

Action for Global Justice

Strategy 2028



“Overcoming poverty is
not a gesture of charity;
it is an act of justice”

NELSON MANDELA

Acknowledgments: Sentence here about the authors and contributors.

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Action for Global Justice

Strategy 2028

ActionAid was founded as a charity in 1972, and throughout our history we have innovated and evolved our approach to better address the structural drivers of poverty and injustice. In the 1990s, we adopted a human rights based approach to development, which we continue to apply. In 2003, we established the ActionAid International federation, comprising members in every region of the world, and headquartered in South Africa.

Strategy 2028: Action for Global Justice represents the next step in our evolution, rooting us more deeply where we work, and with the people whose rights and visions we work to achieve. This strategy builds on learnings from our previous strategy, *People's Action to End Poverty*, our history and practice.

ActionAid staff, external experts and allies worldwide, as well as our partners and the people with whom we work, contributed to this strategy. Our analysis of the external context, our understanding of how change happens, as well as the unique contribution we believe we can make, all emanate from these collective inputs.

Introduction

Strategy 2028 comes at a pivotal moment in our efforts to drive social change towards a more just, equitable and sustainable world. Our learnings and our predictions demand that we evolve as a global federation, and unite with allies in collective actions to contribute to deeper and wider structural change, building on our rootedness in communities. The rapidly changing context that we work in also calls upon us to be agile in our decision making, innovative and adaptive to major external shifts.

Over the next decade, ActionAid will take action to become closer to the people we work with by strengthening their participation in our governance. We will also deepen our engagement with social movements that share our values and vision to address global inequalities worldwide. Building on our existing programming that supports the agency of people living in poverty and exclusion to claim their rights, we will increasingly connect the people, partners and communities with whom we work, with broader people's organisations and social movements¹ engaged in struggles for justice. This recognises the interconnected nature of many of the issues we work on and the need for greater collaboration and solidarity within and among countries to influence structural change.

We will continue to ensure women living in poverty and exclusion are central in our work, and apply a stronger feminist lens to drive a deeper analysis of power and its many manifestations, enabling us to better work towards more equitable redistribution of power and resources, as well as enhancing women's ability to claim and enjoy their rights. We will increase our engagement with young people as drivers of change and as the majority of the population in many of the countries where we work. When crises occur, we will be better prepared to support affected communities, and seize the opportunities that arise in such moments to drive just alternatives, working with communities and broader alliances to transform societies.



1. This refers to broader movements committed to social justice, and working beyond one particular geography to achieve changes in laws, policies, and the way institutions operate.

Change is possible, and it's visible in every region where we work.

In Bagamoyo, Tanzania, a community where ActionAid has been engaged for over a decade in long term programming to strengthen rights awareness, livelihoods and organising capacity, 1,300 people were being pushed off their land to make way for a sugar cane plantation. In solidarity, 50,000 people mobilised through an international coalition across four countries to reinforce the campaigning efforts of farmers, ultimately resulting in withdrawal of support for the plantation. The community was prepared to defend their rights and led the campaign, and continue to mobilise to protect their land rights. In India, ActionAid used creative public engagement tactics to support homeless people to organise a movement to assert their rights, culminating in a ruling by India's Supreme Court that directed state governments to set up shelters. Today, the rights of homeless people to food and shelter are recognised in official national policy.

Responding to lack of citizen engagement in the 2009 earthquake reconstruction in L'Aquila, ActionAid Italy worked with other organisations to organise the first ever festival of participation. More than 30,000 people engaged in events and debates, seeding a vibrant community of citizens calling for increased accountability and transparency from public institutions.

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ActionAid's tax justice campaign, working across many countries, resulted in the Zambian government revising a global mining company's tax bill and strengthening laws to govern mining companies. Our work continues to ensure that these taxes will result in greater benefit to poor communities.

In Brazil, building on extensive work to support people living in urban poverty to organise and claim their rights to education, other public services, and safety in the favelas, ActionAid connected communities such as Heliópolis and others in Cabo de Santo Agostinho with the National Forum for Urban Reform, a collective of movements and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) campaigning on their 'right to the city'. Together, they influenced urban planning and services reform resulting in significant improvements in the lives of people in the favelas, including the improvement of street lighting quality and coverage. Global organising resulted in the United Nations (UN) recognising people's right to the city in October 2016.

Change is possible, and it is rooted in the individual and collective empowerment of those most affected to know, claim and defend their rights over the long term; deepened democracy and participation and campaigning for just alternatives in collaboration with movements and coalitions, supported by global solidarity and committed supporters. People power is our greatest resource in ending poverty and achieving a just, equitable and sustainable world for all.

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Who we are

ActionAid is a global justice federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. Throughout the world, ActionAid works to strengthen the capacity and agency of people living in poverty and exclusion, especially women, to assert their rights. We work with communities, people's organisations, women's movements, groups and networks, social movements and other allies to overcome the structural causes and consequences of poverty and injustice. We connect the work we do at community level with broader efforts and struggles for justice at every level to make the greatest contribution towards a just, equitable and sustainable world.

Guided by feminist and human rights based principles and approaches, we seek to shift and transform power, through empowerment, solidarity, campaigning and the generation of alternatives to ensure that every person can enjoy a life of dignity and freedom from all forms of oppression. We prioritise the leadership of women and young people, especially those living in poverty and exclusion, in our efforts to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. We create platforms for collective action and solidarity by enabling people around the world to unite and contribute to social justice struggles in various ways – as citizens, supporters, staff and volunteers.

Around the world, ActionAid is rooted in the contexts where we operate and proudly upholds our primary accountability to the people most affected by unequal power relations.



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Our Vision

A just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression.

Our Mission

To achieve social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication by working with people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, people's organisations, activists, social movements and supporters.

Our Values

- **Mutual Respect**, requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity
- **Equity and Justice**, requiring us to ensure the realisation of our vision for everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, HIV status, disability, location and religion
- **Integrity**, requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources and open in our judgements and communications with others
- **Solidarity with people living in poverty and exclusion** will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty, injustice, and gender inequality
- **Courage of Conviction**, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative - without fear of failure - in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty, injustice, and gender inequality
- **Independence** from any religious or party-political affiliation
- **Humility**, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice

The ActionAid Federation has committed to applying a feminist lens and values in our work, which will guide us in interpreting and advancing our mission and these values.

The world we live in

Today, there are 350 million fewer people living in poverty worldwide than in the year 2000. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, have set out a road map to 2030 to guide international efforts to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. At the same time, the UN estimates² that climate change is expected to drive 122 million more people into poverty by 2030 and exacerbate existing poverty. Inequalities are also preventing millions of people from enjoying a life with dignity. We live in a moment of global transition where dominant economic forces are affecting the lives of the people with whom we work. In many countries, this has resulted in increased deregulation, privatisation of public services, the dismantling of social protection, a declining role of the state as well as an undermining of democratic institutions. This is contributing to unprecedented economic crises, environmental degradation, and increasing inequalities of power and wealth. There is emerging momentum and aspiration around the globe to transform towards a more equitable, socially and environmentally sustainable world. The time has come to reimagine a different pathway for humanity.



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2. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/oct/17/climate-change-could-drive-122m-more-people-into-extreme-poverty-by-2030-un-united-nations-report>.

The following macro-trends are relevant to our work.

People are organising, defending and claiming their rights.

Despite significant advancements in international commitments and national legislation, human rights are under attack in many countries where we work and in some, dissenting voices are being silenced, persecuted, jailed and even killed. Victories in policy and law reform are often undermined by weak implementation. In some countries, the state's declining role has decreased accountability to individuals and weakened its role in protecting human rights, with local elites and corporations often driving policies that benefit the very few and their interests.

Religious fundamentalism, racism, xenophobia and economic injustice are driving a backlash on women's rights, and increasing restrictions on their freedom to organise. Repressive and undemocratic regimes are stepping up their assault on the political space for civil society. Human rights violations by some governments are also being exposed, often justified by the threat of "terrorism". In some places, communities face repression from landlords and corporations, with forced evictions and violence against community leaders and human rights defenders.

Migration and displacement due to climate change, conflicts and lack of employment opportunities have combined with increasing rights violations, with women living in poverty and exclusion often the worst affected³. Children and girls in particular are vulnerable to marginalisation and exploitation. In many countries, marginalised social groups are faced with increasing exclusion, with lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities among the most persecuted. But new forms of people's movements are emerging to advance human rights and challenge injustice. Mobilisations are occurring around the world as individuals question the legitimacy, transparency and effectiveness of their political systems. Feminist movements are organising to demand justice in the face of widespread impunity for violence against women and girls, and alliances have emerged to stand behind marginalised groups. Use of technology to mobilise people, and expose injustices is changing the landscape of activism, building people power and strengthening youth movements worldwide.



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3. <https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/The%20South%20Asia%20Women's%20Resilience%20Index%20Dec8.pdf>.



Social movements and alliances are mobilising to challenge rising inequalities

Coalitions are forming to challenge unjust economic policies, which are undeniably concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few, and failing to deliver benefits to the most excluded. Increasing forced displacement of communities from livelihood sources and high levels of unemployment in many countries (particularly among young people) as a result of jobless economic growth are deepening inequalities.

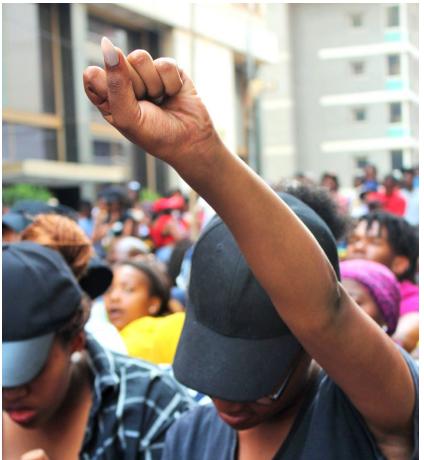
The exploitation of migrant workers and women's unrecognised and poorly paid labour has embedded structural violence against poor and migrant women all over the world. The continued privatisation of public services has increased the unpaid care work burden felt by women living in poverty, and alongside austerity measures, left billions without access to basic social protection.

Growing inequality is being felt within and among countries, affecting people not only in economic terms, but also in who has access to and influence over decision making. The 'hidden power' of international and regional financial institutions and corporations is growing, and in some cases, shaping development and undermining democratic processes. The private sector can also play an important role in development by driving new technologies, providing goods and services, creating jobs and paying taxes. The social economy is growing, with new forms of social enterprise and cooperatives enabling sustainable livelihoods. Many private sector actors share concerns about inequality and environmental destruction, with some re-examining their policies and practices as a result.

The SDGs have emphasised the importance of addressing poverty alongside inequality. Achieving the level of transformation envisaged in the SDG Agenda 2030 will require us to confront the power relationships and vested interests that maintain poverty. The formation and mobilisation of national and international alliances is one way of driving this change.

Social movements are beginning to unite at all levels to challenge inequitable growth, create space and momentum to define sustainable alternatives to the status quo. Advocacy and campaigning by global and national coalitions has also brought increasing public attention to the world's tax havens, widespread tax evasion, aggressive tax avoidance regimes and illicit financial flows. The emergence of different forms of South-to-South cooperation is also contributing to redress unequal power relations between wealthy and lower income countries.

Crises are acting as catalysts for social change



Economic, environmental and political crises are impacting on efforts to address poverty, injustice and inequality. Climate change is contributing to an increase in the frequency, scale and impact of climate-induced disasters, with the effects disproportionately felt by those living in poverty and exclusion. Women and children are 14 times more likely to die in disasters than men⁴, and the resilience of people to cope with such shocks is exacerbated by inequalities.

The world is currently experiencing some of the largest flows of refugees in human history, fuelled by conflicts and climate change. In these situations, displaced women and children are consistently exposed to increased risk of violence.

Amid accelerating global land grabs, resource-based conflicts and continued natural resource extraction, communities are losing access to and control over resources and territories that define their cultural identity and sustain livelihoods. Indigenous communities struggle to defend their land from local elites in many countries, with women smallholder farmers increasingly challenged in supporting their families because of internal migration and conflict.

Yet crises have also opened up space for change. As women first responders have mobilised in some countries where we work to lead early warning and emergency response to recurrent disasters, they have claimed their right to participate in decision making and challenged established norms and limits placed on their potential. As communities have been stripped of communal land and water rights, some have mobilised to expose injustice and organised public campaigns to reverse unjust decisions.

New opportunities and challenges in a younger, more urban and digital world. Technology is creating new opportunities to give visibility to social justice causes. In many countries, and across geographic boundaries, social media is facilitating direct engagement between activists, policy makers and the public, and transforming the ways in which people learn about, understand, and relate to each other, with institutions and with markets. Use of mobile phone technology has created innovative ways of holding states accountable and monitoring public policies. The digital landscape

4. <https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/The%20South%20Asia%20Women's%20Resilience%20Index%20Dec8.pdf>.

has also become a battleground for information, influence and control, with some governments and corporates using technology to monitor and control activists; and racist, xenophobic and sexist individuals and groups using it for their own purposes.

With half the world's population now under 25 years of age and 85% residing in developing countries⁵, younger generations are poised to play an important role in transforming and shaping more just, equitable and sustainable societies. Young people have powered spontaneous and innovative mobilisations in the face of injustice in some regions, often questioning the status quo. This potential offers opportunities to counter growing despair with high levels of youth unemployment in many countries where we work, alongside the increasing privatisation of education and continued violations of young women's sexual and reproductive rights.

Urbanisation has brought a range of problems and new forms of exploitation, with an increasing number of people living in poverty and exclusion now residing in urban slums - most have precarious jobs or livelihoods, and little or no access to public services. Critical services such as education, health care, public transport and justice systems are out of reach for many excluded groups, and often gender-blind. Despite this, most public mobilisations for social change witnessed around the world in recent times have been led by people living in urban contexts. We recognise the need to increase work with people living in urban poverty.

All of these global trends call on us to rethink where, how and with whom we work, and the unique contribution ActionAid can make as a global federation working within and across countries. It is clear that greater connectedness of the daily struggles of people living in poverty and exclusion, and with broader alliances, coalitions and movements are urgently needed to bring systemic change in people's lives and to shift unequal power structures at a global scale. Over the next decade, as we work to progress *Strategy 2028*, ActionAid will harness its collective power as a global federation by connecting struggles wherever we work, creating global momentum for social, economic and environmental justice, and supporting people living in poverty and exclusion in driving this change.



5. <https://www.fightinequality.org/en/news/2017/01/18/scourge-in-equality/>.

Our understanding of how change happens and the contribution we can make

ActionAid's meta-theory of change guides our collective understanding of what will contribute to the achievement of social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

Our theory of change

Social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication are achieved through purposeful individual and collective action to shift unequal and unjust power, whether it is hidden, visible or invisible , from the household level to local, national and international levels. Empowerment of people living in poverty and exclusion is crucial. Active and organised people develop and drive change; which will transform power when led primarily by those who are directly affected, and by individuals committed to deepening democracy and achieving social justice.

Collective efforts and struggles are more impactful when linked through solidarity, campaigning and common cause between communities, people's organisations, social movements, citizen's groups and other allies to strengthen the power of people to drive structural change. This includes advocacy, campaigning and policy influencing to engage with power structures from local to global.

Change is not linear, and opportunities to drive social change, advance alternatives and resist injustice open up at different moments. **Different contexts will require different strategies.**

ActionAid is both a catalyst and a contributor to social change processes. We will be prepared to seize key moments for social transformation when they arise, and to resist backlash, guided by our long-term rootedness in communities and by working closely with people's organisations, social movements and other allies. ActionAid will also enable platforms for citizen actions to hold duty bearers to account.

This is ActionAid's meta-theory of change that guides our collective understanding of what will drive the achievement of social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. This theory of change will be adapted and more specific theories developed for each of our collective priorities and for the different contexts in which we work.

Who we will **work** with

We believe that people living in poverty and exclusion must be central in driving social change towards a more just and equal world. We prioritise women and young people in our work. Women, who pay the highest price of unjust policies and patriarchal societies, must play a key role in order to shift unequal gender relations. Young people are important drivers of change throughout the world, and will inherit a planet that faces irreversible climate change and environmental destruction as a result of the actions of previous generations. They also represent the majority of the population in many lower income countries, and often experience high levels of unemployment and marginalisation. Young women living in poverty, in particular, often experience violence, discrimination and sexual and reproductive rights violations that undermine their rights and dignity.

We will work to address intersecting inequalities in gender, income, location, disability, age, race, caste, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and gender identity that exacerbate poverty and exclusion. We will work with both urban and rural poor, specifically women and young people. We will support the voice and agency of those who are most excluded wherever we work, strengthening their leadership and engagement in people's organisations and movements, as well as national, regional and global policy spaces.

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How we will contribute to change



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Building power from below - our long term work in communities

We will continue to work over the long term in communities with people living in poverty and exclusion to strengthen individual and collective consciousness of their rights, agency and capacity to lead lives with dignity. We will also work directly with communities to understand the causes of poverty and injustice, such as unjust laws or policies, which are often generated in decision making spaces far from their localities. We will connect these communities and their organisations with other organisations and alliances. When new laws or policies are put in place, we will work to support communities in claiming and enjoying those rights.

We will campaign with and support communities' abilities to shift and transform power at all levels, challenging patriarchy and other intersecting forms of oppression, and developing just, sustainable and equitable alternatives.

Our programming will continue to be designed and based on our human rights based approach pillars: empowerment, solidarity, campaigning and alternatives. This approach will advance transformational and redistributive change by analysing and shifting power, and holding leaders to account. In working with people living in poverty and exclusion, we will provide services and other forms of material support without substituting the primary responsibility of governments to fulfil human rights. Service delivery remains part of our approach, and will always be fully integrated with other core pillars of our HRBA.

ActionAid works with children to increase their awareness of rights and fulfilment of those rights. This work will contribute to significant and lasting improvements in the lives of children and their communities.

Linking social justice efforts and struggles and building collective power

As we live in a world of intersecting inequalities, caused by powerful and interlinked global forces, the power of the many will be needed to ensure rights and dignity for all. The structural causes of poverty, gender inequality and injustice are located from the household level to the global level. This means that solutions can only be found through collective and connected efforts at community, national and global levels. We will help build collective power through broad alliances between communities, people's organisations, social movements and other allies, working together across geographic boundaries, to achieve social justice and eradicate poverty. Working with women's movements, including feminist organisations and other women's rights actors will be a priority in our efforts to advance gender equality. We will design global campaigns to bring collective power and voices to bear on systemic and transnational causes of poverty and injustice.

ActionAid will strengthen the leadership and voices of people living in poverty and exclusion, particularly women, so that they are able to set the agenda and lead change. Where necessary, ActionAid will support the growth of people's organisations and movement building efforts so that people have their own organisations to assert rights and defend any gains they make over the longer term⁸.

ActionAid recognises the agency and solidarity of other groups who come together to challenge power, but are not necessarily living in poverty or exclusion themselves. We will work with these allies in their own struggles for deepening democracy, and where necessary, we will facilitate linkages to the people and communities we work with and to broader social movements, supporting people's efforts to build power from below to transform their realities and act in solidarity with others.

Where necessary, we will encourage, support and facilitate solidarity between those directly affected by injustice and others by raising awareness and campaigning with supporters, donors, partners, broader movements and other allies who are working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. Solidarity will include providing material, moral, and other forms of support to communities, people's organisations and social movements as well as engaging in collective action.

Influencing and shifting power

The denial of women's rights is largely founded in patriarchal norms embedded in most traditions and religions; as are violations of the rights of various minorities and excluded groups. Such negative values are often reinforced through our upbringing, and further entrenched by national and international laws, policies or practices, undermining the universality of human rights. To challenge and transform such invisible power, ActionAid will work to address patriarchy, dehumanisation, discrimination, racism, homophobia and xenophobia, all emanating from negative values and stereotypes, and influencing people's hearts, minds, behaviours, practices, all of which stand in the way of the implementation of any laws or policies written on paper. We will step up our public engagement to promote the values of justice, equality, solidarity and internationalism.

Together with our partners and allies we will challenge and democratise the visible power of states and regional and international institutions. We will work to claim the role of the state as primary duty bearer at all levels, and hold states accountable for respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights in ways that are democratic, transparent and effective. ActionAid will work with rights holders and human rights defenders to enlarge democratic space, so that all people have freedom to organise. We believe that every person has the right to participate in decision making that affects them, at every level, and we will step up efforts aimed at enhancing democracy through participation of excluded individuals and groups in decision making. At regional and international levels, we will engage with allies in influencing institutions that impact on international rules and standards and creating space for direct engagement between the people we work with and policy makers.

Alongside communities and partners, we will challenge and transform the hidden power of elites, financial institutions and corporations that are increasingly influencing and controlling decision making processes at all levels. Our aim will be to expose their

power and role so that people can hold them accountable and ensure that decisions are made by those institutions mandated to do so.

Recognising the diversity of the private sector and the contribution it can play in development, we will engage with it to promote responsible and sustainable corporate behaviour. We will continue to challenge the negative impact of corporations on human rights and ecological sustainability and advocate for safeguards and binding legislation to ensure businesses are accountable to human rights, labour and environmental standards and that they pay their fair share of taxes in all countries of operation.

Learning and generating alternatives

We will take a learning approach to our work, which is grounded in developing knowledge from below, and specifically from the experiences of communities and allies we work with, in collaboration with centres of learning, to deepen our understanding of how change happens. We will share community-generated knowledge and alternatives with social movements, policy makers and other practitioners in order to transform policy and practice. We will propose alternatives to the systems and practises we criticise, and ensure that the people we work with are central in defining and building these solutions.



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Programme framework⁶

The key challenges and opportunities affecting people living in poverty and exclusion directly inform ActionAid's programme framework for Strategy 2028 including: the persistence of patriarchy, which is undermining the full attainment of women's rights, and the new opportunities for collaboration with feminist movements to push for accountability to the SDGs' commitment to achieve gender equality and empower all girls; the possibilities for collaboration with affected communities and environmental movements to call for climate justice as the climate change crisis pushes millions of people further into poverty and drives increased disasters, conflict and migration; the chance to support digital and other platforms for collective action to counter attacks on democratic participation, which are undermining people's voices, and collective power as well as the role of the State as duty bearer to uphold and fulfil rights; and the opportunity to promote alternatives to the dominant economic and governance models which are fuelling inequalities and threatening livelihoods. These interconnected challenges present the most significant threats to people living in poverty and exclusion and offer the greatest opportunities to advance our vision of social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication over the next decade.

ActionAid's programme framework will respond to these challenges and opportunities, building on our theory of change and learnings from four decades of working directly with communities to affect social change. We recognise that overcoming the structural causes of poverty and injustice requires long term commitment and engagement, global collective action, alongside the need to be agile and adaptive to a rapidly changing context.



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- 6. By Programme we mean the whole continuum of our mission related work, from direct work with communities, to advocacy, policy influencing to campaigning.

Over the next decade, ActionAid's programme framework will work towards the following overarching goal: To achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication by shifting and redistributing power and resources, strengthening the resilience of communities and movements, and fulfilling the rights of people living in poverty and exclusion.

The above goal will be achieved through a long term integrated programming agenda focused on rights, redistribution and resilience. These three pillars are interconnected and mutually reinforcing in that one will only be achieved if gains are made in other areas. Rights cannot be fulfilled without redistribution of power and resources; and they will continue to be undermined without building the resilience of people living in poverty and exclusion and social movements.

Rights

The state, as an important guarantor of human rights, must be democratic and held accountable for its primary duty to protect rights and deliver justice. This will only happen if the space to influence the state is created and expanded through sustained people's struggles, bolstered by global solidarity. To realise universally accepted rights and achieve dignity, it is essential that the individual and collective agency of people living in poverty and exclusion is mobilised to claim rights and resist all forms of discrimination. Public awareness and action to reveal and confront hidden forms of power, such as corporate power, is also essential to achieving social justice. The realisation of women's rights can be transformative globally, and as a result, women's movements, civil society organisations and other self-mobilised groups should be resourced and strengthened to challenge negative social and cultural norms and practices which fuel discrimination and violation of rights.



Redistribution

The world has sufficient resources to guarantee a life of dignity for everyone, especially people living in poverty and exclusion, but it will require redistribution. The more equitable sharing of power and resources is essential to achieving a just society. People living in poverty, especially women must have access to and control of productive resources while the benefits from natural resources must be more equitably shared to create opportunities, decent work, and respect for labour rights. At the centre of the redistribution agenda must be stronger corporate regulation to reign in excessive wealth and greed in order to ensure a more equitable sharing of the world's resources. A progressive tax system⁷ that ensures individuals and corporations pay their fair share of taxes is also important in advancing this agenda. States must recognise and reduce women's unpaid care work and redistribute financial resources to deliver quality gender responsive public services.

Resilience

As disasters and conflicts increase humanitarian emergencies all over the world, people living in poverty and exclusion must have the resilience to withstand, recover from and transform systems that increase their vulnerability. Power must also be shifted to first responders, especially women's and people's organisations at the frontline of emergency response, with increased accountability to these local communities. In both rural and urban locations, people who are most impacted by crisis must be supported to tackle these underlying drivers, including gender inequalities. With growing urban migration, strengthening resilience in urban contexts is a priority. Given the impact of climate change on rural communities and livelihoods, we must work to safeguard food sovereignty and to achieve ecological and climate justice.

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7. A progressive taxation system ensures that those with most resources pay most.





2017-2020 Collective Programme Priorities:

“If you would like to scatter quotes throughout the document, they could be placed like this”.

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Four programme priorities will guide the collective action of the federation. These priorities will be revisited every three years as part of operational planning in order to have the agility to adapt to major shifts in the external context and maintain relevance to the struggles of people living in poverty and exclusion. Our programming will connect work at all levels – local, national, regional and international – and seek to maximise the added value that comes from working across countries in collective actions. It is around these collective priorities that the secretariat will concentrate support and coordinate the federation to deliver. When relevant we will rally international solidarity and support to specific national struggles or social justice causes. Our joint advocacy and campaigning will focus on the larger structural causes and consequences of poverty, gender inequality and injustice, taking on one major international campaign at a time, to maximise impact and resources.

Priority 1: Address the structural causes of violence against women and girls and secure women's economic justice

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Building on existing programming to end violence against women and girls, ActionAid will work with young women's movements, women's movements and feminist organisations to address the structural causes of this violence, including the intersections between patriarchy, unequal access to power and resources, and socially constructed norms, as well as a failed economic model which devalues and exploits women's paid and unpaid labour. With growing attention to women's economic empowerment as 'an engine for growth', we will seek to shift the discourse to ensure the economy works for women living in poverty and exclusion and advances their rights. A core part of this will be advocating for increased corporate accountability for upholding human rights standards, and protection for women in informal and precarious work, particularly the increasing numbers of young urban workers living and working in unsafe conditions. By increasing women's access to and control over productive resources and social and economic rights, while challenging the patriarchal institutions that systematically deny these rights, we will significantly reduce the risk of violence against women and girls in all its manifestations.

Priority 2:

Ensure increased civic participation and state accountability for the redistribution of resources and delivery of quality, gender-responsive public services

ActionAid will work with people living in poverty, peoples' organisations and social movements and activist groups to increase civic participation in decision making that shapes delivery of public services. We will advocate for the participation of women, young people and excluded groups in decision making and governance processes affecting them. We will also work to ensure democratic and accountable States and governance institutions wherever we work and increased accountability from corporations. Our agenda will include promoting redistributive policies that facilitate more equitable sharing of power and resources. We will advocate for public investment in and accountability for delivering quality, gender responsive public services, especially public education, and challenge the privatisation of these services. We will advocate for these services to be financed through progressive taxation systems, as well as implementation of fairer national and global tax rules. ActionAid will work to protect and expand political space for civil society organising and participation in democratic decision making, as well as support human rights defenders.



Name description
PHOTO: CREDIT

Priority 3:

Strengthen resilient livelihoods and secure climate justice

Climate change impacts heavily on the livelihoods of people living in poverty and exclusion, particularly women. We will pursue climate justice by holding wealthy countries responsible for the climate crisis and accountable for compensating affected countries for loss and damage, as well as supporting communities to adapt to climate change. ActionAid understands the interconnectedness of all natural resources as critical to ensuring resilient livelihoods for all of humanity and for ecology. ActionAid will work with communities to build resilient livelihoods in rural and urban areas. In strengthening food sovereignty, we will continue to advocate for fairer redistribution of land and other productive resources, with an emphasis on increased access and control for women, indigenous peoples, young people and other excluded groups, while challenging grabbing of such resources. We will promote agro-ecology as climate resilient sustainable agriculture is a means of strengthening food systems and the capacity of smallholder farmers to adapt to climate change. During the first three years of this strategy we will build a collective knowledge base on urban livelihoods with the objective of growing work in this area in the years to come.



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Priority 4:

Drive transformative women-led emergency preparedness, response and prevention

ActionAid will continue to build on its unique humanitarian signature that is grounded in human rights, focusing on promoting women-led preparedness and response in humanitarian emergencies, occupation and conflicts to strengthen their power and agency to transform the humanitarian system to be more locally led and accountable to affected communities. The rights of women and other groups made vulnerable by disasters, and protection from violence, exploitation and abuse in times of crises will also be strengthened through community-based protection mechanisms and improved accountability of humanitarian actors. We will build the resilience of rural and urban communities to climate change, disasters and conflicts through transformative actions from the local to the global level, led by women living in poverty and exclusion. The active engagement of young people will be a priority to prevent the worst effects of emergencies. ActionAid will continue to drive accountability to disaster and conflict affected communities, as well as the shifting of power to local organisations and movements at all levels.

At country level, ActionAid's choice of programming under the rights, redistribution and resilience framework will relate to the local and national context. Every country where we work will align its country strategy to Strategy 2028, and in this context, countries will choose which of these collective priorities they wish to coalesce with others around. Countries will have the agility to choose other national priorities outside of the collective priorities as long as these are aligned to the overarching rights, resilience and redistribution framework and implemented in line with the core principles of our human rights based approach.



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Organisational shifts

Strategy 2028 represents the next stage in our internationalisation journey. Building on the lessons we have learnt over the last decade, our federal model will further evolve in various ways which will ensure that we are more networked, unified, agile, and collectively able to contribute to social justice, gender equality and eradication of poverty. Our Federation will be greater than the sum of its parts. We will prioritise generating knowledge and learning around social change processes and communicating impact, and we will be innovative in the way we work and generate resources for our mission. To this end, mobilising collective investments across the federation will be essential.

Four strategic objectives will guide the organisational shifts that are required to deliver Strategy 2028 over the next decade. Realising these objectives is essential in maximising our collective power to drive change and strengthen our accountability to people living in poverty and exclusion.

- *Strategic shift 1:* To be a more agile, unified and networked Federation.
- *Strategic shift 2:* To build a culture of learning and quality M&E that generates knowledge, evidence-based alternatives and communicates impact.
- *Strategic shift 3:* To collectively prioritise securing resources from diverse sources aligned to our vision and values to meet strategic funding needs and build a culture of fundraising innovation.
- *Strategic shift 4:* To embrace a culture of innovation and actively undertake digital transformations that revolutionise our ways of work throughout the federation.

Strategic Shift 1:

To be a more agile, unified and networked federation

Over the next decade, ActionAid will become an agile federation, capable of making timely decisions and innovating through a culture that values experimentation and learning. We will be more democratic and networked through shared power, delegated decision making and increased participation of the people and alliances we work with in our governance structures. We will be more unified, ensuring that we are mutually accountable to one another and each contributing to the effective delivery of our collective vision. Strategic investments will enable us to diversify funding, improve systems and drive impactful programmes in line with our theory of change. Alongside this, we will make strategic choices about what we invest in, focusing more on what we do best and where we can make the greatest contribution.

Core elements that will enable us to realise this objective:

- We will continue to evolve into a more networked and unified federation**

Strategy 2028 represents the next stage of ActionAid's internationalisation process, strengthening our legitimacy and rootedness in the countries where we work by bringing ourselves closer to movements and civil society. This means rethinking international and national boards and assemblies to reflect the mix of experience and background that ActionAid requires to be rooted more strongly in the realities and aspirations of rights holders, and to deepen our legitimacy and accountability in the countries where we work. It also requires continuing to build the architecture which facilitates dual citizenship and mutual accountability. This will include reviewing the role of the global secretariat and that of members, and strengthening the organisation's horizontal framework that enables a more networked federation. International platforms, which are spaces for collective programming, shared learning, integrated planning and collective action, will be strengthened. The federation will continue advocacy, campaigning and policy influencing at regional and international levels, as well as coalescing around an agenda where mobilising our collective power will make a difference. This will be based on the collective programme priorities as defined in this strategy. In addition, the federation leadership team will continue as a space that enables country and secretariat leadership to make joint international decisions. All countries will review and strengthen their governance and operating models to increase their legitimacy and facilitate dual citizenship within the Federation, contributing time and resources to collective work.

The role of the secretariat will be reaffirmed and refocused to support and lead the federation in: international external representation; convening and coordinating programming work across countries on collective programme priorities; conflict resolution; monitoring and supporting compliance with federation policies; managing country programmes; and overseeing investments. Where strategic, the secretariat will continue the practice of delegating some international responsibilities to countries to facilitate 'dual citizenship', increased peer support, and maximise the collective

resources available for our work. The secretariat will focus on the roles that can only be performed centrally and it will be designed to adapt to what the federation can afford to build together, recognising the need to secure resources for strategic investments. Technology and digital tools will be harnessed to support increased networking and collective ways of working.

– We will be an *agile* and *adaptive* federation

ActionAid will achieve greater agility through a 10 year high level strategy backed by adaptive operational planning processes at country and secretariat level. Collective global priorities will be reviewed every three years (at least) in order to be responsive to major shifts in the external context. Countries will have greater flexibility in determining their national strategies within the broad parameters outlined in Strategy 2028. By fostering a culture of learning and innovation across the federation, we will also be able to adapt our strategies, test new approaches and achieve greater agility in our programming. We will ensure agility in our decision making through more timely and transparent processes at management and governance level, which we will achieve by building greater clarity in roles and responsibilities of management structures, and taking action to avoid duplication. Greater use of technology will be harnessed to enable quicker and less costly means of decision making. We will work towards improved relationships, behaviours and practices of governance bodies to ensure decision making processes facilitate agility and adaptability.

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– We will invest in our people as our greatest resource for change and redistribute power

ActionAid will foster highly motivated staff and volunteer teams wherever we work. We will strive to create a sense of belonging to ActionAid as a platform for collective action by strengthening the connection of staff and volunteers in our campaigning actions with communities, movements and alliances. We will deepen feminist leadership in the federation, and ensure that leaders at all levels are capable of practising this form of leadership, which we see as being the most effective and most aligned to our vision and to the change we want to contribute to in the world. We will continue to challenge ourselves and transform the ways in which we share and exercise power, paying specific attention to transforming hidden and invisible power inside our own federation. This will be in line with, and will be the practical application of, our constitutional commitments to ensure all members are equal in their potential to contribute to the Federation and to delink money and power.

– We will increase our external accountability

ActionAid's external accountability will be deepened by increasing the participation of the people we work with in our governance, and by reaffirming our primary accountability to this constituency. Strengthened policies, standards, systems and capacities will enhance our accountability to donors and supporters as well as improve programme and financial management and accountability at all levels. As part of our external accountability, ActionAid will also work to reduce its carbon footprint, ensuring our organisational lifestyle is consistent with our values and mission, and minimises environmental impact.

- We will strengthen our internal accountability and effectiveness**

Assessment of compliance with internal policies and commitments will be monitored by the secretariat, and enforced by the General Assembly which will apply agreed mechanisms in instances of non-compliance. A mutual accountability framework and the implementation of our assurance policy will guide the federation's collective commitment to deliver on Strategy 2028. Our effectiveness will be enhanced by adapting our geographic footprint to have a meaningful impact in line with our resources and enabling alternative ways of organising without moving away from our federal model. A review of our current geographical presence will be carried out in the first year of the strategy, and this will ensure that our country presence is informed by strategic impact, programme coherence and is financially sustainable. All countries and the secretariat will revisit their operational models and related costs, so that funds are consistently maximised for programme-related work and investments. We will explore shared services internally and externally with others to increase cost recovery.

- We will collectively invest in organisational change**

Strategy 2028 calls on the federation to commit to a regular cycle of strategic investments to deliver on the ambitions to diversify fundraising, enable digital transformation, strengthen our systems and innovate in our programming. Building collective investment through adherence to the resource allocation framework as well as additional voluntary contributions and earmarked contributions will enable resourcing of fundraising, digital innovation, systems and technology, and programme impact. This will also be supported through a leaner global secretariat and greater cost-efficiencies at all levels. Working towards a federal perspective on investment priorities for use of unrestricted funding is crucial.



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– We will build⁸ our organisational resilience and strengthen risk management

We will redesign our systems and ways of operating so that we are able to respond in a timely manner to the issues that people living in poverty and exclusion and their movements bring to the fore. This means we will need to shift some of our ways of ‘doing business’ while building our own organisational resilience to an ever challenging and changing context.

Strengthening our engagement with partners at all levels is also an important priority as part of the next phase of the internationalisation process. This includes the engagement of partners in our own decision making processes to help shape, challenge and ground ActionAid’s programmes, advocacy and campaigning as part of being a rooted organisation. Working more closely with, and as part of, local civil society will not only strengthen our legitimacy, it will also enhance our long-term resilience when we increasingly play a more active role in shaping national discourses.

We will strengthen our risk analysis and put in place stronger risk management systems at all levels, which will be resourced to better support partners, movements, human rights defenders and our staff.

8. Defined as the ability of an organisation to prepare for and withstand major internal and external shifts and change.

These organisational shifts are critical to our effectiveness as a global federation working to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

Strategic Shift 1:

Strategic Shift 2:

To build a culture of learning and quality M&E that generates new knowledge, evidence-based alternatives and communicates impact

ActionAid's approach to tracking and measuring change builds on learnings from the past strategy. It is aligned with who we are, what we do and our values as a global Federation working to advance social justice and poverty eradication. Building on ActionAid's accountability, learning and planning system, (ALPS) our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) privileges the voices, perspectives and analysis of people living in poverty and exclusion. Our M&E will focus on assessing and demonstrating the impact of our work, testing our theory of change and tracking changes and lessons learned from the implementation of our programme framework and collective priorities. It will also measure our effectiveness in achieving the organizational shifts in Strategy 2028. Our M&E will generate new knowledge and evidence-based alternatives that contribute to our federation-wide understanding of social change processes.

Over the next decade, ActionAid will work to implement an M&E approach that:

- Strengthens our understanding and knowledge of how social change, particularly shifts in power relations, happens in line with our theory of change. This includes increased efforts to tracking our contribution to change and documenting and communicating our impact in line with our theory of change and programme framework. Our M&E will be better equipped to deal with the complexities in measuring the structural changes embedded in our approach, including shifts in gender and other unequal power relations. This will help us, and the partners we work with, adapt our strategies and manage or resist any resulting backlash as we increase collective actions to advance rights, redistribution and resilience.



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- Recognises our primary accountability to people living in poverty and exclusion and being transparent with our valued donors, supporters and the communities with whom we work. ActionAid privileges the voices, perspectives and analysis of the people we work with. Their knowledge is used throughout the programme cycle, strengthening our own learning and knowledge generation. We are committed to quality programme management and remain accountable to the millions of supporters around the world for the resources they entrust in us. We also commit to engaging with our donors to promote a people-centred M&E and value for money approach and are transparent about our contribution to change and our learnings.
- Invests in our people, technical capacities and systems to deliver quality M&E at all levels. Ensuring a critical mass of people across different teams, with the required skills to deliver on this M&E approach is an essential part of our strategy. We also need to strengthen the systems and methods to track, assess, document, and communicate the impact of our work on the lives of women, men, girls and boys for informed decision making. To do this, we need to embrace technology and innovation, hold each other accountable to our global M&E principles and standards, and partner with academic institutions to expand learning on key focus areas of our strategy.

As we implement this approach, we are committed to learning with and from others so that ultimately our collective knowledge and resources can make a lasting impact on the lives of people living in poverty and injustice and contributes to the work of social justice movements.

Strategic Shift 3:

To collectively prioritise securing resources from diverse sources aligned to our vision and values to meet strategic funding needs and build a culture of fundraising innovation

ActionAid's funding approach is grounded in our identity, theory of change and programme framework. We will seek to partner with those who share our vision and values, as well as continuing to engage long term supporters in the journey to achieve social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

Our approach to resourcing all aspects of our work (empowerment, solidarity, campaigning and alternatives) responds to ActionAid's current financial position and draws on key lessons learnt from our previous global fundraising framework.

ActionAid will be responsive and adaptive to the external environment. While we cannot predict the level of change and its impact on our funding over the next ten years, we know that political and economic shifts are happening faster than ever. We also know that fundraising costs are increasing, donors are establishing stronger regulatory frameworks, and the way in which official aid is being defined and delivered is changing rapidly. Despite these challenges, opportunities for alternatives are emerging. Supporters from middle income economies are beginning to give regularly. Institutional donors have committed to ensuring greater levels of funding flow directly to local and national organisations, leading to greater opportunities at country-level for resourcing our programme priorities. Philanthropic giving continues to grow across a number of countries where ActionAid has a presence with donors becoming increasingly engaged and involved in their giving.



These external and internal challenges and opportunities require a diversified funding strategy, aligned with our identity and programme framework. Over the next decade, ActionAid will focus on building a new funding model shaped by the following strategic priorities:

- A diversified income base both in terms of countries and income streams that allows us to withstand external changes
- A meaningful culture of innovation that is incentivised across the Federation, and established and maintained through formal structures and investment
- A focus on financial sustainability for all countries secured by tapping into both domestic and international sources of funds
- A fundraising market growth strategy which is funded by the federation's collective investments, decided at federation-level based on robust business cases and delivered through effective performance management
- A revised set of internal resource transfer principles.



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Resourcing Strategy **2028**

Strategy 2028 will be resourced through federation-wide agreed principles and collective commitment to resource sharing. This commitment will be guided by the following resource allocation principles:

Compliance by all members and countries with a revised resource allocation framework.

Dual citizenship, which recognises the rights of a member to allocate resources for which it is legally responsible, while upholding a federation-wide perspective on resource sharing, taking into consideration that all funds are collectively raised.

An increased commitment to securing resources for investment across the federation to achieve the changes envisaged.

Growth ambitions

Growth will not be linear. We will invest and expect growth in new and emerging markets, and we will strive to maintain existing support from established markets. in the second half of the strategy period.

We are committed to maintaining the same balance of voluntary fundraising and institutional funding, and within voluntary fundraising we will strive to grow regular giving income faster, recognising the need for more unrestricted income.

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Income Streams

We will continue to invest in and develop new forms of unrestricted regular giving, enabled by a global brand reflective of our identity and approach. These new forms of giving will account for a prominent proportion of our regular giving income by 2028.

Child sponsorship will continue to be part of our funding mix and will be modernised to maximise return on investment and re-launched to highlight the progressive nature of our rooted programming and social justice approach. Programmes supported by child sponsorship will meaningfully engage with children and will demonstrate the transformative impact of our work on children and communities.

We will partner with businesses that are socially and environmentally responsible, uphold human rights, and share our vision for social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

We will increase our funding from trusts, foundations and major donors, maximising untapped potential in markets where ActionAid has a presence and philanthropic giving is growing.

We will partner with institutional donors that share our vision, understand our theory of change, and value our approach. We will play a more active role in influencing donor priorities. We will be more open, adaptive and innovative with external trends in the institutional funding environment. We will create a better operating environment to support the development and management of grants, including building a robust contract management system. We remain committed to programme-led funding and being able to communicate the contribution of our programmes to achieving social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

Strategic Shift 4:

To embrace a culture of innovation and actively undertake digital transformations that revolutionise our ways of work throughout the federation

Innovation has a major role to play in driving our ambitious agenda, including our aspiration to be a more agile and networked federation, and enabling us to respond to the external environment. A culture of experimentation and innovation, which identifies tests and scales up new ideas, including new business models, can make us more efficient, effective, and agile at all levels and in all aspects of our work. Technology has the potential to strengthen our engagement with local partners, people's organisations and movements, as well as current and potential supporters and activists and the broader public. It can also enhance our programming approach, including campaigning and solidarity actions. Recognising the potential of new technologies for our work, ActionAid will digitally transform our Federation over the next decade by fostering a culture of digital innovation we will refresh our internal communications, systems, connectivity, programmes and fundraising to ensure that they are up to date with current technology and benefit from digital advancements. Strategic investments will be made in the use of technologies to drive greater efficiencies and effectiveness. We will continue to grow our social media presence and use of digital platforms for strengthening global solidarity with people living in poverty and exclusion through campaigning and online actions. This includes strengthening the direct connections between our supporters and the people we work with. Increasing the use of technology across all aspects of our work will ultimately contribute to reducing our carbon footprint and contribute to strengthening connectivity within the federation.

Over the next decade, ActionAid will work to drive digital transformations and innovation in all areas of our work by:

- Investing in improved technology infrastructure within the Federation to deliver harmonised processes in our financial and contract management systems, among other areas
- Strengthening connectivity using information and communications technology to facilitate an agile and networked federation
- Positioning ourselves at the forefront of digital fundraising and campaigning innovation through digital platforms that enhance supporter journeys, and increase solidarity, outreach and influence
- Engaging with digital technologies in our programming including the use of inclusive technologies that facilitate the active participation of rights holders, and working with technology innovators to address some of the practical challenges facing the communities we work with
- Developing and testing new business models for the federation, such as social enterprise
- Advocating for equitable access to new technologies at all levels to ensure that these do not further marginalise women and other excluded groups
- Ensuring sound governance of technology across the federation through standards, policies and risk management
- Investing in the capabilities and skills of staff to drive a culture of innovation and digital transformations
- Creating internal processes that foster and cultivate strategic innovations at all levels, and especially in our programmes.

Our strategy will be implemented through three year operational plans that will be approved by the ActionAid International General Assembly.

Strategy 2028: Action for Global Justice is a call to members, partners and allies, and most importantly the communities we work with, to ignite our collective imagination, our resources and the power of people towards a bold and ambitious journey over the next decade achieving social justice, gender equality and poverty eradication.

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ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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