

Rights to end poverty

ActionAid International strategy 2005–2010

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international

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Foreword

This new strategy, *Rights to end poverty*, is our renewed commitment to fight poverty and injustice.

It is our call for collective action to take sides with poor and excluded people and communities and to support their ideas, aspirations and actions.

It is an offer of partnership, an offer to join hands with our supporters and others in eradicating poverty and fighting for justice.

We are continually informed and inspired by the resilience, ingenuity and struggles of the poor and excluded people and communities we work with. Our resolve is constantly strengthened by the progress – be it big or small – that people and communities make in claiming and expanding their spaces, voices, choices and rights towards a dignified life.

We will walk alongside poor and excluded people and support every step and action they take in claiming their rights. There are plenty of gains and achievements in our fight against poverty and injustice to be happy with, but not enough to be satisfied with.

The world around us is changing fast and the context of our work is getting ever more complex. This strategy recognises and responds to the changing context of our work. This strategy is about staying on course with our agenda, responding to new challenges and bringing focus to our work.

This ambitious strategy relates directly to the enormity of our mission. We set high priority for women's rights because we believe that eradication of poverty and injustice will simply not be possible without securing equality and rights for women.

We set ambitions for making a significant impact at the international level because we believe that progress at the local and national level cannot be achieved or sustained without changing the world order that is dictated by powerful nations and international institutions.

This agenda, and the priorities in this strategy, reflect the ambition of all of us in ActionAid International. Many of us contributed to the development of this strategy. Let us now translate the strategy into actions and results.



Noerine Kaleeba
Chair,
International board
of trustees



Ramesh Singh
Chief executive

Note: ActionAid International is often referred to as ActionAid throughout this document.

Section one

Introduction

More than 30 years after ActionAid was founded, our vision of a world without poverty remains a distant prospect. But far from a hopeless dream.

While one billion people still live in extreme poverty – on less than \$1 a day – the picture is not universally bleak. Illiteracy and child mortality is declining in many poor countries. While almost 40 million people still live with HIV and AIDS, some African and Asian countries have brought infection rates under control. Buoyant civil society movements, aided by instant global communications, are creating mass citizen support for action against world poverty and injustice. Developing nations are forming their own power blocs and fighting back against grossly unjust global trade policies that favour the rich.

We live in a world where many are suffering great hardship, but where opportunities also exist to challenge and change, at every level, the inequity and injustices that underpin the existing order.

Tackling poverty and injustice is a global challenge, increasingly so in our interdependent world.

ActionAid is just one of many organisations contributing to the global anti-poverty effort. Nevertheless, the success of our work in assisting some of the world's poorest and most excluded people to climb free of poverty and reclaim a place in society is encouraging and instructive.

Together with over 2,000 partner organisations worldwide, we have helped millions of individuals and families and thousands of communities to address their immediate needs and to have a say in overcoming poverty and injustice. By providing access to information, education, training, funds and materials we have enabled poor and excluded people to claim the rights owed them; rights that citizens of wealthier nations take for granted.

From small beginnings in India and Kenya, we now work in more than 40 countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. Our advocacy and campaigning, by influencing the way individuals, governments and international

institutions think and act, is helping to propel action against poverty and injustice.

We have not done this alone. Donations and campaign actions by hundreds of thousands of ActionAid sponsors and supporters have played a significant role in improving poor people's circumstances and in strengthening action and protest against poverty and injustice. Our partnerships with civil society organisations and engagement with the media have propelled a host of critical issues – including aid, trade, debt and HIV and AIDS – into public discourse. The remarkable and humbling creativity and resilience of the poor communities with which we work underpin all our field programmes.

Nevertheless, in 2005 we are faced with the unacceptable truth that poverty and injustice remain deeply entrenched in many neglected or conflict-ridden corners of the globe. As the world becomes wealthier, the gap between rich and poor communities and nations is not closing, but yawns ever wider. Systematic discrimination perpetuates inequality between men and women and between different castes, classes, religions and races. Every single day we witness the terrible consequences, with 30,000 children dying of preventable, treatable diseases and 800 million people going hungry. This is a moral outrage.

The implications for our organisation are clear. We must strive even harder to reach our goal of eradicating poverty from our world.

One of ActionAid's strengths is our ability to adapt to changing realities. We do not shrink from change, we embrace it. Reviews of our work around the world indicate that our programmes and policies are having a lasting impact. But they also highlight the need to improve if we are to contribute to the anti-poverty movement with maximum impact. This is especially true in our work on women's rights, where we have achieved far less than we had hoped to under our previous international strategy *Fighting poverty together*.

Hence this new six-year strategy, *Rights to end poverty*, which seeks to apply our deepening understanding of the causes of poverty and injustice to heighten our impact. Following the founding of ActionAid International, it also provides clear direction for organising both the ActionAid family and our relationships with others.

The scale of the task ahead is both humbling and daunting, but we remain optimistic. We believe we have learned from both our successes and mistakes and are heading in the right direction with renewed momentum and in partnerships with like-minded people and organisations.

This strategy

This strategy reaffirms ActionAid's commitment to fight and ultimately eradicate poverty and injustice. It will guide the actions of our staff and partners, setting out clear and ambitious priorities for 2005-2010. It also sets out a clear framework for our work to be accountable, both to the poor and excluded people with whom we work and to our supporters and funders.

This strategy builds on the strengths of its predecessor *Fighting poverty together*. It states ActionAid's dedication to act as part of the global movement for equality, rights and justice, while seeking to deliver significant, lasting improvements in the lives of poor and excluded people. It also strengthens our commitment to fight poverty on every level – local, national, regional and international – working through alliances and partnerships to achieve maximum impact.

Women's rights and gender equality offer the key to poverty reduction and achieving them is a central focus of our new strategy. Over the next six years, we will invest significantly more time and effort in securing equal rights for women and girls around the world. We will bring greater focus and depth while continuing to work on the areas of education, food and HIV and AIDS. To these, we will add new priorities for 2005-2010, developing our policy and programme work on human security in situations of violent conflict and emergencies, and on democracy and governance.

In pursuing these priorities, this strategy will ensure that we continue along the successful path laid out six years ago in *Fighting poverty together*.

But it also adapts to a changing world and to the lessons we have learned in the field, by focusing our goals and efforts specifically on securing poor and excluded people's rights. Informed by this international strategy, all parts of ActionAid will develop and align their own strategic plans so that we can deliver consistent collective action. The aim is to ensure that we do all in our power to fulfil our mission.

We have made every effort to make this strategy reflect the true voice of our organisation. It has been born of lengthy internal and external consultations and draws closely on the 2004 ActionAid staff conference, attended by volunteers and staff leaders from over 40 countries. It also absorbs lessons learned from our 2004 external review, *Taking stock II* and most importantly, draws on feedback from the poor and excluded people with whom we work and our partner organisations who live and work among them.

The document is presented in six sections.

Section two presents our understanding of the causes of poverty and injustice and **Section three** describes the distinctive approach that ActionAid employs in fighting poverty and injustice. **Section four** presents our mission-related strategies and **Section five** our internal, organisational strategies for the next six years. We conclude with a statement of our commitment to do everything humanly possible to achieve the ambitious agenda contained in these pages.

Summary

What's new?

This strategy expresses our aspiration to seek alternatives that better serve the interests of the poor and excluded and advance our mission towards a world without poverty and injustice. It builds on its successful predecessor *Fighting poverty together* in the following ways:

- deepening our focus on poverty eradication by addressing unequal power relations and strengthening our rights-based approach and methods
- intensifying our work on education, food and HIV and AIDS
- increasing work with social movements of poor and excluded people
- greatly improving our commitment to, and action on, women's rights and gender equality
- including new priorities – democracy and governance and human security in violent conflict and emergency – in response to our growing understanding of what drives poverty and injustice
- building on the success of internationalising our organisation by increasing our financial resources and raising our profile and impact at a global level.

Poverty eradication goals

The following goals will form the rallying point for all our work:

- Goal one: poor and excluded people and communities will exercise power to secure their rights
- Goal two: women and girls will gain power to secure their rights
- Goal three: citizens and civil society across the world will fight for rights and justice
- Goal four: states and their institutions will be accountable and democratic and will promote, protect and fulfil human rights for all.

Strategic priorities 2005-2010

In striving towards the goals above, our work worldwide will be driven by programmes and policies aimed at achieving the following six strategic rights-based themes:

- Strategic priority one: women's rights
- Strategic priority two: the right to education
- Strategic priority three: the right to food
- Strategic priority four: the right to human security during conflicts and emergencies
- Strategic priority five: the right to a life of dignity in the face of HIV and AIDS
- Strategic priority six: the right to just and democratic governance.

Section two

Power, poverty and injustice

Power imbalance

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 choices.

In order to combat poverty and injustice we must understand its nature. In a world of so much natural and material plenty and unparalleled human ingenuity, why do a fifth of humanity live in desperate want?

Our frontline experience working with poor and disadvantaged communities the world over has led us to conclude that it is unequal and unjust power relations that lie at the root of poverty. Poverty and injustice are not inevitable – they result from structures and processes of human-made social, economic and political systems, and thus from the choices made by some individuals, communities, institutions and nations to discriminate against, exclude or exploit others.

Unequal power relationships are systematically imposed in both rich and poor countries on the basis of gender, age, caste, class, ethnicity, HIV status, race and disability. Physical violence is routinely used to perpetuate male dominance over women. Military force is often used to dominate communities and nations and control natural resources, often in defiance of internationally recognised human rights. Poor and excluded people are disempowered and made invisible. When they do seek redress, the scales of justice are almost always tipped against them.

All too often, powerful vested interests – states, institutions, corporations, nations and communities – choose to exercise the power they have to accumulate even more power. They abdicate their obligation to society at large by denying rights, resources and opportunities to the less fortunate. Women and girls, systematically sidelined, are often the biggest losers, making up the poorest of the poor.

Our analysis that power lies at the heart of poverty and injustice is central to this strategy and to the rights-based agenda for action that it sets out.

Women lose most

In spite of progress on attaining women's rights, deep-rooted patriarchy still thrives in the early 21st century. In developing nations, the consequences are harshest. Poor women, already battling the deprivation imposed by lack of food, clean water, shelter or employment, are subject to cruel daily discriminations on the basis of their sex. These commonly include not being allowed to own property, keep the money they earn or access the education that could offer a better future. This lack of power can be life threatening. For example, women tend to be more vulnerable to HIV infection because they are not able to insist on protected sex, even when they know their partner is infected.

On the international stage, advances towards gender equality have also been achieved. Governments have committed themselves to protecting women's rights at every UN conference of the last two decades, including the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. However, the brutal truth is that the absence of political will and resources needed not only makes it difficult for women and girls to realise those policy gains but also makes it harder to protect them. There is now ample evidence that the realisation of women's and girls' rights offer the most effective route to poverty eradication.

ActionAid will seek to empower women and girls in everything we do.

Rights are violated every day everywhere

Lack of power is inextricably tied to the denial of basic human rights. Our work revolves around supporting poor people to claim such rights so they can improve their lives and make their voices heard.

On a daily basis, in our work in Africa, Asia and Latin America we see rights routinely and callously denied to millions of poor people.

We see how lack of access to land, seeds, money and markets frustrates the efforts of poor rural families to feed, clothe and educate their children. We witness the shameful denial of land rights to women in numerous countries. We challenge the policies of countries where disabled people are not even considered in the allocation of resources.

In many poor countries, we see how lack of access to quality treatment and care for HIV and AIDS is reversing hard-won social and economic gains. Every minute, six people die of AIDS-related illnesses. Over a million teachers have been lost in Africa and millions of children orphaned. While some African countries have successfully reduced infection rates, the epidemic is spreading in Asia. Much good work is being done with individual communities affected by the epidemic, with the courageous leadership of people living with HIV and AIDS. Yet we see little sense of urgency from those with the power and resources to stem this tragedy on the international scale required.

Global injustice undermines poor people's rights

Rights are denied not just at local and national level, but also at international level, as power imbalances between rich and poor countries play out in policies that hurt poor and excluded people. Documenting and challenging such institutionalised, power-based injustices is an increasing part of our work.

The shift to privatisation of public services, advocated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, has led developing country governments increasingly to sell water, education and health services to private, profit-making enterprises. Corporations also frequently gain ownership and control of local knowledge and natural resources at the expense of indigenous communities. This has made essential services such as water, medicines, primary schooling and healthcare inaccessible and unaffordable to many.

The globalisation of markets has increasingly concentrated control of wealth and power in the hands of a small number of corporations, institutions and people. An increasing proportion of global economic production and trade is under the control of huge multinational corporations, operating across continents with few constraints

and controls, the largest of which are larger (measured by value added) than the economies of developing countries. Growing inequality between the wealthiest and poorest is also apparent in many developing countries such as Brazil, South Africa and India. Our future work in these countries must address the wealth and power gap – as well as poverty – if poor and excluded people are to claim their right to a life of dignity.

People caught up in conflicts suffer immediate and acute powerlessness as homes and livelihoods are threatened and normal rules of peaceful civilian life are suspended. With armed conflicts around the world rising, people in many countries face an insecure, fearful future – women, children and poor communities particularly so. In Africa and Asia, hundreds of thousands of families are being displaced from their homes to join the millions already scattered in refugee camps, without adequate food or shelter, vulnerable to violence and mostly excluded through the denials of their existence as international displaced persons.

At the same time, terrorism, fundamentalism and the 'war on terror' launched after the attacks of September 11 2001, have together fuelled a global climate of fear in which the erosion of civil liberties and the violation of human rights has become commonplace in many countries.

Furthermore, poor and excluded people are increasingly vulnerable to environmental threats, including those of climate change and land degradation. Communities we work with have seen dramatic changes – rivers running dry, rare droughts becoming commonplace. The massive floods and increasing number of natural disasters likely to result from global warming will make poor people more vulnerable in already impoverished low-lying countries such as Bangladesh, Haiti and Mozambique. Yet, the high level political will needed to slow climate change and environmental degradation is in scant evidence.

All these trends have negative consequences for the world as a whole, but the main burden, in every case, falls disproportionately on the shoulders of the least powerful – poor and excluded people.

Failing governance

The challenge of changing societies to address these deep-seated and far-reaching problems is enormous. The obvious candidate for the job is government. ActionAid strongly believes that democratic governments can and must act on behalf of their citizens, upholding social and economic rights and the principle of justice for poor and excluded women, children and men. More nations than ever before are committed to the principles of representative democracy. Encouragingly, in recent decades political and economic reforms in a number of countries – China, India, Vietnam, Uganda and others – have helped large numbers of people climb out of poverty.

Unfortunately, we rarely see national governments take the action required to fundamentally shift the balance of power in their societies – by redistributing wealth and resources. Instead those in power tend to act in their own interests, while women and other excluded groups gain little foothold in the political processes.

Politically driven violence and corruption is endemic in many countries where we work. Even in the more successful developing nations, the absence of social safety nets has left the poorest citizens struggling to keep up with their basic needs.

Failures of governance are equally striking at the international level. The inflexible, market-led development formula championed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank has hurt the poor and hindered the development process in many poorer countries. Poorer nations, whatever their circumstances, have been relentlessly pressured to liberalise their economies. The refusal to cancel most debts, and the economic conditions attached when they are cancelled, compels many poor governments to reduce much needed spending on vital services such as education, healthcare and clean water for their people. This is indefensible and counter-productive.

The recognition of international responsibility to support development in poor countries is the mark of a civilised world. The international community recognised this in its adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Yet this commitment has been called into serious question as aid levels have fallen and unfavourable

conditions have been attached. Cynical and self-interested politics have also served to undercut the aid that does reach developing nations, as the European Union and United States maintain protectionist barriers to support their domestic producers while forcing poor countries in the opposite direction. The World Trade Organisation's regulatory framework, as it stands, is tilted towards the interests of richer nations.

As decision-making power shifts from local to national arenas and from national to international, it becomes harder for poor people to influence policies or hold distant decision-makers to account. The imposition of international trade and aid policies and the economic power of multinational corporations are eroding national sovereignty and undermining the livelihoods of millions of poor people. The political landscape is littered with broken promises from rich country governments to the poor. A world of double standards and gross power imbalances is evident.

Changing power relations: a call to action

The picture painted above is a bleak one. But the world can and must change. ActionAid believes that if the powerful choose to exercise their resources to dominate and control others, the less powerful can – indeed must – use their collective voice and action to resist. Enlightened men and women have the power to change societies and the unjust political, social and economic structures that underpin them.

Encouragingly, the impetus for a new world order is strong and growing. Many people of all backgrounds in both rich and poor nations are now expressing outrage at the shocking gap between the lives and lifestyles of today's rich and poor. Consensus is growing, even among some governments, that radical changes are needed to tackle poverty and end the denial of rights to so many.

The emerging constellations of poor and middle-income countries, such as the G20, G33 and G90 and the group of Least Developed Countries, hold the potential to shift the balance of power in global governance. Already, negotiators from poorer countries have begun to stand firm against arm-twisting from powerful nations, refusing, for example, to accept unfair trade terms.

This trend can become a strong line of resistance against undemocratic globalisation and the control and unjust use of resources by transnational corporations. We have seen, for example, how protests led by local women and farmers in Kerala have resulted in successful court action against Coca-Cola to limit ground water extraction by its production plant, a decision that reverberated around the corporate world.

The global conscience mobilised through the UN Millennium Declaration is faltering among governments, with the first minimal target – achieving gender equality in primary and secondary education by 2005 – eluding the world leadership. Nevertheless, the Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals have galvanised social movements, including faith-based, peace and anti-poverty networks, on several continents.

Poor people's organisations, social movements and pro-justice groups around the world are coming together, physically and virtually, to organise for change. Breakthroughs include the access to treatment campaign in South Africa, led by people living with HIV and AIDS, and the global campaign for free access to quality education for girls and boys.

Determined advocacy by women's movements has won significant commitments locally, nationally and internationally to promote and protect women's rights. In Nepal, for example, property laws have been reformed and women can inherit property. The Vienna Declaration on Human Rights and the Beijing Platform for Action are among a wide range of international agreements that bear testimony to the power of people's movements to promote positive change.

Youth, a fast growing demographic, are becoming politically engaged. In the Niger Delta, for example, young people are organising to oppose pollution by oil companies and to gain access to land and the chance to earn a living. Around the world, creative young people are building their own networks for dissent. Their activities are increasingly global, with the International Student Stop AIDS campaign one inspiring example.

Another world is possible

We believe this global wave of citizen action holds far-reaching potential. It is into this growing movement for justice and dignity, for equality and inclusion, that ActionAid will put its energies.

Its impact is epitomised by the success of the World Social Forum, and its slogan 'another world is possible'. The World Social Forum has brought together organisations of poor and excluded people with supportive civil society groups from North and South to counter the forces that perpetuate poverty and injustice and to promote alternatives.

The way forward will not be an easy one. It requires a regeneration of national and global economies. It requires a redistribution of wealth, resources, knowledge and information. Above all, it requires a re-balancing of power relations within and between communities and nations.

Section three

Our distinctive organisation

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 goals

- poor and excluded people and communities will exercise power to secure their rights
- women and girls will gain power to secure their rights
- citizens and civil society across the world will fight for rights and justice
- states and their institutions will be accountable and democratic and will promote, protect and fulfil human rights for all.

Our values

ActionAid 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

- **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.

Our identity

- **One united international organisation.** We are an international organisation owned by national ActionAid affiliates working with people, communities, associates and partners in 43 countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. Our work and our thinking are governed by the perspectives and aspirations of poor and excluded people. Most of our staff and our work is located in developing countries close to the communities we exist to serve. Wherever they work in the world, however, our hugely diverse staff and partners are closely bound by our shared vision, mission, values, priorities, standards and, above all, passionate commitment to a better and just world.
- **Long-term supporters and volunteer base.** Our commitment is shared by our 350,000 long-term supporters and volunteers, a majority of whom are based in Europe. Many of them not only sustain our work through funding, but also help us to put pressure on governments and corporations to change their policies and practices to the benefit of poor and excluded people.
- **Direct and long-term relationships with poor and excluded people.** The majority of our time and resources are spent on the poverty frontline and our staff and local partners have built long-term relationships of mutual trust and respect with many poor and excluded people and communities, and with developing country governments. This close interaction provides ActionAid's bedrock from which we derive the legitimacy and authority to fulfil our advocacy work at national and international levels.

Distinctive approach: past, present, future

What makes ActionAid different? The answer lies in the way we work, a people-centred approach based both on our own cumulative experience and that of other frontline groups fighting poverty and injustice.

In the 1970s we focused our work almost exclusively on providing primary education and sponsoring children in schools. We soon learnt that, whilst education was a key lever to lifting people out of poverty, it was not enough.

In the 1980s, we developed our work to address the multiple deprivations that characterise poverty and to improve poor people's living standards by working with families and communities as a whole. We focused mainly on supplying physical essentials such as seeds, farming equipment and construction materials and pumps, wells and taps for drinking water supply. We also provided money, raw materials and training for income generation activities such as tailoring, weaving and beekeeping. We learnt that addressing the visible conditions of poverty did indeed improve the quality of people's lives, but only while those materials lasted and we continued to provide them.

In the 1990s our work shifted significantly to focus not only on the symptoms but also the causes of poverty. Rather than deciding what poor people needed, we strengthened our capacity to listen to them and help them take charge of their own lives and projects. Giving people choices and voices became our core work. While continuing to provide materials and training sought by poor families and communities to address their immediate poverty, we also started to do advocacy work. Our aim was to amplify the unheard voices of poor people by arguing for change in the attitudes, policies and practices of powerful people and institutions, particularly in local and national governments. The changes we were able to extract from government officials benefited others beyond the communities we worked in, thus scaling up the impact of our work.

Since the late 1990s and into the new millennium we have radically developed our work and identity in response to the unique and fast-moving challenges of our time.

The way we think and act, our character and distinctive competencies are particularly shaped by:

- **Taking sides with poor and excluded people**
We believe that poor and excluded people are the primary agents of change. Poverty and injustice can be eradicated only when they are able to take charge of their lives and act to claim their rights. We therefore work with the diverse social groups through which they organise and act. These include – among many others – landless people in Brazil, sex workers in India, disabled people in Sierra Leone and smallholder farmers in Malawi. We particularly focus on groups that suffer from multiple and acute violation of rights such as children caught up in conflicts.
- **Rights-based approach**
We embrace and respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent related UN covenants and declarations. The focus of all our work is to ensure that the rights of poor and excluded people are respected, promoted, protected and fulfilled and they are our primary stakeholder. We also direct unrelenting attention on the responsibility, both of the state and of other powerful institutions and individuals, in respecting, promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of poor and excluded people. We will deepen our experience and skills in implementing the rights-based approach during this strategy period.
- **Partnerships and alliances**
We work in partnerships and alliances with poor and excluded people, social movements and other civil society organisations. From the grassroots to the global level, such collaboration is absolutely fundamental to our approach. Working in this way enables us to maximise our contribution towards eradicating poverty and injustice while complementing the efforts of others. Local partners, for example, implement many of our field programmes, using their deep knowledge of local conditions, customs and politics that we could not hope to match.

We will work to improve our relationship with local partners and coalition allies during this strategy period.

- **Critical engagement**
In order to effect change, we engage critically with people, governments and institutions whose policies and practices are making or keeping people poor. Our engagement may range from cooperation to confrontation but we will always take a non-violent approach. Our tactics include providing research and evidence, promoting alternatives and running public campaigns. To avoid being co-opted by powerful institutions and individuals we will endeavour to be transparent and open about all our engagements. As we seek wider change in the world, we also commit ourselves to remain guided by the agenda of poor and excluded people and their organisations and movements.
- **Acting locally and globally**
The causes of poverty and injustice often reside outside areas where the worst symptoms are found. We therefore act against poverty on all fronts, local to international. Our work to change national and international policies and practices seeks to bring lasting improvements in the lives of poor and excluded people, while our local action seeks to contribute to fighting poverty and injustice beyond the immediate communities involved. Although it is an area where we must improve, we aim always to achieve coherence and connectedness between our actions at different levels of society.

Core interventions

We are continually refining the methods and means by which we seek to reduce poverty and injustice, based on our learning from experience. The following integrated set of approaches underpins all our work, with priorities determined by local circumstances:

- **Participatory analysis and awareness**
A critical part of our fieldwork involves using simple participatory techniques to help poor and excluded people to explore who and what is causing the poverty and injustice they experience. Articulating their own situation in this way is a key step on the road to empowerment, developing solutions and effecting change. Innovative and successful participative approaches that we have developed by working with many communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas include *Reflect*, *Stepping stones* and *STAR*. In Tanzania, Nigeria and Bangladesh, for example, *Reflect* is driving community participation in local schools' management and decision-making.

In terms of our internal learning process, we also place great importance on our annual participatory reviews, which provide feedback from the poor and excluded people with whom we work. Embedded in our accountability framework and system, this process provides the foundation for our learning and organisational growth.

- **Organising and mobilising**
Resisting injustice is easier when you have strength in numbers. We therefore promote and support the efforts of poor and excluded people to act together and with others to fight for their rights. For example, by assisting groups of people living with HIV and AIDS in many African countries, we have helped them act to claim their rights. We also seek to mobilise civil society and citizens worldwide to tackle poverty and injustice. We particularly support young people in forming solidarity networks across international boundaries.
- **Strengthening capacity**
We work with our partners to strengthen poor people's organisations, skills and access to information and to enable joint action. A crucial part of our work involves the nurture of organisations and leaders that emerge in communities of poor and excluded peoples.

By sharing skills, knowledge and resources we, and our local partners, can help them become strong enough to speak and act effectively for their people. Such an approach has helped communities in Bangladesh, Brazil, and Ghana to influence local budget discussions and to hold local governments accountable. We also strengthen connections between such groups and other organisations that negotiate for poor people's rights. Providing training, information, exchange opportunities and feedback review and reflection processes provides the backbone for our capacity strengthening work.

- **Working with social movements**

We increasingly support citizens' movements that are shaping alternatives – alternatives that serve poor people's needs and that shift the power to make decisions closer to those affected by them. Our work with the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All is testimony to this. We are committed to learning fast in this important but relatively new area of intervention.

- **Addressing immediate needs**

We continue to provide essential support and services in the form of training, information, materials and funds or emergency relief so that poor and excluded people can address their immediate needs. Delivering services is not an end in itself – we do so in a manner that empowers communities to claim their rights and leverage support from the state. In this way, alleviating the symptoms of poverty also enables communities to address its causes.

We do not seek to duplicate or displace the state's obligations and actions. However, when necessary we will act to address the immediate needs of communities with whom we work. For example, we provided new fishing boats and nets to fishing communities in Tamil Nadu affected by the December 2004 tsunami.

- **Advocacy and campaigning**

We campaign and advocate to influence policy and practice locally, nationally and internationally in favour of poor and excluded people. For example, we have successfully highlighted the negative impact of subsidies on poor people's lives by connecting community-led action on food security to national campaign coalitions and to the international arena through regional networking across Africa, Latin America and Asia.

We seek to ensure that our advocacy and campaigns are grounded in rigorous research, strong evidence, clear policy positions and people's action. We aim to propose solutions and alternatives as well as to expose injustice and the abuse of people's rights.

Our campaigns draw energy, legitimacy and support from citizens in both rich and poor countries. We are especially committed to building on our encouraging success in educating and mobilising young people.

Advocacy and campaigning has many positive ripple effects. It helps to unite poor and excluded people and their supporters in richer nations a world away around a shared agenda to address the causes of poverty and injustice. When it works, it also helps to increase the impact of our work.

- **Using research to develop and promote alternatives**

We carry out research to understand and expose how existing systems, policies and practices perpetuate poverty and injustice. We pilot innovative projects to develop and transfer good development practice. For example, we are researching new ways of involving poor people in decision-making on education, budgets and policy. We develop models that seek to advance understanding of the processes behind marginalisation and exclusion, the better to defeat it. In doing so, we increasingly collaborate with academic and research institutions.

Section four

Our strategic priorities

ActionAid's strategic priorities for 2005-2010 build on our belief that poor and excluded people are the main actors in the fight against poverty and injustice, and that given the right space and resources they have the capacity to prevail. Our strategies are also driven by the sheer scale and systemic nature of global poverty and injustice and the human suffering it inflicts. This has led us to focus ever more closely on the promotion and defence of human rights at every level, from local to global. The priorities laid out below also reflect the organisational competencies we already have, or would like to build. By implementing them, we aspire to make a significant and growing contribution to the empowerment of poor and excluded peoples the world over.

Working towards our mission and goals, as stated in Section three, we will focus our efforts around six rights-based themes. These relate to specific human rights where the urgency is greatest for poor people and our distinctive approach and experience can make the most difference.

This thematic framework will guide the whole spectrum of our work including research, advocacy and campaigning – at every level from local to international. Every action taken must contribute towards achieving the goals and ultimately the mission.

These six rights-based themes overlap and intersect with each other. For example, to secure rights to food will require working on women's rights to land and natural resources and to secure the rights of people living with HIV and AIDS we will need to promote rights to food and nutrition as part of their care and treatment. Our actions will be prioritised in the areas of intersection between the six themes.

Within this guiding framework, individual parts of the organisation will have freedom and flexibility to prioritise themes and actions. Country programmes and regions will do so according to (a) the needs, aspirations and plans of those with whom they work – poor and excluded people and their communities, organisations and movements, (b) the potential for building and working with coalitions and alliances, (c) the potential for

bringing about enduring changes and success, and (d) ActionAid's own capacity in terms of expertise and resources. While we do not prescribe which or how many themes or key actions a country programme will take up, we do emphasise the need to focus only on those where they can deliver robust results and lasting impact.

All parts of the organisation, however, will work on the one or two main international campaigns of ActionAid.

Strategic priority one: women's rights

Throughout human history, women in many societies have been abused, discriminated against and excluded. In addition to embracing women's rights as one of our overarching goals, we will place women and girls at the heart of our work around the world. We will also address women's rights directly, for example, by seeking to work with women's organisations to transform gender relations. Our hope and aim is to witness women worldwide growing in confidence, skills and knowledge so that they may decide their own destiny, live without fear of violence and participate effectively in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

Key actions:

- strengthen the capacity of women and girls to claim their rights and meet their basic needs
- take actions to protect women and girls from violence and provide support if they suffer violence
- strengthen women's leadership and participation in governance and decision-making
- build and strengthen women's organisations and movements and support them in connecting with broader alliances
- advocate and campaign for laws, policies and practices that advance and protect women's rights
- raise consciousness and change attitudes so that men and women relate to each other as equals and men and boys support the cause of gender equality.

Strategic priority two: the right to education

Over one billion people, the majority of them women, lack a basic education and the links between illiteracy and poverty are proven and strong. In many countries, privatisation of education has undermined the basic contract of the state to educate its citizens. While schools have the potential to transform pupils' lives for the better, in reality they are all too often reproducing the injustices and inequalities found outside their doors. The Dakar Framework for Action on Education, agreed in 2000, offers a vision for a better future but the global community has failed shamefully to follow this up with resources.

For us, education is a fundamental human right, the responsibility of the state and a core element of a development policy committed to social justice. Our vision for education is that all children will have free access to quality education within an equitable system. We want to see schools where children's rights, especially those of girls, are respected, injustices are challenged and children's lives can be transformed. We want to see early childhood education and adult learning that leads to social change.

Key actions:

- support excluded and disadvantaged groups, especially girls, in gaining access to the quality education which is their right
- strengthen citizens' participation in education governance through initiatives such as budget tracking and involvement in reform of policies and systems
- promote the rights of all learners within education systems and ensure that both boys and girls understand women's rights and discrimination and violence are eliminated
- advocate and campaign for constitutional change enshrining the legal right to education in countries where it does not yet exist, and for its enforcement elsewhere
- influence resource allocation by national governments and international donors in line with agreements at the Dakar Education Forum and other summits
- work with coalitions and networks to advocate and campaign for education policies and practices that promote the right of education for all.

Strategic priority three: the right to food

In a world of plenty, 800 million people go hungry every day. The denial of the right to food compromises people's ability to achieve all other rights. To fight the scourge of hunger we must address its causes and not just alleviate its symptoms. The answer does not lie in importation of food. Nor, against a backdrop of surplus food dumping by rich nations, is simply increasing production enough.

The majority of people in the South depend on agriculture to earn their livelihoods. Land grabbing and inheritance practices discriminate against women. Unfair trade rules, subsidies and food dumping undermine local agriculture and food security. Increasingly costly agricultural inputs and control of markets by transnational corporations further threaten food security. The root cause of hunger lies in the denial of rights and unequal access to and control over natural resources such as land, water and seeds, and is exacerbated by conflict.

We have been campaigning for access to food and working with poor farmers for decades. Our efforts have included providing seeds, technical advice and information to increase small farmers' production in many countries in Asia and Africa; empowering Kenyan sugarcane growers with funds and information to enable them to get a fair price from sugar factories; supporting recently freed bonded labourers in their struggle to win land allocation from the government of Nepal, and supporting the courageous Indian civil society organisations who challenged their government in the courts to guarantee meals for school children and protect poor and excluded people from death by starvation. At the international level, we have a long record of campaigning against the grossly unjust prices, subsidies and conditionalities that prevent poor farmers from getting the best income from their produce. We have brought the priorities and stories of poor people from many diverse countries into the international policy arena, giving them a voice where previously they had none.

Key actions:

- advocate and campaign for farmers' rights – especially women's – to agricultural land, water, pastures, forest and seeds
- support poor communities to develop sustainable livelihoods and sufficient purchasing power for their needs

- support and build strong civil society networks that include farmers', women's and landless people's organisations, working together to secure the right to food
- promote constitutional change or legal action to ensure that people get sufficient food as a legal right
- advocate and campaign for the reversal of unfair rules and practices imposed by the World Trade Organisation and seek to embed pro-poor development at the centre of the multilateral trading system
- advocate and campaign for policies and practices that promote food security for people and food sovereignty for nations, including regulating corporate control of the food chain, achieving World Food Summit commitments and mitigating the impact of climate change.

Strategic priority four: the right to human security in conflict and emergencies

Every year about 300 million people are affected by conflict or natural disasters. Those who are most vulnerable and least powerful suffer greatest impact. Weak or authoritarian states, competition for natural resources and a proliferation of small arms mean that more and more people live in daily fear of violent conflict. Climate change and environmental degradation subject millions more to the threat of natural disasters.

In crises, fear and want predominate. We are committed to improving the security of poor people facing conflict or disaster, so that they can live free of fear and free of want. Eleven countries where we work are either experiencing or just emerging from situations of violent conflict. From Rwanda and Burundi, through Sierra Leone and Liberia, Afghanistan and Nepal our work takes a long-term approach, supporting an end to violence, social and economic reconstruction and peace building. This approach involves working both before potential crises erupt to reduce the risks and mitigate impacts, and after crises occur, to aid recovery and explore the opportunities for change that occur at such times of flux. We also conduct research and analysis on the dynamics of conflict in an urgent effort to reduce the extent of violence affecting poor people.

Key actions:

- support poor and excluded people in accessing appropriate assistance for relief, recovery and mitigation of the impacts of emergencies and conflict
- generate knowledge and compile evidence of how women and poor people experience conflict, climate change and environmental damage
- advocate for the protection of women's and girls' rights during situations of conflict and disasters
- work with governments and intergovernmental organisations to reduce risks and protect people, especially the most vulnerable
- support women's groups and civil society to be active and effective in conflict resolution and peace building
- support poor and excluded people and their organisations in demanding implementation of international treaties which address human rights in conflict and emergencies.

Strategic priority five: the right to life and dignity in the face of HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS threaten the basic rights to life and dignity. By 2004, nearly 40 million people were living with HIV and AIDS, 70% of them in Africa. However, Asia is expected to overtake Africa in terms of affected population by 2010. Emerging epidemics are also being projected in Latin America.

Around six in ten people living with the virus are women, and the proportion is rising. Many women in countries with high infection rates experience violence, unjust inheritance practices and difficulties in negotiating safe sex. Health and social services in developing countries are overburdened and underfunded. Orphans, vulnerable children and youths are among those who have least access to life-saving information, care and treatment.

In many countries, the human and economic costs of the epidemic are undermining national development. Funds committed by donors still fall far short of the amounts required according to UNAIDS projections. Most people who need treatment are still unable to afford it.

ActionAid and our partners have a long history of working with communities to protect vulnerable groups from infection and to tackle stigma and discrimination. We work with HIV-positive people, often using innovative methods, to develop their skills in living positively and claiming their rights.

We put people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHA), especially women and girls, at the centre of our planning and implementation. The pillars of our approach are: access to treatment and care; sustainable livelihoods; an enabling policy environment; and strengthening organisations run by people living with HIV and AIDS.

Building on our experience, we will consolidate and scale up our HIV and AIDS response and prevention work in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Key actions:

- promote the rights of women and girls, especially the rights to information, protection from violence, freedom from stigma and discrimination, reduction in the burden of care and the power to make choices for safer sex practices
- advocate for the basic rights of orphans and vulnerable children, especially education, shelter, care and property inheritance
- hold governments and other institutions accountable to their commitments, especially for increased and equitable funding
- promote the right of the poor and excluded, especially women and girls, to free and comprehensive treatment and care
- secure sustainable livelihoods and good nutrition for PLHA, especially women and girls; this includes their property rights

- strengthen the capacity of PLHA, orphans and vulnerable children and their support organisations to engage meaningfully in decision-making at all levels and to take part in effective community responses to HIV and AIDS
- explore ways in which successful and widely-employed approaches developed by ActionAid, such as *Stepping stones*, can go further in tackling gender relations in communities and households.

Strategic priority six: the right to just and democratic governance

The theme of governance runs right through our work at all levels, from local communities to international institutions, and across the spectrum of governmental, non-governmental and community-based organisations – our own organisation included.

A rights-based and people-centred approach to governance emphasises the participation of citizens and the ability of poor and excluded people to ask questions, claim rights, make decisions and hold institutions to account. These are the foundations for deepening democratic processes where people can shape the state and the state, in turn, creates the social, political, economic and legal conditions in which people can exercise their rights and be free from fear and want.

Accountable governance will involve monitoring the policies and practices of local and national governments, donors, intergovernmental organisations and transnational corporations.

Institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO often impose policies on poorer nations that conflict with the duty of governments to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of their people, particularly the excluded. Making local, national and international institutions and governments fully accountable for their actions, and responsive to the needs of poor countries and people, will help to restore just and democratic governance.

Key actions:

- strengthen the capacity of women and poor and excluded people to organise themselves to claim rights, participate in decision-making processes and influence public policy

- support civil society organisations and social movements working to achieve accountable government, democratic international institutions and effective regulation of transnational corporations
- promote monitoring of the state's delivery of social and economic rights by budget tracking and other means, such as public hearings, citizens' tribunals and the right to information
- work with national legislators and policy makers for democratic decision-making, especially on international loans, contracts and economic policies
- promote accountability and transparency within and among civil society organisations at local, national and international levels
- advocate and campaign, nationally and internationally, for just trade, cancellation of poor countries' debt, pro-poor aid policies and the realisation of the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations
- promote and support alliances of Southern countries and their initiatives for democratic regional governance and integration.

Geographical focus

ActionAid works in over 40 countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. Our decision to work in a country is driven by an assessment of what our presence will bring to existing poverty eradication efforts – both by others in the country and by ActionAid internationally.

Our work will remain focused on countries where the depth of poverty or extent of inequality creates the most urgent need. Our largest investment will therefore continue to be in Africa.

In this strategy period we are committed to consolidating our presence in the countries where we already have programmes. In countries where this is limited, we will target our efforts to attain optimum influence and impact. Where necessary we will develop programmes in new countries, or introduce a staff presence, as part of a cohesive development of international, regional or sub-regional programmes. However, we will take a cautious approach to expanding into new countries.

In this strategy period we also plan to expand our presence and develop new affiliates in richer, more powerful countries so as to strengthen our influencing and fundraising potential. Mobilising greater support and resources in the USA for our work internationally will be essential.

We will deepen our engagement in emerging global powers such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa.

Section five

Organisational implications

We are well aware that delivering this ambitious strategy presents a major challenge. In order to succeed, we must strive to be accountable, effective, dynamic and international. We must be vigilant in ensuring that our organisational structures, ways of working and behaviours continually reinforce our goals.

Our legitimacy, and ultimately our influence, depends on us being **accountable** for all that we do. We will be open and transparent in our work and within our organisation. We will seek always to deliver on our commitments and lead by example. We will hold ourselves accountable to poor and excluded people, to our partners and to the supporters who give us time, money and solidarity.

We will be **effective** – constantly striving for efficiency and excellence. Working together within the ActionAid family and with our partners and allies, across functions, themes, and geographical boundaries, we will pursue the actions that make the most difference to the lives of poor and excluded people. We will be cost conscious and deploy our resources to maximise value.

We will be **dynamic** – bold, responsive and innovative – in relation to the ever changing and complex environment in which we work. While pursuing our new strategy, we will hold true to our existing commitments to poor and excluded people and communities. We will seek always to be outward-looking, listening to those we work with and accommodating new ideas and relationships. We will be committed to developing best practice and generating alternatives. Building on our diversity and learning, we will aspire on a daily basis to improve our work.

We will be **international** in our governance, management and the way we work. At the heart of this approach lies our governing principle, that all parts of ActionAid have a shared vision and shared strategies and act together towards eradicating poverty and injustice, that all parts of ActionAid have strong relationships with the communities where they work, and that our organisational practices and work are connected at every operational level, from local to national to international.

Organisational objectives

In order to deliver our mission-related goals and strategic priorities, we set ourselves the following six key organisational objectives. We expect that the actions and interventions that result will strengthen our governance, staff, skills, structure, culture and practices.

1: Strengthen our governance and deepen accountability

We will strengthen our governance to reflect our international nature – sharing power across North and South, acting together with one voice from local to international. Our international spread and diverse staff, the vast majority of whom are from developing nations, will bring a better understanding of the issues that poor people face.

We will make ourselves more accountable to the poor and excluded and strive to ensure that our work is relevant, cost-effective and appropriate. Accountability to our supporters and donors strengthens our relationships and influence. Mutual accountability with partners reinforces confidence, trust and effectiveness.

As we become more interdependent within ActionAid we will improve our internal accountability processes between different parts and levels of the organisation.

To strengthen governance and accountability, we will:

- develop all current country programmes, where it is legally and practically feasible, as affiliates of ActionAid
- develop quality boards in all affiliates, with significant representation of poor and excluded people in Southern countries and of volunteers or supporters in Northern countries
- invest in the development of board members (both affiliate and international boards) and in the continuing development of ActionAid's governance systems and practices

- clarify the roles and accountabilities of affiliates, associates and the International Secretariat, as outlined in ActionAid's memorandum of understanding, to ensure a balanced system of governance, power sharing and decision-making
- strengthen a mutually reinforcing dual identity – both national and international – in all the national affiliates of ActionAid. The aim is to increase our cohesiveness as one international organisation, made up of many parts
- strengthen systems, skills and practices designed to ensure delivery of our accountability, primarily to the poor and excluded people and their communities and organisations, but also to our supporters and donors
- strengthen implementation of the open information policy in all parts of the organisation
- work to improve the quality of feedback from partners as well as to improve ours to them.

2: Strengthen staff capacity

Independent reviews of our work have commended our committed and hardworking staff. Our successes and our evolving philosophy and approach flow from their creativity and hard work in partnership with the communities we work with. As we move forward we will continue to build a diverse cadre of staff, motivated, knowledgeable, accountable and confident in delivering ActionAid's mission. We will step up our efforts to develop leaders who will drive the organisation and bring about societal change.

We will invest to ensure that our staff acquire the skills, attitudes and values needed to deliver our mission. We must build capacity for research, advocacy and campaigning. We will enable and encourage staff to understand and respond to the realities of poor and excluded people. We will offer learning opportunities such as inductions and secondments – promoting staff movement across countries, themes and job functions. We will provide opportunities for personal development and for staff to be involved in shaping the organisation.

We need to develop a style of leadership aligned to our values and beliefs – focusing particularly on promoting gender equality, rejecting patriarchal attitudes and encouraging a sensible work-life balance among staff. We will:

- strengthen leadership development, especially for women
- strive to attain gender balance and diversity in staffing – including recruitment from within the communities where we work – and to sustain it at all levels
- invest in training for staff, trustees and partners on core concepts, tools, approaches and techniques, especially rights-based approaches, women's rights and working with partners and social movements
- develop and strengthen appropriate methodologies and practice to enable staff and partners to carry out rigorous power analysis and impact assessment
- strive to create an empowering and motivating work environment in harmony with ActionAid's values and approach
- promote a culture of personal safety and work-life balance
- enable and encourage staff to reflect, learn and grow within their daily working environment and to generate and share knowledge gained from their experiences.

3: Strengthen our structures and systems

The effectiveness and impact of our work depends on the ability to work in diverse, flexible and empowered teams. We will provide space and incentives for staff to work within and between geographical divisions, functions and themes. We will strengthen management structures to improve decision-making, implementation and accountability. Power, including financial resources, will shift within the organisation to align with our strategic priorities.

An organisational culture that encourages innovation, learning and sharing will enable us to respond to a rapidly changing and challenging external environment.

We urgently need tools and support systems that link individual and organisational learning. We will invest in developing and sharing our knowledge and ideas. We will:

- improve and clarify our management of work which cuts across geographies, functions and themes, drawing out the connections between areas of work
- build and strengthen thematic and functional teams in line with the principles of multiple accountability and our programme priorities
- invest in technology to improve efficiency and effectively manage distant and virtual team working
- develop systems to promote effective internal communication and encourage input of external knowledge and perspectives
- invest in structures and systems that will help us to generate and promote innovations, knowledge and alternatives, as we strive to become a knowledge leader in the outside world on our priority themes
- develop transparent and practical methods of strategically allocating funds in line with organisational plans and priorities
- strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems and reinforce our impact assessment capability to develop our understanding of how change happens
- improve cost effectiveness and develop performance measures that enable us to monitor our progress and assess the impact of our work. We will aim to achieve support costs at less than 15% of income.

4: Strengthen our communications and campaigns

ActionAid has low visibility, particularly in the North, in relation to its size, impact and ambitions. Effective communications and campaigns will provide the bridge between us and the world and the means to transmit the messages of poor and

excluded people to the general public, decision-makers and supporters worldwide to bring about change. It is also imperative that we communicate to a global audience what makes ActionAid different and effective.

To succeed, we need to build more and deeper relationships with local, national and international media. We need to build our capacity and experience, and that of our partners, in campaigning and communicating to the world through the media and direct communication channels such as the internet and mobile networks. It will take tenacity, courage and creativity to make sure that we are heard. We will:

- ensure that voices of the poor and excluded are part of our advocacy and campaigns and receive public and media exposure
- establish a clear mechanism for prioritising and implementing international campaigns
- invest in and develop our capacity to design and deliver effective, clear, focused and consistent national and international campaigns
- build a professional and innovative communications team located in key global media hubs in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe
- develop the capacity of staff to campaign and to communicate our messages through the media
- strengthen the ActionAid brand through greater visibility and quality campaigns and communications integrated with fundraising.

5: Increase our supporters and mobilise supporters and partners behind our mission

One of our greatest assets is our large and growing number of supporters and their increasing willingness to engage in campaigning for change as well as giving money. In addition to nurturing our many long established supporters, we have become more active in supporting younger people in their desire to be activists and campaigners.

Vocal support from specific constituencies of voters and consumers offers key opportunities to influence Northern and Southern governments and their power blocs through national and international campaigns. Recognising that eradicating poverty requires collaboration, we will work increasingly in alliances and partnerships with social movements, networks and civil society groups. This will require exchanges of personnel and ideas, and joint campaign actions as we build a collective voice for social change. We will:

- offer existing and new supporters more and different opportunities to engage with ActionAid in addition to supporting us financially
- broaden our supporter base to include a wider representation of civil society from the North and South
- seek to constantly improve our communication with supporters and to forge stronger links and a closer affinity between supporters and the communities in which we work
- invest in and use new media and other forms of technology to widen our constituency
- continue to develop joint actions and campaigns with our peers and other organisations, networks and movements
- improve our capacity, policies and systems to ensure that we are able to work more effectively and accountably with people's organisations, social movements and a diverse range of civil society organisations operating at every level from small communities to the international arena
- internationalise our youth programme by connecting young people in the North and South and actively involve them in ActionAid campaigns.

6: Increase and diversify income

We expect that regular giving from individuals will continue to comprise at least half of our income. Linking donors to children and communities in the South is the cornerstone of this approach, affording them closer understanding of the real experiences of poor and excluded people. This reliable source of long-term funds enables us to commit to future plans, set aside appropriate levels of reserves and safeguard our independence.

While our fundraising is successful in several Northern countries, we have been slow to expand into new ones. Emerging fundraising opportunities in the South also offer potential to broaden our supporter base, raise money and engage with new donors to make aid more effective.

In this strategy period, we expect to increase the proportion of our income that comes from official donors. This will both bring in extra income and put us in a good position to influence official donors' development policies and practices and their accountability requirements.

Competition for funds is growing. New non-profit organisations are forming, demands from donors are increasing, and more official funds are subject to competitive tendering, resulting in greater competition and higher fundraising costs. We must evolve to meet these challenges.

We must strengthen our fundraising capacity, focus our case for support, deepen and diversify our income sources and products. Our capacity to harness official donor funding must grow significantly, though it will not exceed 40% of total income. We will:

- seek to significantly increase core long-term income (excluding emergency related), from individuals and institutions in the North and the South, from €113 million in 2003 to between €215 and €240 million in 2010
- diversify our income sources, products and donors, predominantly to reduce risk, safeguard our independence and increase our opportunities to influence donor policies

- diversify our fundraising methods and the materials used to ensure they accurately reflect the work we do and exploit the technologies now available while offering maximum appeal to long-term supporters, including the opportunity for genuine and positive North-South exchanges
- expand relationships with official donors and use the opportunities this presents to influence policy and share information
- raise funds that are more flexible to allow income to be used where it is most needed
- maintain appropriate reserves in line with our growth and the evolving risks we face.

Section six

Making it happen

This strategy is our springboard for action in the face of abject poverty and gross inequality. It builds on our experience and deeper understanding of the world to consolidate gains achieved in working to our previous strategy *Fighting poverty together*.

This strategy brings greater focus to our work, welding our goals to thematic priorities, which will help us achieve the greatest impact on promoting rights and justice that we possibly can.

It reflects our resolve to strengthen our alliances in order to promote a powerful partnership for change between organisations of poor and excluded people and those of wider civil society around the world.

It reflects the increasingly interconnected nature of our work and of our deployment of staff and resources, as we play our part in the global movement for justice.

It emphasises accountability, leadership, the generation and sharing of knowledge and our desire for closer engagement with supporters, both new and existing, to increase our influence worldwide. Above all, it expresses our aspirations for change and progress that will better serve the interests of the poor and excluded and advance our mission towards our vision of a world without poverty and injustice.

This is an ambitious strategy, but given the massive scale of human suffering we witness daily, a relevant one. We believe we have what it takes to deliver: rootedness in the communities we work with; committed supporters and donors; growing partnerships and alliances; supportive trustees and a cadre of able and dedicated staff.

Taking this strategy forward from a statement of intent to decisive action will require us to:

- develop a framework to assess our progress against the goals, strategies and priorities we have set
- develop materials and tools to promote and internalise the spirit and substance of the strategy
- manage change across the organisation
- unlock financial resources to implement an investment strategy aimed at maximising our income across all fundraising markets
- develop thematic, functional and regional plans to implement the strategy internationally
- align national strategies for coherence and synergy
- critically reflect, innovate and learn.

The way forward

This strategy is about achieving change for the better. Change within ActionAid and change in the world around us. We are hopeful that, despite the scale of the challenge, the anti-poverty movement of which we are but one part will ultimately consign poverty and injustice to history. We are optimistic that, within the lifetime of this strategy and guided by its content, we will expand our impact and effectiveness in the world. We are grateful that, every day, we need only look to the creativity, energy and resolution with which poor and excluded people fight to overcome abject poverty in order to draw inspiration for our own efforts.