflection and learning, rather than on unnecessary bureaucracy and routine processes and adapts requirements where necessary to ensure processes add value.
- *Alps* requires that staff learn with and from poor and excluded people, our partners, allies, supporters and others so that better decisions about our actions are made and good practices and solutions can be shared and developed.
- *Alps* requires that we remain flexible, and adapt our strategies and plans in light of learning.

- *Alps* encourages the use of creative media and alternative forms of communication other than lengthy written reports. People's art, oral traditions, theatre and song are some of the means by which people can engage their full creative talents and develop insights that surprise, inspire and generate new ways of looking at and doing their work.
- *Alps* requires that we are constructively critical and transparent in our reviews and report writing. It requires that we also report back on what we have changed as a result of lessons arising from review and reflection.
- *Alps* reports and documents are approved in most cases by only one level up in the line management, to prevent unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy. *Alps* expects that individuals must take personal responsibility for learning and actions, and that ActionAid as an organisation creates space for learning by encouraging creativity and innovation, and nurturing a culture that values diversity and teamwork.

## Transparency

*Alps* requires transparency and the proactive sharing of information in relevant forms with all our stakeholders, particularly poor and excluded people, because they have a right to information, and information is a form of power. Information sharing facilitates effective communication, mutual understanding and trust in our relationships with poor and excluded people and other stakeholders.

- *Alps* requires all ActionAid members to adhere to the Open Information Policy, pro actively sharing relevant information with primary stakeholders, and making available to the public all our major policies and documentation of *Alps* processes. It promotes such openness in an active way by requiring translations of key documents to local languages and promoting visible public sharing of information.
- *Alps* requires us to constantly assess what we spend and determine value for money in relation to the quality of our work and the impact it has achieved. *Alps* requires us to make financial information public, to ensure this assessment is done with our partners and the involvement of poor and excluded people.
- *Alps* written information must be relevant and useful primarily to the people who produce it, receive it and who need it to make decisions and for learning. It must be written in a way that is easily understood by most people and in the language of the majority of users. No information should be required that is not used in significant ways – all information gathered must receive feedback, acknowledgement and clarity on what it has been used for.
- *Alps* encourages open information through social audits, transparency boards and posters easily accessible to communities, with details of our own plans and budgets.

## Evidence (rigour<sup>1</sup>)

*Alps* strengthens the quality of our decision-making processes, assessment of progress, learning and accountability by ensuring our planning, baselines, on-going monitoring, reviews and evaluations are based on evidence and the perspectives of key stakeholders.

- *Alps* requires that all research findings, reports, appraisals, baselines and indicators, strategies and plans, are based on analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data – including testimony of affected stakeholders and the numbers of people (disaggregated by gender) reached/affected.
- *Alps* requires that data collected support staff and partners to assess the quality and impact of their work and question the strategies and assumptions underpinning their approaches. All strategies and plans should have a clearly articulated theory of change which expresses the programme logic. Only data that are actively used should be collected, and the burden of analysing data should be on those for whom it is useful. We should utilise data that already exists, including sponsorship data collected during appraisal processes, existing research and data from government departments, research institutes and other NGOs. Collection and analysis of data should be rigorous.

<sup>1</sup> Rigour – meaning consistently applying principles, ensuring data and analysis is accurate, relevant, useful. While this captures the principle more fully than 'evidence', some interpretations of 'rigour' exclude adaptability and complexity and are thus inappropriate



# Attitudes and behaviours

*Alps* can only be effective if our staff, volunteers, activists, board members and partners hold attitudes and behave in ways that fit with our shared vision, mission and values. These include:

- Behaviour that is not domineering or patronising but that genuinely shares power with others rather than keeps it for oneself.
- Behaving in a way that genuinely supports those who are excluded to fully participate, bringing poor and excluded people into the heart of decision-making, rather than simply informing and consulting them.
- Behaving with confidence and commitment to address discrimination on grounds of sex, age, caste, ethnic identity, race, colour, class, sexuality, disability, religion and HIV/AIDS status, in all of our work.
- Actively seeking to learn from and build alliances with others who are aiming for similar goals by different methods. In so doing, we are aware that we are not working in isolation in searching for a lasting solution to eradicating poverty and injustice.
- Reflecting a desire for the best knowledge, even if such knowledge fails to support or undermines one's preconceptions, beliefs or self-interests.
- Actively seeking to learn from and share our knowledge, skills and experience with our colleagues internationally and others working for equity and justice.
- Demonstrating a willingness to listen, understand and take account of the different cultural, language and communications characteristics of others.
- Striving to achieve effective communications within ActionAid, recognising that people are faced with different demands and taking initiative in writing and communicating lessons and experiences which are in accessible formats and language.
- Seeking to breakdown silos and maximising the co-operation between all the different areas and functions in our federation.

Facilitating behaviour and attitudinal change is a continual process. ActionAid will provide the space and opportunities to support our staff, volunteers, activists, board members and partners to examine contradictions, personal behaviours and values. This will require different approaches, including coaching, mentoring and feedback mechanisms.

“Knowing others is intelligence  
Knowing yourself is true wisdom  
Mastering others is strength  
Mastering yourself is true power.”

*Tao Te Ching*

# Programming approach

The **human rights-based approach** 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. All our programmes are guided by *Alps* principles and by three additional programming principles of ensuring the **primacy of poor and excluded people**, of building **linkages across levels**, and of **partnership**. The mutually reinforcing approaches to empowerment, solidarity and campaigning are woven together at local, national and international levels, designed to secure measurable change for people living in poverty. The three components of ActionAid's human rights-based approach are summarised in the diagram **below**. It is the integrated 'delivery' of these three components that underpins our programming approach.

## ActionAid International human rights-based programme framework - key components

### Empowerment component (power within)

**With** poor and excluded rights holders and their communities, organisations and movements;  
**For** enabling their collective analysis, identity and actions.

**Examples:** rights consciousness programmes (e.g. reflect circles), capacity building, rights holders' organisation building, addressing immediate needs.



### Solidarity component (power with)

**With** citizens, partners, organisations, networks, coalitions and alliances;  
**For** enlarging support (including money), voice and actions to strengthen the power of poor and excluded people.  
**Examples:** alliance and platform building, networking with other rights holders and civil society, public awareness-raising, mobilising supporters and citizens



### Campaigning component (power over)

**Targeted at** duty bearers (state and non-state actors and institutions) that violate or deny rights;  
**For** a change in policies and practices, opening political space, and building public opinion;  
**Examples:** local and national campaigns, budget monitoring at all levels, advocacy and influencing processes, claiming and enjoying

ActionAid has rights programmes at three different levels – local, national and international. This is because we believe that the causes of poverty and injustice are found at all these three levels, and must be tackled holistically, through the building of movements driven by poor and excluded people and their allies. We have a very strong commitment to working directly with poor and excluded people locally, and believe all our work, including solidarity and campaign work in the north, should be informed by that work with poor and excluded people, and that the way we operate should support the empowerment and agency of poor and excluded people. We also believe very strongly in the power of solidarity and seek to mobilise our supporters to take action, as well as build linkages between movements and in alliances with other civil society organisations. Our theory of change stresses the need to build strong local, national and global movements that act to bring about and sustain change, shifting power and realising rights. We thus monitor the linkages between change at different levels and across different kinds of work, to ensure it is sustained change.

We work through partnerships and in alliances wherever possible because we believe that change will be more sustainable if we build the strength of other organisations, particularly those directly accountable to rights holders, rather than doing things directly ourselves. Details of this are spelled out in the Partnership Policy at the end of *Alps*.

# Human rights-based approach – minimum standards

Minimum standards to support the operationalisation of ActionAid's human rights-based approach are set out below. It is recognised that some individual programmes (such as a campaign in Europe) will only meet these standards through its linkages to programmes at other levels. More detailed guidance on what a human rights-based approach means in practice are in the ActionAid Human Rights-Based Approach Handbook.

## A checklist – minimum standards for ActionAid human rights-based approach programmes:

<p><b>Minimum standard one</b> Building poor people's consciousness as rights holders</p>	<p>Do existing programme activities or strategies enable ongoing analysis and reflection on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conditions and causes of poverty?</li> <li>• Rights denied or violated?</li> <li>• The power relations that exist between rights holders and other actors including duty bearers, or allies/friends?</li> <li>• The power relations between women and men and girls and boys?</li> <li>• Causes of inequality, exploitation and exclusion that underlie rights violations?</li> <li>• Duty bearers (especially the state as a primary duty bearer) and what opportunities there are to hold them accountable?</li> <li>• Other major powerful players (in the economic, political, civil society, cultural/ideological sectors) and their influence/interests?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minimum standard two</b> Agency of the poor and excluded</p>	<p>Do existing programme activities or strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the organisation and mobilisation of rights holders?</li> <li>• Build skills and leadership of rights holders to articulate their agenda, and take actions to claim rights?</li> <li>• Address basic needs in a way that empowers rights holders and generates alternatives that the state can be lobbied to take up?</li> <li>• Build a relationship of trust and mutual accountability between ActionAid, partners and rights holders?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minimum standard three</b> Women's rights</p>	<p>Do existing programme activities or strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that women identify and are able to challenge different forms of subordination and exploitation – whether sexual, cultural, political or economic?</li> <li>• Strengthen the capacity of poor and excluded women and their organisations?</li> <li>• Challenge unequal power relations between men and women?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minimum standard four</b> Poor and excluded people critically engage duty bearers</p>	<p>Do existing programme activities or strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable poor and excluded people and their organisations to connect with and claim from or challenge duty bearers, especially the state?</li> <li>• Enable poor people to monitor public budgets and the implementation of public policies at local level?</li> <li>• Enable immediate local level gains through the fulfilment, protection and promotion of rights by the state?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minimum standard five</b> Changing the rules</p>	<p>Do existing programme activities or strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards lasting gains at the local level and beyond by tackling structural causes of poverty and rights violation (e.g. changes in law, policy, procedure or budget allocation in favour of the poor and excluded)?</li> <li>• Connect local rights violations to national and international contributing factors; connect local struggles with national and international movement; and connect local issues to national civil society processes and work such as national development strategies?</li> </ul>

# Overview of policies and processes

## Programme policies and processes

Core *Alps* programme processes provide guidance and standards for ActionAid's work at multiple levels to ensure quality, relevance and ownership of programmes and related processes. ActionAid's planning and review cycles are designed to increase the influence of poor and excluded people and provide the guidance and standards for the organisation's work at multiple levels to ensure quality, relevance and programme effectiveness. In ActionAid the term used for 'monitoring' includes ongoing participatory review and reflection, and the term 'reviews' includes external evaluations. The diagram on the next page shows which processes are applicable to each level, and how they link to each other in the strategic, programme, and annual cycles.

The core programme processes and policies include:

- Monitoring and evaluation requirements
- Appraisals (entry phase)
- Strategies
- Strategic plans
- Annual plans and budgets
- Participatory review and reflection processes
- Annual reports
- Strategic reviews (external evaluations and peer reviews)
- Partnership policy

## Organisational processes and policies

Organisational processes and policies contained within *Alps* include:

- Associate reviews
- Governance reviews
- Assurance policy
- External and internal audits
- Open Information Policy
- Staff climate survey
- Complaints and Response Mechanism

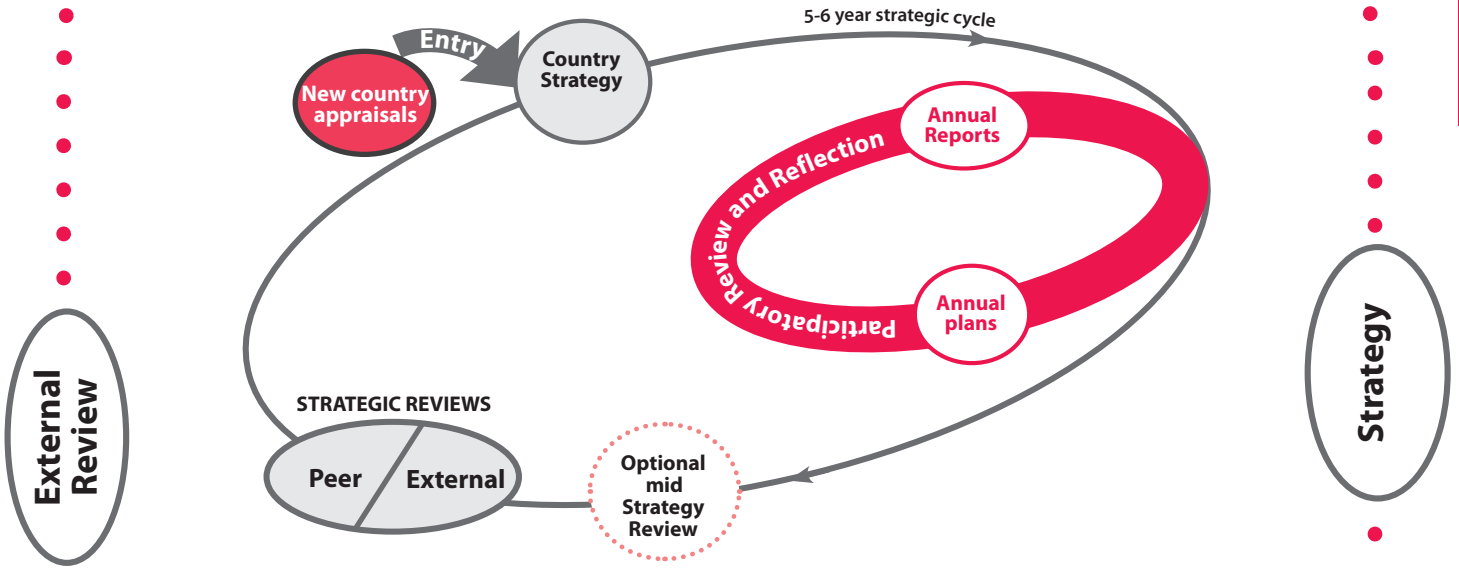
## Supporting processes and policies

Other critical accountability policies and processes that are linked to *Alps*:

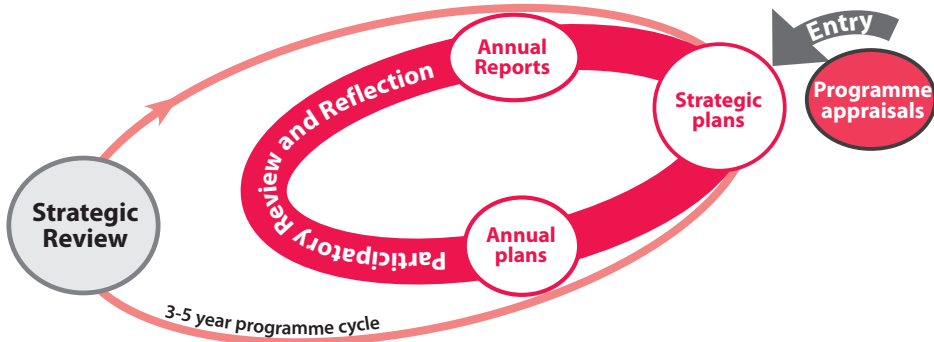
- International global human resources and organisational development framework
- International financial management framework
- International risk management system
- Resource allocation framework
- Fundraising policies, including long term links policy, and child sponsorship policies

A summary description of each of these processes, including core requirements, are set in the subsequent sections. Notes to Accompany *Alps* sets out more detailed guidance for programme processes. The full policies and descriptions of governance processes are available on the HIVE or from the relevant unit.

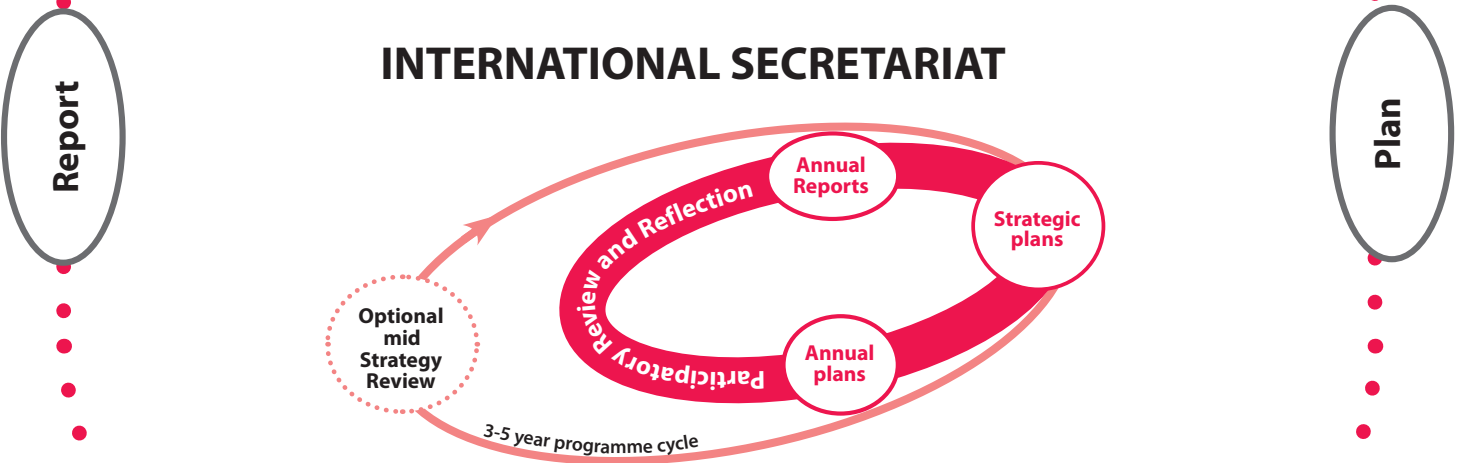
### COUNTRIES (Members and branches)



### RIGHTS PROGRAMMES



### INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT



# New monitoring and evaluation requirements

## ActionAid's approach to monitoring and evaluation

In 2010, a set of new monitoring and evaluation requirements was agreed under which all countries must have a monitoring framework and system which allows tracking of progress against national and global strategy. These are to be completed by the end of 2011, and all programmes must have baselines and indicators by the end of 2012. To support this process, all countries must also review local rights programmes against HRBA minimum standards, *Alps* standards and linkages to the global strategy, using the self-assessment tool provided by IASL. All local rights programmes must have uploaded a quality strategic plan, or a self-assessment with a plan for when and how to arrive at a quality strategic plan, on to the HIVE by the end of 2011.

The principles of *Alps* – accountability, transparency, learning, power, women's rights, evidence/rigour and our human rights-based programme approach – as well as the three additional programming principles, putting rights holders first, ensuring linkages and partnership, are the foundations of our approach to monitoring and evaluation. The way in which we develop indicators, baselines, monitoring frameworks and systems must be done very carefully to serve these principles and approach, to empower those involved by deepening an understanding of rights and shifts in power – rather than becoming extractive and bureaucratic. Here is a brief note on each. More detailed guidance is available in Notes to Accompany *Alps* on the HIVE.

## Triple Loop Monitoring for Learning



ActionAid's monitoring system is designed not only to monitor our work (represented in the diagram as action/output) and the results of our work (objective/outcome) but also to test whether or not our theory of change is working out in practice (goal/impact). Our review and reflection should also monitor changes in the context to see whether our work is still relevant. The link between outcomes and impact is represented by a dotted line and question mark because it is rarely possible to prove or be sure of our impact due to the complexity of change and the fact that many actors and forces are part of that change.

## Indicators

In ActionAid we refer to three levels of indicators:

1. **Meta-indicators** are very broad indicators, such as the number and category of people being reached directly and indirectly by the programme, set at strategy level which allow for the clustering of diverse programme-specific indicators that are agreed in a participatory manner with stakeholders for specific programmes. They support ActionAid to analyse progress against the change promises made in our national and international strategies by allowing for aggregation. They should not be directly imposed into lower level programmes; rather, linkages should be made where appropriate.
2. **Participatory programme indicators** provide the more specific measures by which we monitor progress in achieving planned-for outputs, outcomes and impact. All programmes are required to develop indicators with key stakeholders such as allies, partners or poor and excluded people at the outset of a programme. These are set out in the monitoring frameworks in the strategic plans for local rights and national and international strategic programmes. Output indicators simply track the immediate results of an activity, for example numbers of people trained. Outcome indicators track progress against the changes expected for each objective. Impact indicators provide evidence that the ultimate goal of our work – ending poverty and exclusion and increasing the rights and power of poor and excluded people – is being achieved. Indicators should be relevant and useful for participants in the programmes to understand change, and easy to collect. They should include indicators related to availability and take up of rights and entitlements and levels of empowerment and solidarity. Where the change is long term (such as for policy change in campaigns), progress indicators should be established to guide and track the process.
3. Strategic plans, strategies and partnership agreements should also have **performance indicators** that specifically measure ActionAid's contribution to change and performance. In the case of programmes, these should be set with partners and poor and excluded people or allies as part of a contract of collaboration. In the case of organisational objectives, these will relate to quantifiable elements such as funding targets, but also to qualitative issues such as organisational culture, and the degree to which we are living our values.

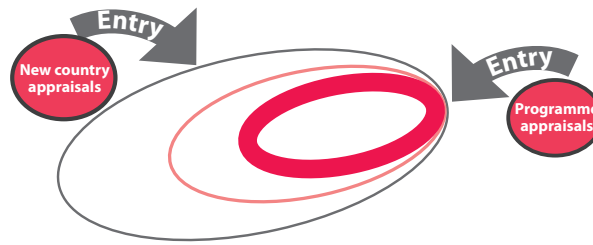
## Baselines

Baselines document the status at the start of a programme, so that change over time can be assessed. A baseline is usually carried out during strategic planning but should draw on the situational/contextual analysis undertaken during appraisal. A baseline describes the initial status of the indicators set to help monitor progress against objectives. It should include initial levels of empowerment as perceived by rights holders themselves in the case of local rights programmes, and levels of capacity in the case of partnerships where the appraisal indicates need for capacity development. For our campaigning and solidarity work it may include levels of support for the campaign objective, the politics of the issue, power dynamics, and the views and positions of the various stakeholders, including the perspectives and voices of rights holders, particularly women, and stakeholders, decision-makers, influential people and organisations, potential allies and opponents.

## Monitoring and evaluation frameworks

A monitoring and evaluation framework sets out the outcomes (changes sought through the objectives) and related quantitative and qualitative indicators, domains of change and key questions to guide monitoring. It also contains basic baseline information such as coverage data and statistical data ('proxy indicators') against which to assess progress. It should also set out how and when monitoring, review and reflection processes and evaluations will take place, including how data will be collected, stored and analysed and who should be involved in these processes. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks, indicators and baselines should be developed in a participatory manner involving all relevant stakeholders, including rights holders and communities. Drawing up a framework should be started during the strategy or strategic development process. A monitoring framework should be used on a continuous basis to support ongoing reflection, analysis, learning and reporting. In-built inter-linkages between different levels of monitoring and evaluation frameworks ensure that our analysis and actions are connected from local to national and to international levels, and that multiple accountabilities are harmonised. ActionAid's Global Monitoring Framework is used to facilitate analysis across different areas of change at different levels. Nationally or internationally aggregated and synthesized monitoring and evaluation information informs our work beyond the local level.

# Appraisals



## Purpose

An appraisal is an exercise undertaken to explore and understand the context, feasibility and value of new medium- and long-term partnerships and programmes on the basis of financial, technical and political considerations. Because a full appraisal is an intensive process involving multiple stakeholders which raises expectations and requires resources and relationships of mutual understanding with relevant stakeholders, appraisals are usually only undertaken after a rapid pre-appraisal has prioritised a specific partner or programme to explore through an 'entry' period or short-term engagement of at least a year in which suitability for longer term engagement and investment has been identified. A crucial part of the appraisal is exploring the feasibility and appropriateness of different funding sources.

## Who and when

Appraisals are required before initiating any:

- New country programme or new affiliate/member of the federation;
- Long term local rights programmes;
- Partnerships (carried out within the larger programme appraisal).

Appraisals are not required for short term programmes of less than two years. Appraisals for longer national and international programmes are encouraged but are at management discretion.

## Process

A decision to proceed, made against ActionAid's standards and principles, is required at each stage of the appraisal. First, potential longer term rights programmes are selected through a rapid pre-appraisal (usually selecting only those potential partners and programming areas which on paper meet criteria). Then, an entry phase (short-term exploratory engagement) is planned and implemented to build relationships and understanding of the issues. Where this is judged successful as the start of a longer-term engagement, it leads to an appraisal proposal (terms of reference) that sets out precisely what needs to be appraised against what criteria. This normally includes assessing in some depth the necessary relationships and resources (potential for partnerships, possibility to meet requirements of different types of available funding, availability of technical capacity) to make the programme a success. Key internal stakeholder groups (including finance, sponsorship, human resources, funding affiliates and programme staff) and external stakeholders (including poor and excluded people and/or potential allies and coalition partners, potential partners, donors and where relevant/necessary government) must be involved. The content and detail of an appraisal will vary and we encourage discretion and flexibility in deciding the details

## Country appraisal

- The senior leadership team initiates an exploratory phase after they have agreed the strategic fit of the country against the criteria in the AAI strategy;
- The exploratory phase leads to a recommendation to the International Board whether or not to proceed with a full appraisal. The exploratory phase normally consists of some initial research, relationship building and short-term partnerships.
- Upon agreement by the Board to proceed with a full appraisal, the senior leadership team normally deploys an individual or a small team to gain deeper first-hand knowledge, experience and contacts in the new country. The full appraisal is based on a TOR which meets all Alps principles; for example, ensuring due attention to women's rights, ensuring the process is transparent, that relevant stakeholders are involved, etc.
- The appraisal considers different options for a new entry into a country, including independent entry (i.e. establishing a new office), or association or merger with an existing organisation aligned to ActionAid's mission and change goals. In developing those options, country appraisals assess comparative benefits and risks involved for different options, organisational development support and financial resources required; and key risks the implications for different functions and units within AAI.
- The senior leadership team sign off the appraisal, with recommendations forwarded to AAI Board for recommendation to the AAI Assembly for final approval.
- Short-term engagement with a new country for three years or less or in response to emergencies requires only the approval of the International Board.



## Local rights programme appraisal

- The country director and senior management team are accountable for the process. Agreement of the national board, in the case of associates and affiliates, and of the International Secretariat in the case of country programmes, is required before entering the third phase of the appraisal – the full appraisal.
- The entry phase is planned and budgeted based on documented assessment of the proposed programme against appraisal criteria. For a local rights programme, these criteria include strategic fit (e.g. contributes to the objectives and outcomes of the national or international strategy), and operational considerations such as availability of suitable funding, partnerships and cost effective management. The assessment must provide quality and reliable information (evidence) of the feasibility of human rights-based programming in line with our programming principles and standards, of partnerships in line with our Partnership Policy, and of funding in line with the requirements of child sponsorship and/or other potential supporters or funders.
- The appraisal process confirms the programme's value in contributing to ActionAid's goals and objectives, assesses the relevant degree of commitment (length and size of programme) and recommends the key areas of foci, the partnerships and the type of funding suitable for a long-term programme. It provides the basis for strategic planning. For local programmes, the feasibility of both child sponsorship and institutional funding should be explored.

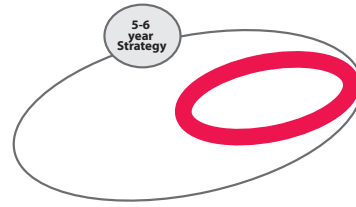
## International and national rights programme appraisals

- Appraisals are required for national and international programmes (for example a campaign, fundraising programme or a major multi-country programme or framework agreement) into which we plan to invest significant resources (for example, over a million Euros) and that is intended to be longer than two years. Appraisals for smaller/shorter programmes are at management's discretion. They are likely to be more relevant for large countries with multiple national programmes than for programmes in small countries.
- An appraisal for such a programme builds on the analysis and areas identified in strategy development, and is thus likely to focus mostly on appraising appropriate partnerships/linkages and management arrangements and making choices on priorities rather than content. A key part of the process is confirming relevant and feasible linkages across different levels (e.g. which countries will take part in or link to an international programme, which local rights programmes link to national programmes). As in other appraisals, the first step is a rapid or pre-appraisal that confirms strategic fit, leading to an exploratory phase resourced through annual planning, leading to programme proposal or concept that is approved by management before developing strategic plans that are submitted for funding.
- Appraisals for national and international rights programmes are agreed through a TOR and documented in a concept note that is signed off by senior management (senior leadership team in the case of international, senior management team in the case of national). Senior management ensure that all relevant staff have been consulted (fundraising, management and programme).

## Partnership appraisal

- Partnership appraisals are carried out as part of programme appraisals.
- A partnership appraisal confirms mutually held values, principles and programming approach, and assesses operational capacity and strategic fit. It provides an analysis of the leadership and governance of the organisation, its capabilities, expertise, strengths and any gaps and areas of potential collaboration and synergy prior to engaging them in a local rights programme or strategic programme. It provides a baseline against which the success of the partnership can be assessed.
- Partners must also be able to appraise ActionAid before entering into any form of contractual relationship or alliance so that clarity of expectations, nonnegotiable principles, and shared values and expectations of both ActionAid and the partner are clearly defined and understood. Partners should expect ActionAid to be held accountable for the principles and behaviours set out in *Alps* and the Partnership Policy.

# Strategies



## Purpose

Strategies are key documents that guide ActionAid International's work at the international, national, and local levels, creating a sense of politics, purpose and priorities. Strategies create inspiration and focus. Strategies help to create a common understanding and guide the planning process, building synergy and coherence across our work at different levels. Strategies are effectively our statement of intent and commitment or promise. Our stakeholders, particularly poor and excluded people and their organisations, inform all of ActionAid International's strategies.

## Who and when?

- International (every 5-6 years)
- Country (every 3-6 years, starting from within one year of approved appraisal)

At local level, where ActionAid works with local partners to support poor and excluded people and their organisations, ActionAid supports the strategies of partners and communities with a strategic plan that links to our national strategy.

## Process

All strategies should:

- Be developed through a participatory and collaborative process involving major stakeholders inside and outside ActionAid, that includes vulnerability, gender, rights, power, and risk analysis
- Be informed by the external evaluation and peer review of the prior strategy, as well as by on-going monitoring and learning
- Include a brief context analysis that makes clear the rationale for strategic choices
- Elaborate a clear theory of change that is consistent with AAI overall theory but contextualised to context
- Set out clear, realistic and coherent objectives and activities to achieve them which are consistent with ActionAid's human rights based approach
- Be accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation framework and plan
- Include a financial/funding plan that sets how the necessary resources will be raised.

By 2012, all country strategies are expected to align their strategies to the new global strategy either through a strategy addendum or an updated/new strategy, depending on the country's position in the strategy cycle. All organisational policies and systems are required to align with the international strategy.

Note that ActionAid has deliberately chosen to stagger national and international strategy development, rather than synchronise them, so that in any one year several members are undergoing intensive review of work and the context and developing new strategies. This helps ensure continuous learning and strategy renewal and avoids a top-down organisation. All members must, however, use the addendum process to align to the global strategy.



*Women's rights are an unequivocal priority of ActionAid International's Strategy.*

*Latin American Feminist Conference  
Andre Telles*

## ActionAid International strategy

- The international strategy applies to all parts of ActionAid. It is a guiding document, aiming to offer a clear direction to all of ActionAid for five to six years, laying out our theory of change, approach and objectives that should be the 'umbrella' or core framing for all country strategies. The objectives provide a broad framework and direction within which there is scope for adaptation at national and local contexts
- ActionAid International's chief executive leads the process in consultation with the senior leadership team, International Board and staff against a Terms of Reference agreed by the Assembly in the prior year, with the input and advice of key units of the secretariat. A cross-organisational drafting team is normally formed. The International Board approves the final terms of reference for the drafting process and proposes the final strategy to the Assembly for approval.

## Country strategies

- The country strategy sets out outcomes and objectives that are relevant to the country over a three- to six-year period, contextualising ActionAid's theory of change and goals in the national context. The strategy is the guiding frame for all local and national rights programmes and for annual organisational planning. It must be consistent with ActionAid's human rights-based approach and *Alps* principles and standards.
- Strategies should be actively used and updated regularly through ongoing monitoring and evaluation (PRRPs) and reviews, or in response to changes in the internal and external contexts. Any major changes made during the lifetime of a strategy have to be documented and included in an addendum to the strategy document. This is expected of all countries in 2012 to align to new global strategy.
- Country directors lead the strategy development process in consultation with their senior management teams, normally through appointing a cross-organisational drafting team, with technical support from IASL, ensuring that all key stakeholders are given ample opportunity to be actively involved, and that the process meets all *Alps* principles and standards.
- The International Secretariat or the National Board/Assembly, depending upon whether this is for country programmes or members, approve the final terms of reference for the strategy drafting process, and the final strategy.

"Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning."

Gloria Steinem

# Strategic plans



## Purpose

Strategic plans (sometimes also called 'programme plans') are medium-term plans (three to five years) that set out how country and international strategies must be delivered by specific rights programmes at local, national or international level. Strategic plans are more operational than strategies and set out the outcomes and schemes that will be operationalised through annual planning. They provide a medium term perspective. All strategic plans include a clear monitoring and evaluation framework and resource plan.

## Who and when

- Local, national and international rights programmes within a year of appraisal or prior strategic plan;
- International Secretariat - two times within the six year strategy period

## Process

Strategic plans are developed once the feasibility, need and focus for a programme are confirmed through an appraisal, and are developed within a year of the appraisal process, or upon review of a previous strategic plan, building on the findings of that prior process. The strategic planning process is also informed by ActionAid's programme framework and minimum standards, *Alps* principles and standards, and the requirements of donors and supporters identified for the programme, and any other relevant studies, research and documentation. The strategic planning process includes establishing the theory of change/logic chain, participatory indicators and baseline with key stakeholders, which not only help provide a way to measure progress, but are also tools for agreement of focus and purpose among stakeholders.



*Strategic plans are a mechanism by which specific units and programmes detail their contribution over three-five years to international and country strategies. They set out expected outcomes and provide a framework for annual plans.*

*Liba Taylor / ActionAid*

## Local rights programme strategic plans

- Strategic plans for local rights programmes set out the overall goals and objectives of the programme, the partners and community groups it expects to work and engage with (including the added value of ActionAid's support and contribution) and how the programme contributes to the overall country strategy goals and objectives. It should also set out, where relevant, the linkages between local empowerment, solidarity, campaigns, communications and fundraising work at different levels, staffing requirements and a funding plan indicating income sources. A phase out strategy is developed along with the first strategic plan, outlining the time frame and conditions for exiting the programme.
- Local strategic plans are normally developed through a process led by the programme director, involving fundraising, finance and specialist programme staff, to a TOR signed off by the senior management team.
- Where ActionAid is operational, the strategic plan is developed in a participatory manner after ActionAid has built trusted relationships with rights holders and stakeholders and deepened our understanding of a given context through a one-year entry phase and a subsequent appraisal. This involves different groups of rights holders in analysis and strategic planning, and reflects stakeholders' perspectives, ideas, suggestions, aims and commitments.
- The partners and/or a local community organisation (CBO) which enter into a long-term programme agreement with ActionAid are not required to develop a separate strategic plan where they already have their own. In such cases ActionAid's engagement with and the added value to the partners' or CBO's ongoing work must be set out clearly in the strategic plan, as must agreed areas of mutual accountability, shared principles and objectives. These will have been discussed and agreed during the appraisal process.
- The country director and National Board approve and sign off the local rights programme strategic plan.

## National and international rights programme strategic plans

- Any national/international programme for which a concept has been developed and approved through the appraisal process also requires a strategic plan. (Senior leadership decides where these are relevant)
- These set out activities to achieve a specific set of objectives (with a clear explanation of the theory of change/assumptions that link the two), details of participating local and country programmes, partners, planned strategic actions and key expected outcomes towards achieving ActionAid's international strategy, the broad allocation of resources for the plan period and a monitoring and evaluation framework.
- In the case of programmes funded by one major donor, this may be the same as the proposal submitted to the donor. These are negotiated by ActionAid and the funding partner in line with *Alps* and in line with the goals, objectives/strategic priorities set out in the international and/or country strategies and strategic plans at the relevant level.

## International Secretariat strategic plan

- This replaces the thematic and functional plans required previously, in order to bring more synergy to the work of the International Secretariat. It is a key accountability mechanism between the International Secretariat, the International Board, and members and country programmes.
- The International Secretariat strategic plan clearly sets out objectives and outcomes of the Secretariat in line with agreed support, compliance and programme role. (Detailed activities are in annual plans.)
- Two international strategic plans for a three-year period are developed in the international strategy period. The first is developed within six months of the strategy's start to give sufficient time for planning and analysis (with an interim plan to guide until this is complete).
- Countries are consulted in the drafting of the strategic plan, which is signed off by the International Board.

# Annual plans and budgets



## Purpose

An annual plan and budget (also known as an 'operational plan') describes specific activities and allocates resources (money and people) to achieve the goals and objectives set out in strategies and strategic plans. A plan and budget is primarily a tool for management as well as a key accountability mechanism with stakeholders. Planning processes are being reviewed, and a new approach may be piloted for 2012.

## Who and when

All units of ActionAid, listed below, are required to submit plans and budgets in October of the prior year.

- Local rights programmes;
- Country programmes, associates and affiliates; and
- ActionAid International Secretariat and ActionAid International (consolidated).

The dates and requirements for local and national programmes are set within countries.

Annual plans and budgets are a precondition for funding allocation to countries, programmes, units and departments within ActionAid. An annual plan and budget clearly states realistic and achievable objectives and outcomes, ensuring clear inter-linkages and contributing to changes identified in the strategy or strategic plan. Country plans must refer to the International Secretariat and vice versa. An annual plan and budget is not excessively detailed, but allows flexibility and openness to change or to re-direct work plans as circumstances change and as a result of on-going learning and reviews.

## Process

- The chief executive or country director appoints a planning lead, preferably with a planning co-ordination team bringing together finance, programmes, IASL and fundraising, who steers the process.
- The annual plan and budget is developed in consultation with all relevant stakeholders – including local rights holders where programmes directly affect them – and is clearly linked to on-going monitoring, review and reflection processes. The annual plan addresses new insights, issues and lessons that have arisen from critical reflection on progress, and challenges from these processes and other reviews and studies.
- Annual plans and budgets are endorsed by senior management teams in country programmes, and by national boards or assemblies in members before being submitted to the International Secretariat in October, and to the International Board in November, for the annual resource allocation and plan and budget approval exercise.



*Annual plans and budgets should be informed by outcomes of review and reflection processes.*

*Action Aid UK staff conference, London, 2005  
Kristian Buus/ActionAid*

# Annual reports



## Purpose

To share progress, income and expenditure, outcomes, impact, lessons and challenges against the relevant strategy, strategic plan or appraisal document and reflect how the lessons will translate into subsequent changed actions and plans.

Annual reports are focused on impact and learning, with stories of change illustrating shifts in power, rather than on activities, which are normally reported on in monthly or quarterly management reports. Annual reports not only serve our own institutional memory and shared learning across countries and units, but also fulfil our accountability and transparency to a wide range of actors, both internally and externally, to whom we are accountable. Annual reports clearly and honestly communicate key messages to them based on their interests and information needs, increase their understanding of ActionAid's work, and reinforce their support of and collaboration with ActionAid in the future.

## Who and when

- Local, national and international rights programmes (these are summarised into country and international reports) in January;
- Country programmes, associates and affiliates in February;
- ActionAid International Secretariat in March;
- ActionAid International in April;

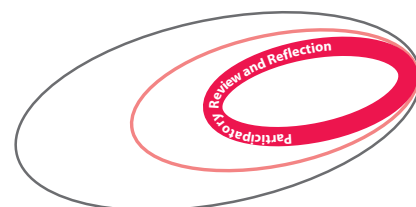
## Process

- The relevant unit head leads this process, with overall co-ordination and technical support from impact assessment and shared learning and communications.
- Participatory reviews and reflections, together with cumulative information and learning, form the basis of the annual report.
- Where relevant, we should promote organisational learning by making this more than a documentation exercise, so that it stresses our transparency and accountability to stakeholders.
- Annual reports are approved by the National Board, Assembly (or delegate) - depending on constitution - for ActionAid members, by the CE for International Secretariat and international programmes, and by the International Assembly for the ActionAid International annual report.
- Annual reports including finances and narratives for each calendar year, are required at the end of February for all affiliates, associates and country programmes, and at the end of March for the International Secretariat, with a consolidated report for ActionAid International global prepared by the end of April for submission to the International Board and Assembly.

## Annual reports include:

- Key areas of progress and challenges against strategic objectives and outcomes in annual plans, evidenced with qualitative and quantitative data and testimonies;
- The perspectives and testimonies of key stakeholders in their assessment of change and ActionAid's contribution (both positive and negative);
- Short case studies that illustrate impact and/or lessons about the approaches and outcomes of the work during the year;
- Financial and quantitative data to back up our analysis of trends, change and progress including any changes in the baseline;
- A review of financial performance, income and expenditure trends against strategic objectives and comments on costs versus impact and performance;
- Progress against actions and lessons in the prior plan and new lessons and actions emerging from the annual review; and
- For external communications, *Alps* encourages ActionAid programmes and units to be creative and innovative in choosing effective means to communicate on their progress and lessons, e.g. in the form of a pamphlet, photo essay, poster, CD-ROM or video report.

# Participatory review and reflection processes



## Purpose

Participatory review and reflection processes (PRRP) are the core component of ActionAid's approach to regular and ongoing monitoring of the progress and outcomes of our work. The term 'PRRP' refers to ongoing participatory monitoring mechanisms and to periodic moments of more in-depth review with key stakeholders on the progress of our work, where data collected through our monitoring processes are gathered, analysed and consolidated for learning and accountability purposes. PRRPs enhance our relationships with and accountability to primary stakeholders, keep us focused and energised and help ensure that we are on track in achieving our objectives. PRRPs focus particularly on whether our chosen strategies (assumptions about change) are working, and whether we need either to do them more effectively or change them based on feedback. PRRPs also generate useful data and evidence to help strengthen rights-based programming, solidarity, campaigning and communication work.

## Who and when

*Alps* requires regular participatory review and reflection/monitoring to be carried out by functions and teams at all levels across the whole organisation, from local communities to partners all the way up to our International Board. How we and our partners (both funding and non-funding) will be involved in and contribute to each other's monitoring should not be assumed but rather negotiated as part of the memorandum of understanding (MOU) finalised during the strategic planning stage. Participatory review and reflection should be on-going, with synthesis moments linked to planning (usually around July) and reporting (usually between December-February)

## There are four levels of monitoring that need to be considered:

1. **Context** – what has changed in the context that we need to take into account? Are there new, or newly learned, factors? It is often useful to first ask what has changed (independent of our intervention) and see if it can be traced back to activities.
2. **Activities** – are we doing what we said we would? Are our resources invested? How can we improve efficiency and effectiveness?
3. **Objectives** – reviewed against outcomes and indicators, assessing both positive and negative, expected and unexpected.
4. **Goal/impact** – is there any feedback as to whether objectives are leading to intended impact? Are our assumptions and theory of change playing out in practice or do they need to be adjusted, and if so how?

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

*Margaret Mead*



## Process

The process for PRRPs varies widely, depending on type and location of the programme's primary stakeholders. A few standards are:

- While *Alps* allows space and flexibility for innovation in designing approaches and methodologies for participatory review and reflection processes, they should also be designed to meet all accountability requirements, including data collection for donor reporting and build on existing data collection processes such as child sponsorship reports and letters.
- The timing of on-going monitoring, review and reflection processes should be determined on the basis of the monitoring and evaluation framework and system set out in appraisals, strategies and strategic plans.
- While monitoring is on-going, it is expected that teams and functions carry out a more in-depth review and consolidation process at least twice a year to inform annual planning and reporting. Other teams may wish to carry out reflections on a quarterly basis, particularly if they are required to report to donors or after a key intervention or event such as campaign action, emergency intervention, launch of a new marketing or communication product etc. to ensure lessons are captured for future work and plans.
- The lessons and findings of PRRPs and agreed actions arising from them should be documented in an appropriate form and fed into management reports and updates, donor reports, performance appraisals, annual reports, annual plans and budgets and other organisational change processes, as well as various types of communication to external audiences.

### Some examples of approaches taken at different levels:

**Local rights programmes:** having community organisers, partners' staff or our staff regularly interview individuals and groups and record feedback during visits; having regular community and partner meetings where progress and learning is an explicit part of the agenda throughout the year; building review and reflection into processes, making it part of the conscientisation process; asking 'third parties' (respected, somewhat neutral community members) to observe and give feedback on the effects of different interventions; having staff, partners and community leaders from one area visit and give critical feedback on another area.

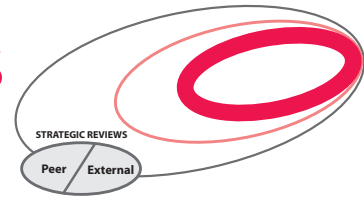
**Internal organisational functions:** surveys (online or email) sent out to team members and those they serve; phone and in person interviews with external actors who can give feedback; integrating questions on our interventions into regular communications with allies, supporters and activists; inviting a few key stakeholders to take part in team meetings, to give input.

**Very High Development Units (Europe, Australia, US):** surveys and interviews of country partners, staff and allies, mutual linkages to PRRPs in specific programmes, building feedback on key campaigns into regular communications with supporters and activists.

**International programmes:** (themes and campaigns under the old strategy) rapid reflection at the end of any key event; asking someone to 'participant observe' by critically reflecting on progress, including interviewing key actors during a key event; using surveys and interviews and inviting stakeholders; getting feedback from 'stakeholder panels' or 'peer panels' in which our interventions are put under scrutiny by friendly but neutral people who know our work.

**National and international strategy level:** Establish a system of gathering data and reflection throughout the year which is summarised in a report or template. Bring various stakeholders together to assess linkages between the different levels and what needs to be done more effectively to bring the sum of the parts into a more coherent whole.

# Strategic reviews: External and peer reviews



## Purpose

The purpose of a strategic review is to analyse progress against the previous strategy in order to account to stakeholders and to inform the next strategy. Strategic reviews include an external evaluation component, focused on evidence of impact and quality of work against the country strategy, and – for country level – an (internal) peer review focused on the degree to which work at country level has contributed to the global strategy and the federation.

## Who and when:

- ActionAid International as a whole, at the end of each strategy;
- ActionAid International affiliates, associates and country programmes at the end of their strategy;
- Local rights programmes, at least once every five to six years.

Mid-term reviews (in a three-year period) are also recommended – but are optional – for all programmes.

## External evaluations

### Purpose

External evaluations assess performance and lasting changes attained against strategies or strategic plans at a critical moment in the programme strategy cycle. External evaluations are an opportunity to bring in technical experts to review our work and give us advice, but they should be done in a participatory way to ensure the findings are grounded and used. During 2011-2012, as we update Alps, countries are encouraged to experiment with different kinds of evaluations and evaluators to help improve our evaluative practice.

### Process

- External evaluations are normally carried out by a team of consultants, with specialist expertise in the priority areas being reviewed. The size and composition of a team will depend on the size of the programme and priority issues being reviewed. However, an external evaluator(s) is essential in the process, which should also include those who are involved in implementing strategies or programmes (e.g. rights-holders, particularly women, partners, ActionAid staff, supporters, donors and other stakeholders). At least one member of the review team should be a gender specialist.
- It is normally not cost effective to review all elements of the programme. Areas of focus should be agreed based on issues arising during review and reflection, audits and other reviews. Case studies should be selected randomly (to guard against positive selection) but also purposively against criteria to ensure diversity and match with strategic focus.
- The chief executive leads the process for the ActionAid International Review, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. The TOR, appointment of consultants and final report are signed off by the International Board. In the case of branches, the process is led by the country director, with TOR, consultant and final report with management response signed off by the Board (in the case of members) senior leadership team (in the case of associates and country programmes).
- The final report, including management response, must be published and made available to all stakeholders.

## Peer reviews (for countries)

### Purpose

Peer reviews are a key mechanism for ActionAid colleagues to hold each other accountable to the strategies and standards of ActionAid. Peer reviews help to build a cohesive organisation and promote cross programme learning and strategising. Peer reviews do not duplicate the purpose of the external evaluations, but rather validate, question and explore key findings and recommendations from the perspective of peers, and complement and add to the external evaluations. They also look at the contribution of the programme to the federation over the strategy period, and in the future. They are more forward-looking as they link the external evaluation to the strategy development process. The TORs for the external evaluation, peer review and strategy development should be planned together.

### Who and when

- Peer reviews are only required for country programmes and members. They take place at the end of each country strategy period, within a one-month period from the time the external evaluation is completed and reports are available and link directly into the strategy development process. They should be carried out over seven to 10 days, with the first day for preparation, and the final day for report writing.
- Peer reviews are also highly relevant and recommended for local, national and international rights programmes as a way to carry out strategic reviews. The involvement of partners, allies, and staff from programmes pursuing similar objectives in other areas can provide highly relevant feedback and promote shared learning.

### Process

- A peer review team consisting of a minimum of three people is appointed by the international senior leadership team. In the case of peer reviews of members, at least one of the reviewers should be being drawn from governance structures (Board or Assembly). One reviewer should be from the International Secretariat, and one manager or director from another country.
- The terms of reference for a peer review are focused on three or four priority issues (rather than a comprehensive review) agreed by the International senior leadership team, and address key issues emerging from external evaluators' observations, comments and recommendations. The recommendations arising from the peer review help to inform the management response of the overall external evaluation.
- Peer reviewers interact with and listen to a broad range of stakeholders, including poor and excluded people, particularly women, partners, allies, cross sections of ActionAid staff, supporters, donors and other stakeholders.
- The draft report and recommendations of the peer review are shared by the reviewers with the management team and National Board before they leave the country, and with the International Secretariat before it is finalised. The chief executive, with the senior leadership team, reviews the report and provides a summary of key issues to the board (through the Audit and Risk Subcommittee).

# Partnership Policy

Working in partnership is a core programming principle within our human rights-based approach. We recognise that the quality of our relationships with poor and excluded people, communities, our partners and allies is fundamental to our success in achieving our mission and to ensure the optimisation and sustainability of relevant impact of our work.

The Partnership Policy framework, approved by the International Board in December 2008, sets out the core principles in partnership processes and guides practice in our work at local, national and international level. It aims to foster strategic and effective partnerships with poor and excluded communities and their institutions, social movements and citizens' and civil society organisations, networks, coalitions and alliances. It is applicable in our programme, policy and campaigning work within all parts of the organisation, with all units expected to comply with, follow and use this framework to develop their own context-relevant partnership policies and procedures, particularly within country programmes.

The principles, policies and guidelines for strategic relationships with state institutions, including governments, for-profit companies and corporations are covered in separate policies.

## AAI's definition of partnership:

A partnership is a relationship of equality between partners based on mutual respect, complementarity and accountability where the shared values, purpose, goals and objectives are clear and which recognises autonomy of the partners.

Based on the above definition, we recognise:

- A partnership as both a dynamic process and a relationship, which may or may not involve the transfer of money;
- It is often longer-term (one year or more) allowing time to develop and deepen the relationship for shared goals, objectives, programmes and projects;
- It involves the transfer or exchange not just of funds but also of solidarity, staff, ideas, learning and extended relationships (e.g. partners) etc.
- A partnership is grounded in a documented agreement that spells out the contractual obligations, irrespective of whether ActionAid provides funding or not.

## Guiding principles

1. **Complementarity:** Partnerships must identify mutual benefits for the partner organisations and ActionAid. Mutual benefits should strengthen the impact of our work to eradicate poverty and injustice. Partnerships should be perceived as alliances for joint action towards a common goal – not only in relation to a specific project, but also at a more strategic level.
2. **Adherence to principles of mutual respect, equity, justice and accountability:** All parties should recognise that a partnership between two organisations comes with its differences in resources, information and power. Holding on to the principles of mutual respect, equity, justice and accountability mitigates the misuse and abuse of power, which has the potential to derail the partnership.
3. **Nurturing nascent organisations of rights holders:** Partnerships should aim to support them to develop into autonomous and sustainable organisations that have their own identity and are not replicas of ActionAid.
4. **Fostering a human rights-based approach:** ActionAid fosters a human rights-based approach in its strategy to fight and end poverty and injustice. Ideally, ActionAid partners should share this approach, or at the very least, agree that programming activities undertaken within the partnership are clearly designed and implemented in accordance with the rights-based approach.
5. **Promote independence:** While some partners will initially be heavily dependent on ActionAid (financially and technically), it is recommended that we develop partners' capacity and sustainability to reduce their dependency on ActionAid.

**Selection of partners:**

In line with ActionAid's international strategy, we always seek to work in partnership with others for greater synergy and impact. However, in certain cases we will work alone or directly when it may be more efficient or effective or where we cannot identify partners that share our mission, principles or goals (e.g. our direct work with poor and excluded people or engagement with government and donors). The two-pronged objectives of working in partnership as a way of maximising potential impact and as a mutual and contractual obligation are distinct, but they are mutually applied in determining the selection criteria of partners.

**ActionAid will enter into partnership with:**

1. Legally registered or unregistered groups, organisations, networks, alliances, coalitions or movements that have clear and transparent governance and management structures and practices. Organisations that are not legally registered but that are recognised by their constituencies, or where the political context makes it difficult for organisations we wish to partner with to register, ActionAid can enter into partnership through or in conjunction with other organisations that are legally registered. For nascent organisations that we nurture for long-term partnerships, the recognition and support of rights holders are a prerequisite. In these cases, the partnership processes should include actions that enable them to gain legal and moral recognition and legitimacy.
2. Organisations that are mutually compatible and support one each other's vision, values, mission, goals, objectives and approach.
3. Organisations that have a clear focus on poverty, human rights, inequality and/or social justice and which are compatible with ActionAid's rights-based approach.

**ActionAid will not enter into partnerships with:**

1. Individual or family organisations for private benefit, party-political organisations for partisan benefits, and profit-making organisations and companies that distribute dividends to members and shareholders.
2. Any entity aimed at personal profit, exclusionary partisan or faith promotion; and to undertake illicit activities.
3. Organisations that do not or are unwilling to prioritise women's rights and gender equality and/or are publicly known to be opposed to this, as well as organisations that are homophobic, racist, communal and have been known to use custom, race, culture, ethnicity and/or religion to violate/deny the rights of excluded groups.
4. Partnership agreements should always be approved by the designated authority that is at least a level higher than the person developing and managing the specific partner or partnership. No single member of staff within the organisation can solely approve a partnership involving funding.

Any partnership that is longer than three years (and which has a substantial financial investment in the country) should be approved by the country management team and the National Board or delegated board committee, based on a thorough mutual partnership appraisal which assesses complementarity of vision, approach, values and principles.

All partnerships should be defined and described in a written partnership agreement signed by the authorised staff. Instead of using a pre-formatted agreement prepared by ActionAid, a partnership agreement should be developed in a joint process by partners and written in forms and language that are mutually workable. The agreement should spell out not only the obligations of the partner, but also of ActionAid.

Each country programme/associate/affiliate is expected to establish a contextualised partnership policy that is consistent with the global framework, which sets out: principles of partnership, types of partners, eligibility criteria for selecting partners, process of appraising and assessing partnerships, processes of approving and managing partnerships, grants disbursement procedures and accountability processes, monitoring, review, evaluation and phase out processes.

# Organisational processes & policies

## Governance manual

The governance manual refers to ActionAid International's governance structure, policies, and procedures. It also describes the roles and relationships between the ActionAid International Board, the International Secretariat, and its individual members and branches. It sets out the key responsibilities of board members of ActionAid International and national boards, and summarises the processes of the International Board.

## Governance review

### Purpose

In the spirit of ensuring accountability, transparency and the integrity of our structures and systems Alps asks AAI Members to carry out a governance review on the effectiveness of governance structure, processes and policies and the Board to assess its own effectiveness as a team and individually: The purpose of governance review is to:

- Assess effectiveness of governance structure (Board and Assembly if existent) and the relationship with management and the whole federation.
- Assess compliance of Assembly, Board and Committees with AAI values, policies, strategies, regulations and Constitution.
- Identify risks.
- Consolidate and document the lessons learnt, challenges and successes of the current Board and Assembly.
- Bring in new knowledge and capacity and
- Improve the governance structures, standards and policies.

### Process

- The review is conducted in accordance with the Constitution and governance manual.
- The governance review shall be conducted by an external consultant that is an expert on governance.
- The Chief Executive/Country Director and the IS (International Governance Unit) shall identify a consultant to facilitate the governance review
- The process involves consultation with and feedback from IS (International Governance Unit) and other staff including the AAI representative who have worked with the Board/Assembly as well as relevant external stakeholders.
- A report of the review will be written up by the consultant and the Governance.
- The report shall be discussed by the Board/Assembly.
- The Board/Assembly with support from the International Governance Unit will agree on recommendations and an annual plan including a development plan for Board/Assembly and support required.

NB: The International Board has agreed, as a pilot during 2011/12, to carry out a governance review biannually with a review and reflection annually to assess its own effectiveness as a team and individually. The governance review requirements will be reviewed in 2012 as part of the governance and Alps reviews.

# Associate/Affiliate Review

## Purpose:

The purpose of Affiliation review is to determine its progression from Associates to Affiliation status of ActionAid International. The requirements of this review are outlined in the AAI Constitution, Membership Regulations and other agreements signed with Associate Member and policy approved by the AAI Board currently under review.

## Process

Affiliation review will have three building blocks: (a) ongoing regular review, (b) stakeholders' feedback survey and (c) international review exercise.

- The ongoing regular review consists of annual self review and reflection and biannual governance review to assess effectiveness of governance structures (Board and Assembly), with documented recommendations and development plans for the AAI Board and Assembly. The Senior Management Team of the Associate and the regional functional teams of the International Secretariat will also reflect on and review the governance structure, governance, and member progress as a part of their annual review and reflection process and document the proceedings. The Associate and the International Secretariat to provide a mid-term reporting on Associate progress against criteria spelled out in the policy. The Regional Audit and Finance function will provide a report on the status of the Associate in relation to audits and its financial health of the Associate. An associate should not be recommended for a review unless it has unqualified external audit and been deemed to have satisfactory controls.
- A short and sharp stakeholder survey will be conducted through an independent consultant to find out stakeholders' views about quality of governance and its addition of value in terms of achieving our mission and organisational performance. Stakeholders will also be asked for their advice and recommendations on areas that need improvement.
- The Governance and Board Development Committee of the International Board will constitute the International Review Team. The process will be supported by the International Governance Unit. The Associate should appoint an in-country team to prepare for and support the International Review team. The in-country team should ideally comprise of members of the Governance committee of the Associate Board, members of the General Assembly and some Senior Management Team members.
- The date, time, venue and format for the review visit will be developed with the Associate through the Associate Director and the Associate Board Development Committee. The Associate is encouraged to propose a review schedule and interviews plan to the International secretariat to be agreed jointly with the International Review team in order to ensure full preparations are made. Documentation regarding the issues and progress to date of the Associate should be prepared by the team and sent to the review team by the International Secretariat (IGU) at least four weeks in advance of the review.
- During the visit, a selection of agreed Board members and staff should be available for interviews by the reviewers and to accompany the Review team on field visits to local programmes. The overall presentations from the Associate should be done to the Review Team. A debrief meeting between the review team with the full board and senior management team should be organized at the end of the review to ensure that findings are shared and agreed between the reviewers and the Associate to allow for critical engagement and reflection on the whole process before the production of the review report.
- The review team will prepare a report with recommendations for Affiliation with our without recommendations for areas of improvement. The report will be shared with the International Secretariat and Associate. The Associate, through its Board, will need to comment on the draft report commissioned by the international review team within 2 weeks of receipt. The final report, with comments from the Associate, will be reviewed by the ActionAid International Chief Executive, International Directors and the Governance and Board Development Committee before presenting to the International and UK Board (if the Country programme is owned by AAUK) with recommendations for approving or not approving the Affiliation. The AAI Assembly approves Affiliation. In the case of disapproval, a further review will be conducted no sooner than 12 months and no later than 24 months.

# Assurance Policy

## Purpose

The Assurance policy and related monitoring tool are designed to promote compliance, accountability, performance and learning by ActionAid International and its Members:

- To ensure the strength and performance of the AAI Federation and its Members.
- To ensure mutual respect, accountability and responsibility between Members.
- To avoid damage to the mission or reputation of AAI and its Members.

## Who and when

Self assessments are submitted once a year alongside annual reports in February by all AAI Members, Country Programmes and the International Secretariat.

## Process

The process will have two standard building blocks: (a) annual self assessment (b) ongoing reviews.

### *Annual Self Assessment:*

- AAI Members, Country Programmes and International Secretariat shall undertake a self assessment exercise on annual basis. This will be done through a developed tool. The self-assessment and reporting process will be integrated with the annual review, reflections and process and mechanism thus avoiding additional and stand-alone burden.
- In case of AAI Members and International Secretariat, the respective Board has the primary responsibility for this and shall approve it. In case of AAI Country Programmes, the Regional management teams will serve the function of proxy Board to the relevant country programmes and should approve it.
- The report shall be sent to the International Board via the International Secretariat. Analyses of reports will be reviewed by the AAI Audit and Risk Committee and presented to the AAI Board with recommendations to the Assembly for action required by the Assembly, members or the International Secretariat. Good practices will be celebrated and shared.

### *Ongoing reviews*

- Compliance, accountability, performance and learning is also assessed and assured through various on-going review and audit processes as recommended, required and practiced in accordance with other Alps processes, namely participatory review and reflection processes, external and internal audit, strategic reviews, and, for members, governance reviews.
- In addition, the assurance system will draw from the on-going Management Information System and Monitoring and Evaluation, Impact Assessment and KPI reporting systems.
- Reports of such reviews and audits will be reviewed by the AAI Audit and Risk Committee and the AAI Board for necessary action as well as for reporting to the AAI Assembly annually.



# Audit

Both internal audits and external audits are nonnegotiable requirements for the whole of ActionAid and are a key part of its accountability system.

## External audit

**Purpose:** To independently examine records, procedures and activities, and provide a legally valid report outlining the auditor's opinion on the state of affairs.

### Who and When:

- ActionAid International consolidated statutory accounts on an annual basis,
- Affiliates, associates and country programmes as per local law.

### Process

- External audit firms should be appointed by the Board for members, and by the International Secretariat for branches (country programmes).
- For the audit of worldwide aggregated accounts of ActionAid International, the Audit Committee has approved an arrangement where country programmes are subject to a risk-based audit in areas deemed necessary for the purposes of the audit of the aggregated accounts.
- Countries to be audited are agreed annually between the international finance functions and the external auditors and then approved by the International Audit Committee.
- Audit arrangements are made directly between the country programmes and the local audit office, but the scope of the audit is laid down in the audit instructions issued by ActionAid International's Auditors.
- Heads of finance ensure compliance with local laws and regulations regarding the conduct of external audits.
- All country external audit reports are circulated to the regional director, regional finance coordinator and international head of audit within two weeks of issue.

## Internal audit

**Purpose:** To ensure the economical, effective and efficient utilisation of charitable funds and the reviewing of the organisation's approach to risk management.

### Who and when:

- Country programmes and members (every two years);
- International Secretariat (every two years); and
- For specific international units based on risk criteria.

### Process

- Internal audits are carried out by the international audit team, based on timing and terms of reference agreed with the relevant head of office (country director/regional director/international thematic head) before the start of the audit. It includes specific areas requested by the country programme, regional office or senior leadership team, if appropriate.
- Most country programmes and members also have a local internal audit function reporting to the country management team or National Board and the international head of internal audit.
- The internal auditor(s) prepare a draft report during the visit for discussion with management outlining key recommendations: The report is sent to the country programme or National Board for a formal management response.
- The final report is issued incorporating management responses. Management is expected to state actions taken against major recommendations six months after the audit. Each audited management unit must formally discuss the audit report and remedial actions. The Audit Committee of the International Board receives all audit reports and meets twice annually to review internal audit, risk management and financial management.

# Open information policy

ActionAid International believes that the timely, free flow of information, in accessible language, form and format is essential for ensuring accountability, learning, trust and good performance. This policy is guided by ActionAid International's commitment to transparency and to sharing of information with all our stakeholders, and aims to guide all staff and the whole organisation in the open sharing of information, as well as to let stakeholders know what they can expect.

## Under this policy, it is mandated that we must publicly share:

- All our organisational policies (including HR, finance, governance, communications, *Alps*, etc.);
- Details of our governance and management, including biographies of key functionaries, summary of Board and executive body meetings, and any expenses of board members or advisory board members;
- Staff employment data (numbers, gender, ethnicity, caste), grades, salary bands, costs and allowances;
- All *Alps* documents, with the exception of internal audits, e.g. strategies, plans, reports, reviews, external audits;
- Details of funds and finance, including full accounts, grants to partners, resource allocation frameworks;
- Relationships, including groups of people we work with, partners, donors, auditors, bankers, investment managers; and
- Issue-based policy positions and ActionAid International guidelines on policy and political positioning.

All these documents should be pro actively shared via the international or national websites. This information should be available in relevant forms to relevant stakeholders – for example all local plans and commitments should be available in the local language, shared not only in written documents but also in more accessible forms as appropriate. ActionAid International, within the limits of its resources, will also send information as requested (as per this policy) in electronic or printed form to an authentic address of the person or organisation requesting information. Anonymous requests for information may not be responded to.

The boards of all members are ultimately accountable for ensuring adherence to this policy (with this accountability being delegated through the International Secretariat to country directors in the case of associates and CPs)

Confidentiality will be retained in relation to personal details of staff (address, family details, income, property, sexual orientation, illness), and any specific agreements (intellectual property or legal disclosure agreements), disciplinary matters and information dealing entirely with internal administration or operating systems which has no direct effect outside the organisation, or internal documents written by staff to their colleagues, supervisors or subordinates, unless those documents are intended for public circulation, as well as fundraising information, sharing of which will jeopardise ActionAid International's competitiveness in fundraising capacity.

Any exceptions to this policy must be agreed by the chief executive in the case of the International Secretariat, and with the International Board in the case of members. In unusual situations (e.g. war, insurgency) of insecurity, threat and vulnerability to the organisation, staff or partners, ActionAid International may choose not to share any or selected information for a specified period. Similarly, if sharing of certain information in the specific local situation will make staff and the organisation highly insecure and vulnerable, the relevant ActionAid International office may choose not to share the particular information for a specified period. Compliance with the policy should be reviewed on an annual basis as part of assurance policy, and in internal audits.

“To be serious about rights, we have to be serious about participation and power”

*Robert Chambers*

# Complaints mechanism

The Complaints and response mechanism framework policy applies to all units of ActionAid; country programmes, affiliates, associates, international themes and functions, and regional offices. Its purpose is to ensure accountability by allowing any stakeholder with a complaint to formally raise the issue for investigation and action in an impartial manner.

## What is a complaint?

A complaint is an external grievance made against ActionAid or more specifically against one of its employees, associated 'consultants' or partners where the organisation has allegedly failed to meet a commitment related to our activities, our use of resources, our mission and values, staff conduct or behaviour, or legal requirement.

## What complaints will ActionAid consider?

ActionAid will receive and respond to all complaints. This might include allegations of fraud, unlawful harassment or child abuse which will also relate to local laws and regulations to ActionAid policies and procedures. In such cases the most stringent standard will apply whether it be the local regulations or ActionAid's policy. If it is established that a complaint has been made maliciously, in bad faith or without serious intent then a response will be made to the complainant explaining why their complaint is not being taken further.

## Process

- Each ActionAid country and international secretariat is responsible for establishing and advertising a central point at which complaints can be received, such as [complaints.country@actionaid.org](mailto:complaints.country@actionaid.org). This should be someone impartial, such as audit, or someone in the governance structure.
- Once the complaint is received, it should be acknowledged, all facts verified, and then registered using a form that is in the full policy. The complaint should then be investigated through the established impartial channel, and a response given to the complainant. The complainant must be given an option to appeal.

Full details of the Complaints and Response Mechanism Framework can be downloaded from ActionAid International's website and intranet.

# Staff climate survey

## Purpose

The purpose of a staff climate survey is to take stock of the institutional climate and consider responsive strategies, ensuring that *Alps* principles are fully mainstreamed in our ways of working.

## Who and when

Independent climate surveys are required for countries and ActionAid International globally.

Surveys are done every two to three years for AAI. Country surveys are done as part of this, but members are also encouraged and welcomed to carry out independent surveys.

## Process

- HR/OD takes the lead, but for the terms of reference for the surveys. These should be signed off by the International or National Boards.
- All surveys should be carried out by an independent external person or organisation. They should allow confidential opportunities for all staff to participate, the findings must be shared with staff, and the final report must be accompanied by a management response with clear actions taken as a response.
- The climate survey/audit must include an analysis of the work environment, the effectiveness of policies, systems and support; power and participation (empowerment) within the team, team functioning, internal communications, space for learning and reflection, support for women's rights and gender equity, and leadership.

# Supporting policies

ActionAid International has a range of systems, standards and legal measures in place that contribute to our internal and external accountability. A summary of some of these systems and their linkages with *Alps* are set out below. For a full set of accountability policies, please see the Assurance policy, available on the HIVE.

## AA International financial management framework

This establishes the financial standards, policies and procedures for ActionAid International. This framework establishes our upward financial accountability and demonstrates ActionAid's concern for financial integrity; as such it is important evidence of our accountability to all stakeholders. Finance functions across the organisation are charged with establishing and communicating the policies and procedures contained in the framework. Financial management is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation. The framework contains the entire key financial policies approved by the International Board, including reserves, key financial management processes: financial planning and budgeting, reporting and audit and key accounting policies and procedures. Its custodian is the international finance director.

- The **statutory accounts** fulfil our accountability to our official regulators and International Board members, and are used to provide donors and others with financial information on the agency.
- **Management accounts, financial control and audits:** These systems are described in the ActionAid International financial management framework. Their purpose is to facilitate and protect the financial integrity of the agency and provide managers with current financial information. The framework sets out detailed control and accounting procedures.
- **Funding relations with partners:** The financial management framework sets out the key financial accountability systems and procedures for partners with which ActionAid has a funding relationship. For long-term partners, the framework sets out principles and standards for ensuring financial integrity, budgeting and reporting, cost analysis, measures and procedures for handling fraud, and audits.

## AA International global HR/OD framework

This framework provides the whole of ActionAid International, its members and branches with a common framework against which HR/OD principles, policies and standard practices can be verified, with a view to encouraging consistency and coherence of organisational behaviour. The aim is to build a shared culture and identity, and support the internationalisation of ActionAid. The HR/OD functions at various levels also help managers develop their staff's skills so that they can make a relevant contribution to the overall mission of the organisation and in support of *Alps* processes.

Each location has an appropriately designed performance management system. A multiple feedback mechanism is a norm that meets the accountability aspirations of *Alps* and is implemented at the senior levels of the organisations. The performance appraisal processes help us to meet our internal and external accountability as individuals and as teams.

## AA International risk management system

ActionAid International has a risk management system that ensures that each country programme or affiliate, region, theme and function has identified the risks to the achievement of their objectives and is taking actions to manage those risks. The national and international board members also identify and review the major strategic, business and operational risks which the organisation faces and confirm that appropriate systems are in place to manage and mitigate those risks. The internal audit department co-ordinates the organisation's risk management process. Risk assessment analysis is a key part of strategy development and review processes in *Alps*. All country programmes, members, regions, themes and functions submit an updated risk register as part of their annual plan.

## Funding Policies

ActionAid has a range of policies and systems that govern our relationships with institutional, corporate, and individual donors, to ensure that on the one hand we are not donor driven, and on the other hand we meet our accountability commitments to the donors who support us. There are policies that govern from where, from whom, and how we are allowed to raise money, such as the **Online Fundraising Policy**, the **Company Fundraising Policy** and the **Cross Border Fundraising and Supporter Management Policy**. There are policies and procedures related to how we report to donors, such as the Contract Management System, and related policies related to our brand and communications, such as the **brand guidelines**.

## Long term funding links and child sponsorship

We also have a set of specific policies related to our individual regular givers. The **long term funding links policy**, and the **DA Start-Up, Transfer, and Phase Out** policies provides the standards to ensure the implementation of long-term funding links is in alignment with ActionAid's values, mission and strategy. These set out agreed international policies and standards in the management of child sponsorship and other long-term partnership links between financial supporters and communities and countries in the south, such as Next Steps (Il Prossimo Passo). Work is currently underway to further update these in line with our HRBA and to integrate these into *Alps*.

In communities where the children live, ActionAid makes certain commitments about how the child and the community will be partners in the process of their empowerment, how this process will be carried out, what rights will be ensured for the children and community, what funds will be raised and how they will be spent and what changes the programme will seek to bring about in their lives. At the supporter end of the link, ActionAid makes commitments as to how the supporter's contributions will be spent, the expected outcomes as a result of this partnership, how they can engage with the child and community and what communications they will receive.

## Resource Allocation Framework (RAF)

### Purpose

The Framework (RAF) is a set of policies that determine how financial resources are allocated between units of ActionAid International Federation and how the International Secretariat and the Federation's international work is funded. The purpose of the RAF is to provide the ActionAid International Federation with a transparent system for allocating financial resources in the interests of the common good of the Federation that is aligned to our mission and strategy. The RAF seeks to advance the longer term common good of all members, develop a sense of shared ownership and mutual obligations between all members, support accountability and transparency in financial relations, encourage efficient and effective use of resources, support financial sustainability and growth of the federation, maximise the different fundraising potentials of different members, ensure that our programmes are adequately funded and that a significant proportion of our resources are allocated to work by, with and in poor and excluded communities, and enable the creation of strong, financially stable, sustainably funded members and International Secretariat.

The Resource Allocation Framework includes three supporting policies:

- The International Contribution Policy: This policy guides how country units calculate their annual International Contribution (IC), which funds the International Secretariat and the Country Investment Programme. The IC ensures a clear programme of core work by the Secretariat and a sustained programme of country development to strengthen the overall impact and income of the Federation.
- The Country Investment Allocation Policy. This governs four funds available to support members above and beyond their annual allocation, namely: the Country Development allocation - designed for strengthening of smaller and newer members; the Influence Fund - which supports multi-country campaigning; the Fundraising Fund- which invests to bring higher returns from fundraising; and the Country Emergency Fund which gives short term grants to support emergency response.
- The Discretionary Income Allocation Policy. This guides how discretionary income raised by Very High Development Countries will be allocated to High, Medium and Low Development Countries).

In addition to the policies this Framework also sets Global Allocation Parameters for where and on what overall proportions of financial resources are distributed across units of the Association. These targets provide internal mutual accountability between members and external accountability to key stakeholders. These policies are used to guide the Long Term Financial Plan and the creation of annual financial plans.

## Resource Allocation Framework *continued*

### Who and when

The Resource Allocation Framework applies to all parts of the Federation. It will be used annually by units and the International Secretariat to guide the allocation and redistribution of resources during the planning and budgeting periods. It will also be used as a monitoring tool during the annual reporting period. This framework doesn't include detailed policy on national resource allocation. However, its parameters may mean adjustments in national plans are required. Management and boards of members and country programmes develop their plans independently. The RAF establishes three categories of members to help guide equitable distribution of resources, based on the United Nations human development index (HDI). There are currently ten countries who are in the Very High Development category, nine countries which are in the middle and high development category, and 23 which are in the low development category.

### Process

The planning period is used as a period to negotiate the extent to which future plans are compliant or not. For members where the gap between the current situation and the framework requirements are wide a transition compliance period may be negotiated during planning. For some members this framework may create the requirement to change fundraising strategy or expenditure plans. It is the responsibility of individual units to adjust their fundraising strategy and expenditure plans as necessary to ensure they can fulfil the requirements of this framework in the negotiated time frame. Balancing the financial needs of all entities on an annual basis will require some judgement and management and board discretion. This framework ensures these judgements can be guided by criteria, and are therefore transparent and may be reported. Where there is a dispute between members or between a member and the International Secretariat in relation to resource allocation, the dispute resolution processes outlined in the Membership Agreement will be followed.

#### **LDUs - Low human development index country units:**

- will receive funds from other parts of the organisation
- will spend money on programme work with poor communities within the country
- will raise funds for themselves

#### **MDUs - Medium and High Development Country Units:**


- will receive funds from other parts of the organisation
- will spend money on programme work with poor communities within the country
- will raise funds for themselves and may raise funds for other parts of the organisation
- must cover an increasing % of national expenditure year on year, working towards self-sufficiency, demonstrated by country financial plans. The Country Development Allocation can be drawn on to support this. The pace and nature of these plans will depend on an assessment of the country's context and therefore ability to (a) meet the minimum socioeconomic rights of their citizens with own resources (b) raise resources based on the economic, political and legal environment

#### **VHDUs - Very High Development Country Units:**

- must raise funds for other parts of the organisation (be net contributing in total funds and unrestricted funds)
- are expected to make available more than 65% of their total income for distribution to MDUs, LDUs.
- must be financially self sufficient (sustain themselves). Where a unit is not yet able to do this it must demonstrate through its country strategy and plans how it will become self-sufficient and a net contributor of funds to the Federation within the current strategy period. The Country Development Allocation can be drawn on to support this.
- less than 22% of a self sufficient members income may be spent on fundraising
- any unrestricted surpluses will be redistributed for investment through the Country Investment Programme

# Glossary

<b>Affiliates</b>	National organisations that are formally affiliated to ActionAid International.
<b>Associates</b>	Other organisations that are in the process of becoming formally affiliated to ActionAid International. This term is also used to refer to ActionAid International country programmes that are developing into affiliates.
<b>Country Programmes</b>	Branches of ActionAid International which have not yet begun the process of associating as members of the federation. Country programmes refers to the overall operations, rather than specific programmes.
<b>Initiatives (or short-term programmes)</b>	This term refers to programmatic or functional work that contributes to a strategy but is not sufficiently broad to warrant development into its own strategic plan. Examples are a short-term campaign, a research process or a fundraising campaign. There are no formal <i>Alps</i> requirements for such work outside inclusion in broader annual plans and reports, so this is at management discretion.
<b>International Board</b>	The International Board provides overall governance and assesses and approves AAI's global strategies, plans and resource allocation.
<b>International Secretariat</b>	The International Secretariat has overall responsibility for developing a global framework for AAI's work, and ensuring that all parts of the organisation work together with an agreed set of common goals. It is also responsible for representing AAI at regional and international levels, and ensuring that communications and action between different parts of the organisation, as well as between AAI and other organisations, are effective. The secretariat is not a central head office as such, but rather one of the units in the larger collective of AAI offices – many of its functions are dispersed across countries, regions and continents. The secretariat is headed by a chief executive who works from the secretariat's main centre in South Africa.
<b>Local rights programmes</b>	This term replaces DA (Development Areas), DI (Development Initiatives) that ActionAid has historically used for our long term local development programmes. It refers to our long-term work at the local level in the key components of HRBA programming, i.e. empowerment, solidarity and advocacy. (The term special projects was previously used to refer to shorter term institutional funded programmes)
<b>National and International rights programmes</b>	This term is used for discrete programmes of work designed to achieve a set of defined outcomes with a defined set of stakeholders over a period of several years across several areas (LRPs or countries). Strategic programmes replaces the terms 'multi-country programmes', 'special projects' and 'campaigns' variously used to describe this work before. They should cover a range of activities to enable them to meet the minimum standards of HRBA programmes. A fuller elaboration of what constitutes national and international programmes is under way to inform the final revision of <i>Alps</i> .
<b>Senior Leadership Team</b>	Most senior levels of management within ActionAid International, including the Chief Executive and six international directors. This replaced the International Directors Team.



**Alps is the Accountability, Learning, and Planning System of ActionAid International.**

Alps is a framework that sets out the key accountability requirements, guidelines and processes in ActionAid International, not only in terms of organisational processes for planning, monitoring, strategy formulation, learning, reviews and audit, but also in terms of personal attitudes and behaviours.

Alps defines our standards, not only about what we do but also how we do it. Alps requires processes and ways of working that are crucial to supporting and strengthening ActionAid's rights-based work.

**Alps is designed to:**

- Deepen our accountability to all our stakeholders, particularly to the poor and excluded people with whom we work;
- Ensure that all our processes create space for innovation, learning and critical reflection and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy; and
- Ensure that our planning is participatory and puts analysis of power relations and a commitment to addressing rights – particularly women's rights – at the heart of all our processes.

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